



MINUTES
Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Town Council Special Meeting – Planning Retreat
DoubleTree Hilton - Atlantic Beach, NC
2717 West Fort Macon Road
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 8:30am



The regularly scheduled meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council was held Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 8:30a.m. at the DoubleTree Hilton, 2717 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

Members Present: Mayor A. B. Cooper, III; Mayor Pro Tem Austin Waters; Councilmembers: Renea Baker, Joey Dean, Danny Navey, Joseph Starling

Members Absent: None

Others Present: David Walker, Town Manager; Katrina Tyer, Town Clerk; Mike Shutak, Carteret News Times

Council met at 8:30am for coffee and a light breakfast.

Call to Order

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order at 8:41am.

Town Strategic Plan

Mayor Cooper reviewed the five key focus areas of the Strategic Plan established by the prior Council: Great Government; Smart Growth/Redevelopment; Recreation and Entertainment; Placemaking; and Environmental Stewardship and Resiliency. Some area we still need to work on are leveraging technology, such as a new website for easier citizen communication, work with other towns in preparation for I-42, strengthen ordinances regarding town appearance and property maintenance, and solicit public comment in another survey.

Boardwalk Renewal

Replacement of boards and repair must be done to the current boardwalk as soon as possible. On November 23, 2021 a Competition Brief was released seeking boardwalk designs. The jury has reviewed the submissions and finalists have been announced. The finalist will present their design on April 7, the public will be able to view the presentations and then submit public comment via Survey Monkey until April 22. We hope to announce a winner on May 9 and begin construction on November 1.

We are working on grants for land acquisition and construction. Fred Bunn currently owns Lots 9A and 9B, one lot each to the east and west of the festival area the town currently has an Easement for. With some of this extra land, the Town can square up the festival area. Council discussed the proposed designs and how they relate to parking, nostalgia, boardwalk homeowner privacy, etc.

Break 9:47am

Return 9:53am

Commercial Corridor District (COR) & Causeway

The lots on the Causeway range from 104ft to 130ft in depth, most are 120ft deep. Due to the 100 foot septic setback from SA waters rules, most commercial property owners cannot install septic. The town has to make the decision to allow more residential buildings in the Commercial Corridor District (COR) or work with private companies for a wastewater option. There is potential with the connection to the Sugarloaf treatment facility, if the Utilities Commission will approve. We are also seeking funding from NCDOT for implementation of the winning plan.

The firms today have been asked to develop a mix of requirements and incentives for establishing such uses; define community character and design; consider economic development and support local businesses; develop a system for timing and location; and draft text of a new zoning or overlay district. They are not transportation planners or ROW experts. The firm selected will hold community meetings for input and design ideas.

Break 10:57am

Return 11:00am

Small Area Plan Presentations

Benchmark (11:00 AM)

They really focus on public engagement and have a lot of projects with NCDOT. They discussed how they would seek public input and ensured they intended to keep the Town's desire of residential/commercial use.

Steward (11:30 AM)

They are currently working with the Town of Beaufort on a sea level rise project. They incorporate market knowledge and growth in their plan. They have previous CAMA experience and are preferred by NCLM. They just completed a utility allocation contract for the City of Dunn. They provided information on how to engage citizens and distinguish between business owners and visitors.

Yard & Company (12:00 PM)

They work hard to draw developers and builders to implement the plan so it does not sit on a shelf. They have worked with Virginia Beach, Palm Beach and Norfolk. They look at what is in the way in our current code and progress. They feel design focus is sixteen feet back and sixteen feet up. Buildings should interact with the community.

Lunch Break 12:33pm

Resume 1:37pm

Funding for the Causeway Corridor Plan is the biggest issue, its best to approach this in parts. Suggestions were to have businesses pay in to a sidewalk fund to construct a sidewalk project; seek funds from the cleanwater trust fund, etc.

Plans for a soundside fishing pier at the bridge abutment has been an idea for a while. Council is ready to pursue this, perhaps by accepting a donation from Big Rock Take a Kid Fishing funds.

