

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, July 27, 2021 - 9:00 AM

Council Chambers, 1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach, NC



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pierce called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

PRESENT

Mayor LeAnn Pierce

Mayor Pro Tem Jay Healy

Council Member Lynn Barbee

Council Member JoDan Garza

Council Member Steve Shuttleworth

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Employee Recognition

Fire Chief Alan Griffin introduced the three new Beach Patrol Officers who have been on the job since just before July 4: Barry, Kalyn, and John. He said they are getting a lot of positive feedback for doing a good job. He said one Officer is on the beach most days, with two scheduled on busy weekends, and their purpose is to identify violations of beach strand rules, such as glass bottles, dogs during prohibited times, visitors digging large holes and leaving them, and trash.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked if the Beach Patrol Officers are writing citations. Chief Griffin said they initially try to educate visitors, and most people comply and walk away. He said right now, if an incident escalates to a ticket situation then a Police Officer is called.

Council Member Barbee said he likes this approach for safety purposes.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if they are educating visitors about the Pack It In, Pack It Out program. Chief Griffin said yes and that they have bags to hand out for those who need them.

Council Member Garza said the Beach Patrol Officers represent the Town and can set the tone for a visitor's positive vacation experience.

Mayor Pierce said she is glad to see the program get off the ground.

Planning Director Jeremy Hardison recognized Building Inspector Darrel Johnson, who was recently recognized by the N.C. Building Inspectors' Association as the Building Inspector of the Year.

Mayor Pierce congratulated him and expressed appreciation for his work.

2. Manager's Update

Town Manager Bruce Oakley gave an update on various projects and events:

- **Canal Drive Flooding:** The Town has sent letters to properties identified as problematic but has not yet heard back from anyone. Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) will meet with the Town soon to offer ideas, and the Town is also researching Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance. In addition, Town Attorney Noel Fox is reviewing ordinances from other communities.
- **Legislative Update:** Mr. Oakley and Mayor Pierce recently met with former U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre, a Town Consultant, who shared that time is running out but hope still remains that federal funds will be reprogrammed to allow for beach nourishment this year. Mayor Pierce asked when the Town would get an answer about money for this cycle. Mr. Oakley said within the next week or two. He said the engineering and specs are ready to go. Mr. Oakley also shared that the U.S. Department of Interior reversed the decision about using sand from the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) zone, so when the Town's 15-year project expires sand will have to come from out at sea unless this is reversed again. He said he has asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to confirm this interpretation.
- **American Rescue Plan:** The Town passed a resolution accepting funding but has not yet received anything. Patience has been requested, as a lot of communities are waiting for this money. Council's next meeting will include a plan for how to spend the money, the majority of which will be used for stormwater projects.
- **Beach Patrol:** Council Member Garza asked Chief Griffin to post a group photo of the new Officers on Facebook, including the Carolina Beach Locals group page, so the community will recognize them.
- **Ocean Rescue:** Chief Griffin gave this update. A group of 18 lifeguards recently traveled to Jacksonville Beach, Florida, to participate in a regional competition, where they finished second in their category, Division B, and brought home 42 medals. The Town has put its name in the hat to host the regional competition within the next year or two, which would bring about 250 lifeguards to the area over three weekdays. A fundraiser is under way to bring 12 lifeguards to the national competition in Texas, with \$10,000 raised toward the goal of \$15,000. More donations are expected. Mayor Pierce said she is proud of the group and feels sure the Town can bridge the gap if the fundraising effort falls short. Council Member Shuttleworth said it was a problem the last time the Town offered to use public dollars for this type of expense. Mayor Pierce said they will figure it out. Chief Griffin asked for help in sharing the fundraising effort on

social media. He said they will make it happen. Council Member Garza praised Chief Griffin and his staff for their achievements. Council Member Barbee said this must be a great recruiting tool and credited these types of opportunities with the high quality of lifeguards the Town is getting. He said Council supports Ocean Rescue and thanked the group.

3. Finance Director's Update

Finance Director Debbie Hall gave an update:

Wilmington Beach Street Reassessment

- Approved May 13, 2014
- Total assessment \$2.2 million
- 505 properties
- 7 equal annual installments at 6 percent interest
- 11 delinquent accounts with a balance of \$46,880
- Working with Ms. Fox to determine collection options

Revenues Estimates Through June 30, 2021

- Sales and use tax: Collections are up 21.89 percent over same period in FY 19/20
- Property tax collections: Ad valorem current year collections were 97 percent for the same time period in FY 19/20
- ABC tax, building inspections, parking lots, parking meters, and parking permits revenue sources are all up

Expenses Estimates Through June 30, 2021

- General fund expenses: estimated fund balance 24 percent
- Council Member Shuttleworth questioned why the FY 19/20 and FY 20/21 expense total numbers were significantly lower than the budgeted expenses figures. Mayor Pierce said she was expecting the fund balance to be a lot higher when she saw the sales tax projections. Mr. Oakley said revenue was higher than expected while projects were cut. Ms. Hall said she was highlighting higher revenue numbers, but some came in well under budget, including Freeman Park figures. Mayor Pierce said if there are revenue sources that are down, then Council needs to know about them in addition to those that are up. She asked for the report to be updated. Mr. Oakley said staff would prepare a report and send it to Council before the next meeting, where it would be presented.

