CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Retreat
Tuesday, January 25, 2024 — 8:30 am
Fort Fisher Recreation Center Fort Fisher, NC

MEETING MINUTES

Council Members Present:

Mayor Lynn Barbee   Mayor Pro Tem Deb LeCompte
Council Member Jay Healy   Council Member Joe Benson
Council Member Mike Hoffer

Staff Members Present:

Bruce Oakley, Town Manager   Sheila Nicholson, Executive Assistant
Ed Parvin, Deputy Director   Jeremy Hardison, Planning Director
Eric Jelinski, Parks and Rec Director   Mark Meyer, Public Utilities Director
Brian Stanberry, Public Works Director   Alan Griffin, Fire Chief
Kim Ward, Town Clerk   Noel Fox, Town Attorney

UNC School of Government Facilitator Rebecca Jackson led the discussion, "Defining Strategic Priorities". No action was taken during this retreat. Below are some of the highlights of the discussions.

The Council shared key successes over the last 12-18 months. Overall, the strongest recurring themes were:

- Infrastructure plan completed
- Financial successes of the Town- strong fund balance
- Family oriented Town
- Amenities: Lake Dredge, Skate Park, Marina, Playground, Hamlet
- Freeman Park
- Securing grants for significant projects
- Moving project forward including paving Lake Park Boulevard
- Development
- Parking resolution
- Stormwater
- Sidewalks
- Ocean Blvd
- Overall high performance of staff and Council
- Understanding and adhering to protocols for Council/Manager form of government
- Closing out major lawsuits, land purchases

- Establishing and maintaining strategic relationships with outside agencies
- Commercial and retail growth
- Educating and engaging the public- Town Halls and Communications, Open Houses, Social Media
- Public Safety
- Appearance
- Pride and Carolina Beach reputation/stock is rising
- Keys to success are our continuity, communication, empowerment, teamwork, building relationships with key stakeholders.

The Council discussed the habits of high-performing boards in council-manager forms of government and shared how Council could strengthen relationships and build trust within their team.

What makes a strong team?	What special skill do you bring to the team? (GIVE)	What do you receive from this team? (GET)
Trust Honesty Clear direction Strong comms Diversity Individual strengths Desired Outcomes / common goal Forming/storming/norming/performing Emotional Intelligence Leadership Positive attitude Dedication	Big picture Analytical thought Personal research with a focused approach Advocate Ability to approach issues with Logical vs emotional Keeping an open mind Listening to learn Creative – a unique approach Passion Honesty and Courage Listening and helping	Measured approach Sense of team Social interaction Personal growth Pulse from the community Difference of opinions Expertise from others Cooperation Relationships Acceptance Reciprocal respect

The Town Council discussed habits of high performing boards which include:

1. Think and act strategically
2. Understand law and policy
3. Demonstrate teamwork
4. Master small group decision making
5. Honor staff/council partnership
6. Act transparently
7. Use council time in four key areas
8. Adopt clear rules of procedure
9. Review accurate feedback and data on policy and performance
10. Be aware of "shared constituencies"

The Town Council agreed to work to improve small group decision making.

The Council collaborated on the team atmosphere they hoped to create: **Professional, approachable, committed and with pride in accomplishments.**

The behaviors the Town Council committed to were:

• Being ambassadors for the Town • Effective communication • Using the correct processes • Act in unison • Be open with the Board • Be more professional	• Don't go out on your own accord and commit decisions, resources or activities of the Town • Rise above the fray • Don't mislead people when you meet with the public • Avoid the rumor mill/social media/misinformation • Bring back information to all	• Find a way to resolve misinformation • Dress and talk for success • Stick to what the Town approves, even if you opposed • Advocate for Council decision and carry the board message

STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK: The consultant presented best practices in strategic planning and performance measurement and discussed the importance of alignment of planning and implementation.

The benefit and uses of local government strategic plans were presented and include:

1. Provides direction & guidance from the elected officials
2. Transforms ideas into actions
3. Informs the Federal and State Legislative Agendas
4. Aligns core government functions and processes with desired strategies
5. Establishes Performance Management & Evaluation (Benchmarking and reporting)
6. Provides direction to Budgeting/Resource Allocation
7. Is foundational to internal and external communication strategies
8. Aligns citizen satisfaction, prioritization, engagement and education
9. Ensures employee engagement and informs orientation
10. Provides a basis for transparency and accountability.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

Environmental scanning is an analysis of the current state of Carolina Beach and the ongoing trends in the internal and external environment that impacts success, currently and in the future. This allows us to identify opportunities and key strategic issues in the community and organization. The results are extremely useful in shaping goals and strategies.

