



Minutes
Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Town Council – Work Session
Town Boardroom - 125 West Fort Macon Road
and Electronically via Zoom
Tuesday, June 9, 2020 at 2:00pm



A regularly scheduled work session of the Atlantic Beach Town Council was held Tuesday, June 9, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Meeting Room, 125 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina and electronically via Zoom.

Members Present: Mayor A. B. Cooper, III; Mayor Pro Tem Richard Johnson; Councilmembers: Harry Archer (via Zoom), MJ Forrest, Danny Navey and Austin Waters

Members Absent: None

Others Present: David Walker, Town Manager; Katrina Tyer, Town Clerk; Morgan Gilbert, Parks and Rec Director; Sabrina Simpson, Admin Services Director; Michelle Shreve, Planning Director; Marc Schulze, Public Works Director; Mike Simpson, Fire Chief; Jeff Harvey, Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. The Clerk called roll, everyone was present in the boardroom, except Councilman Archer, who was present via Zoom.

Councilman Navey made a motion *to amend the agenda* by adding a discussion on Police Department staffing as Item 4. Seconded by Councilman Waters. Approved unanimously by roll call vote, 5-0. Motion carried.

UPDATED PERSONNEL RESOLUTION

Becky Veazey, NCLM/MAPS Group, was present to review the significant changes made to the proposed Personnel Policy. The majority of the changes were made to comply with State and Federal law changes. Policies toward discrimination and bullying were added or amended. FMLA rules were also updated. There was discussion on social media use by town staff. Town Manager David Walker stated that approval of the proposed Personnel Policy will be requested at the July 27, 2020 Council meeting.

POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING

It was explained that in the current budget, the Chief has been instructed to hold off on filling a vacant position. In the proposed budget, that same position is funded, but the funds are proposed to be held in a salaries reserve line. Councilman Navey asked Chief Harvey how he was currently staffing shortages due to injury or schooling. Chief stated that before the position was frozen, causing a temporary reorganization of the department, he would use the Captain and Investigator, but now he does not have that access. As part of the reorganization, he has put the Captain back on the road and the Major assumed a majority of the Captain's administrative duties. Currently the department utilizes a part time officer dedicated to monitoring paid parking enforcement, which is working out pretty well as it eases the burden on full time staff. Chief asked for direction on filling the vacant officer position to allow the Captain to resume his previous duties.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson calculates a full time officer cost \$100,000 annually. Councilman Forrest thinks that going from eighteen (18) officers to fifteen (15) makes it is hard to maintain a 24-hour operation. Mayor Pro Tem Johnson compared our numbers to Emerald Isle. Chief Harvey explained that numbers are hard to compare across the island due to various factors such as residency, population, impacts of tourism, and the vast difference in coverage area.

Councilman Archer commented that this has been a topic before Council in the past. He supports bringing back three officers on a shift. Mayor Cooper and Mayor Pro Tem Johnson agree a decision should not be made regarding the position until the FY2020-21 Budget is approved.

FY20-21 BUDGET

Mr. Walker reviewed the proposed budget highlights with Council. Mayor Cooper explained the beach nourishment tax that was implemented last year. Since the tax was implemented, we received beach nourishment funding from the Federal government. The questions for Council, is do we want to continue dedicating 1.5 cent of the property taxes toward the beach nourishment and dredging fund or plan to allocate the money to a different fund. Mayor Pro Tem Johnson does not like that we are considering moving this money for something else when we told the public it was for beach nourishment. Mayor Cooper explained things have changed since the 2018 Town Survey and the Town's dedicating 1.5 cent of the property tax rate toward beach nourishment and dredging, such as the federal funding of the recent beach nourishment project.

Councilman Navey made a motion *to enter* public hearing on the proposed FY2020-21 Annual Operating Budget. Seconded by Councilman Forrest. Vote was unanimous, 5-0. Motion carried. This is a procedural motion so it was not voted on via roll call.

Eddie Briley, 225 Moonlight Drive. He is here today to talk about the Police Department and there are three on Council now that he knows can hear this conversation. In 2006, the Council was elected and tasked with revamping the size and policies of the Police Dept. They did their research, even himself riding along with the officers on patrol. After a year of trying to cut the department from nineteen (19) officers and twenty-five (25) part time, doing the same research Rich has done, it was determined that a shift should be three officers, each consisting of two officers and a supervisor. The Police Department is always a department to beat on. If you cut the Police Department down, then you are not doing him a justice with sixteen (16) officers. He said Rich can't manage Chief Harvey's job.

Mr. Briley also stated that he was on the board when the stormwater fee program was set up. He appreciates his road being clear and that is thanks to the stormwater fund.

Patricia Moss, 1717 East Fort Macon Road. She is here today representing the Asbury Road neighborhood regarding dredging. She appreciates the previous dredging into their canal and reviewed the process they have been through trying to get dredging done this year between issues with contractors and broken equipment. The dredging never got done and she, with her neighbors, are requesting funding for their area dredging to be added to the upcoming budget.

Councilman Navey acknowledged her comments as a Dredging Committee member and apologized for the project not happening.

George Foss, 1717 East Fort Macon Road. He concurred with how much they need help with dredging in their neighborhood, stating they have had to get out and push their boat to the dock due to the sand and shoaling.

Councilman Waters made a motion *to close* public hearing on the proposed FY20-21 Annual Operating Budget. Seconded by Councilman Navey. Vote was unanimous, 5-0. Motion carried. This is a procedural motion so it was not voted on via roll call.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson said the way he sees it, the way the budget is proposed, if we don't move money from the General Fund, we have a \$300,000 shortfall. If we have a \$300,000 shortfall, how do we fix it? Do we raise taxes? He doesn't understand why the numbers are not left in the fund they belong in. He wants it presented with the numbers honestly disclosed. If there is a shortfall, show it and explain the money will be pulled from the General Fund.

Mayor discussed the stormwater fund reserve balance. Mayor wants to address the current beach nourishment fund and wants council to set a policy. We do need to keep adding to the fund to build it up, but not at the rate we initially thought, thanks to FEMA from Hurricane Florence.

Mayor Cooper and Mr Walker will work together to get the numbers for what it will take to secure the beach nourishment and dredging fund.

Mayor Cooper stated we have to decide what the right number is for Atlantic Beach to retain in the General Fund reserves; what do we want our unrestricted balance to be? We need to consider that if there is another hurricane, what we need our balance to be. Since Hurricane Florence, we have lost a lot of tax revenue and have not increased taxes. Harry believes the \$2mil proposed would be acceptable.

YEAR-END BUDGET STATUS & FUND BALANCE REVIEW

Mr Walker reviewed our budget to actual status for the current budget year, noting there continues to be activity for the next several months that will impact the June 30 balances. He also discussed the estimated reserve balances for each of the funds as we close out this budget year.

Harry would like to show appreciation for allowing him to attend the meeting via Zoom.

Mayor expressed sympathy to former Mayor, Joe Stroud, on his son's passing earlier this week.

ADJOURN

There being no further action taken or business before Council the meeting stood adjourned. The time was 3:39pm.

These minutes were approved at the September 28, 2020 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council.

ATTEST:




Sabrina Simpson – Deputy Town Clerk

TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH


A. B. Cooper, III - Mayor

Minutes prepared by Katrina Tyer, Town Clerk.