4. Onboarding New Council Members

Council Member Garza recently suggested a new onboarding process be implemented for incoming Council Members. He said there are better ways to prepare them for success and cited the first 60 days as being particularly difficult for new Council Members.

Council Member Shuttleworth said he appreciates Council Member Garza's idea but thinks those running for Council should have a foundation of knowledge that comes from doing their homework.

Council Member Garza said he would like to see a two-day workshop implemented right after the swearing in of new Council Members.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he agrees it is the responsibility of new Council Members to meet with department heads and come to Council meetings and workshops before taking office.

Mayor Pierce said she understood what Council Member Shuttleworth and Mayor Pro Tem Healy were saying but that she also appreciates Council Member Garza's efforts because there are things staff can do to help new Council Members.

Council Member Garza said it is important to help each other and mentioned new Council Members may not know they should be reaching out to County and State officials as part of their duties.

Council Member Shuttleworth said Council Members should always be developing those relationships by checking in with County and State officials on a regular basis, even when there is not a specific request.

Council Member Garza said incoming Council Members do not know who to contact, and there is not a proper structure in place to ensure these interactions. He said he and Mayor Pro Tem Healy sat down with Mr. Oakley, Ms. Ward, and Mr. Parvin for two hours to discuss ideas for an onboarding process. He said other Council Members must not have read the summary of these ideas or their thought process would be different.

Council Member Barbee said it was incorrect for Council Member Garza to assume that those who disagree with him were not participating in the process. Council Member Barbee said he read everything and agrees with a lot of it.

Mayor Pierce said she was confused about what Council is doing with this agenda item.

Mr. Oakley said staff will put together a proposed orientation program for new Council Members and present it to the current Council for review and input.

Council Member Shuttleworth said Council Member Garza's assumptions about others not reading the summary are not accurate. Council Member Shuttleworth said his thoughts are that he's not sure how much time should be spent educating those who don't take the initiative to become informed.

Council Member Garza said new Council Members should be expected to do their homework, but things can be done to help them improve.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Council Member Garza

- More should be done to save trees. In addition to the resolution Council recently passed to oppose House Bill 496, which seeks to keep counties and cities from adopting ordinances regulating the removal of trees from private property without the express authorization of the

General Assembly, Council should pass a resolution in favor of Senate Bill 436, which seeks to authorize counties and cities to adopt ordinances providing standards for the preservation or replacement of trees.

- Council should discuss House Bill 781, which offers the possibility for open containers of alcohol within downtown districts. Council Member Shuttleworth said he would not support this because it could be problematic and go against the goal of creating of a family-oriented community atmosphere. He said residents have also voiced opposition to this. Council Member Garza said with the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and people becoming more cautious again, this could help with social distancing. Council Member Barbee said he has talked to residents who support and oppose this measure. He said the issue will require significant discussion before he is willing to take a position for or against. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said other places have done this successfully, but his main concern is that it could strain the Police Department. He said he would like public input before making a decision.
- The Town should be proactive in planning for the COVID-19 variant, and staff should think about a game plan. The operation of Town committees needs to be considered.
- Residents should be reminded to plan, prepare, and execute for hurricane season and also changing their smoke detectors.
- The next 30 days will be packed with events, so it's important to let residents know to expect more traffic and lots of visitors.
- The Town should establish a table at the Saturday morning market at the lake.

Council Member Barbee

- Allocation and placement of handicap parking should be discussed during the off-season.
- Is there an update on beach pickup of leftover items? Mr. Oakley said the Police Department tags abandoned items at night, and in the morning Public Works picks up the tagged items and disposes of them; if there is no tag, the assumption is that the item was put out early in the morning. Mr. Oakley said he is trying to ensure this process is still being followed, and there have been fewer complaints about the issue this year versus last year.
- Boardwalk bathroom facilities are inadequate for the volume of people in the area. Many have complained. The Town should increase cleanings during peak periods, such as on Thursday evenings before the music and fireworks. Council Member Shuttleworth said CAMA will not allow the Town to rebuild the current bathrooms, so the Town had previously looked at putting bathrooms across the street on the FEMA lot but had abandoned that idea. He said additional bathroom facilities are needed in the core business district. Mayor Pierce said it may be time to revisit the FEMA lot. Mr. Oakley said staff can bring a proposal to Council. Mayor Pierce said staff should see if bathrooms on the FEMA lot are feasible and possibly add all the Town bathroom projects together.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy

- The new beach access at Sand Dollar Lane via the Beautification Committee and Public Works Director Brian Stanberry is awesome.
- The new bridges and swing at the lake are amazing and represent solid construction.
- At some point, the Town will need to have a serious conversation about parking because private lots will be lost next year and it will be an issue.

Council Member Shuttleworth

None

Mayor Pierce

Where is the Town with getting a loan to consolidate all three bathroom projects? Mr. Oakley said the Town got a loan for the Hamlet project and is working on putting the Mike Chappell Park bathroom project into the loan; the lake project was originally in one of the earmarks that didn't get approved, so the Town is going to have to make a plan for that one and roll it into the loan. Mayor Pierce said the goal is to have one lump sum to do all three projects at the same time and use room occupancy tax (ROT) funds to make the payment each year. Mr. Oakley said Hamlet bids should be in today.

ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Motion to adjourn

Motion made by Mayor Pierce

Voting Yea: Mayor Pierce, Mayor Pro Tem Healy, Council Member Barbee, Council Member Garza, Council Member Shuttleworth

Motion passed unanimously