Trends- Internal: Organizational changes, employee climate, budget	• Hard to find, recruit and maintain staffing levels • New generation has different culture. Looking for impact and looking for more money and not necessarily long-term stability • Senior management retiring • Provide professional development and training programs • Plan for changing and perhaps younger workforce. • Technology- changing rapidly

Trends- External: Community, stakeholders, infrastructure needs, climate/ environmental pressures	• COVID service implications are long term for quality of life and culture • Housing boom • Construction costs • Climate changes • Baby boomers "glory days" • Remote work increasing • Cost of Living increasing • Social media increasing and ever present (truth vs fake) • Funding for police and fire • Technology- changing rapidly
Political Factors: Local, State and Federal policy	• Changes in policy makers (federal and State) • Polarized politics • Federal / State funding for directed projects • Residents not interested in civic leadership – Who are our next leaders?
Economic Climate: What's the financial picture locally, regionally, globally?	• Covid was a massive boom for the Town financially • Baby boomer transition impacting property availability • Uptick in retail and commercial • Cost of living increases for all • Wilmington grows, we grow • 2nd homes and retirees growing • National economic downturn somewhat insulated at Carolina Beach • Short Term Rentals • It's not just summer
Customer Needs: Changing Demographics? Changing requirements?	• They want Health, Safety and Welfare • Infrastructure • Increased expectations of citizens overall • They want potholes fixed! • Some want the past back • Population demographics change • Erosion of social fabric • People expect high quality amenities in Carolina Beach • Carolina Beach higher standards • Take pride in traditional community values • Connect with residents and leverage partnerships • Provide more information for citizens • Increase transparency and accountability
Technology Factors	• Reliance on electronic processing • Teleworking trend (Zooming) • IT security issues / security threats
Uncertainties	• The next big storm • Demographics • Climate change • Sea level rise

Key Issues	• Infrastructure to support growth
	• Continue building and maintaining exciting amenities for residents
	• Improve intergovernmental relations (OTB engagements)
	• Maintain existing facilities
	• Strategically plan and design communities with aesthetics in mind
	• Focus on public safety – maintain adequate resources as we grow
	• Centennial project- Next year engagements
	• Provide heath safety and welfare

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

Carolina Beach desires to develop a strategic plan that will serve as a foundation for growth. The plan will communicate a long-term vision for Carolina Beach as well as guide policy and management decisions with a focus on results.

VISION: The Town Council took a step back in time to consider the history of Carolina Beach. Important events and dates of cultural, political, and economical significance were discussed to understand Carolina Beach more fully and to develop a vision for the future. The Council collaborated on themes for a 5-year vision statement for Carolina Beach. After group discussion on individual Councilmember visions for the future as expressed during a "postcards exercise", the Council came to a consensus on which themes had the highest prioritization. The following vision themes were developed by the Council. The first six themes were the Town Council's highest priority.

- Family friendly community
- Promote Conservation: Stay green and clean
- Connectivity
- Sustainable beaches
- Modernization and preservation of infrastructure
- Amenities for healthy family lifestyle
- Welcoming
- Premier place/ great place
- Hometown feeling
- Vibrant economy/ sustained economic activity
- Multimodal
- Unique community
- Be a safe community

MSISION: A mission statement defines an organization's purpose and role in achieving the community vision. The Town Council collaborated on themes for Carolina Beach's mission statement. The following mission themes were developed by the Council with the first three bullets being prioritized.

- We are stewards of Carolina Beach
- Retain our town vibe while allowing for planned growth
- Bridge between constituents, Town staff and external partners

- We are public servants for the residents of Carolina Beach, voters and stakeholders
- Set policy and direction and execute
- Translate public input into policy and legislation
- We serve to improve our community
- We have passion for our community
- Improve resident and visitor experience
- Leave the Town better than we found it
- Provide high quality of life
- High quality customer service
- Strong leadership
- Commitment to partnership and collaboration (working together with external organizations)
- Smart growth

CORE VALUES: The Town Council discussed the importance of defining core values for the organization. A Core Value statement describes *how* the organization expects staff to fulfill the mission and defines standards of behavior. The Council collaborated on themes for Carolina Beach's core value statement. The following core value themes were developed by the Council.

- Creativity
- Transparency
- Empowerment
- Inclusion
- Respect of others
- Sustainability
- Dedication – Lead by example
- Integrity – We mean what we say, and we say what we mean

At 3:30 p.m. Council recessed the meeting until Friday, January 26, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.