Planning Board and Board of Adjustment Roles

Council discussed setting new Planning Board term expiration to expire in June like the Board of Adjustment so a new Council is not tasked with appointments as soon as they are seated. Discussion again on the option of a Planning Board member being a non-resident, but property owner. Also for the Planning Board to review Special Use Permits, rather than the Board of Adjustment.

Upgrades to Town Technology

Cloud-based services need to be upgraded, one benefit to this would be eliminating having to physically move servers off of the island during a hurricane. Council agreed to consider this in the upcoming budget. The town needs to implement GIS mapping in all departments it would be beneficial such as planning, water, fire. Our current website is outdated and needs to be upgraded to allow for more public interaction. Cameras at the Boardwalk and at the bridge was discussed again for safety and crime prevention.

Shellfish Leasing and Floating Structures

Shellfish leasing is becoming more prominent around our sound, Council needs to determine if they want to approach Marine Fisheries to request more areas in Atlantic Beach to be prohibitive to shellfish farming. Farmers are building floating structures over their farms, some structures are as large as tiny homes. One option is to join with Pine Knoll Shores and offer suggestions for more suitable farming areas. The plan is to assign a few Councilmembers to work with Marine Fisheries for a solution before the Moratorium expires.

UDO and Property Maintenance Updates

Discussion about amending the cottage district setbacks from five feet to seven feet, or if the structure is a certain height apply a larger setback to help maintain the cottage feel. The consensus was to add this question to an upcoming public survey. The Town's property maintenance ordinance is out of date, consensus was to have planning staff obtain quotes from consultants regarding rewriting the ordinance.

Break 3:04pm

Resume 3:13pm

Lightening Round

Enforcement of Right of Way Encroachments

Items in the Town's ROWs are increasing. We think mainly due to lack of parking and the overflow falling down the cottage district streets people have placed large boulders, installed rope fences and landscaping along the roadsides. The Town needs to decide if they want to enforce no ROW items or continue to be lax about it. It was the consensus to write a letter to property owners with items encroaching in the Town's ROW and just reminding them they are on the Town's property and the Town can begin enforcement at any time.

Beach Driving Regulations

Ideas discussed were to reduce the driving season, reduce the area allowed to drive (such as not west of the Circle), and limit driving privileges to those with a fishing license. It was the consensus to leave the policy as it is and to work on enforcement of violations rather than eliminate the privilege.

Golf Cart Parking

Golf cart parking at beach accesses has been a public request since we began allowing golf cart usage. It was the consensus to add parking to a couple access to see how they would be used, Club Colony areas was suggested. Spots will be clearly labeled golf cart parking only and they must remain out of the street.

Mobile Vending Regulations

Due to recent requests, Council must decide again to allow food trucks and push cart vending. It was the consensus not to allow either. Pursuant to state law changes, some cities are allowing open container drinking in certain development areas. It was discussed allowing this in areas such as the Circle and Crows Nest Shopping Center. Mayor Cooper will this discuss with property owner Fred Bunn and relay back to Council.

Branding Improvements

Mayor Cooper proposed placing signage (like the current blue logo street signs) in the Town's canals to identify each canal. Council agreed this was a great idea.

We will also work on designing performance shirts, fishing shirts, t-shirts, hats etc. with the Town's logo for sale at the new town hall.

Covered Docks and Boat Lifts

Covered docks and boat lifts can be a visual deterrent and a danger in a hurricane so it was the consistency to continue not allowing them.

Beach Fire Rings

Council discussed this topic again and will consider placing a few out next Fall to see if and how they are used.

Speed Limit on East Fort Macon Road

It was the consensus to pursue changing the speed limit on East Fort Macon Road from the Causeway intersection to Fort Macon State Park to 35mph year-round. This will make all of Fort Macon Road in Town 35 mph year-round.

Council Procedures & Communications

After discussion there were not any changes to current procedures. Everyone still feels the weekly report from the manager works well. Professional dress attire remains the same.

Closed Session Pursuant NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss personnel matters

Due to time constraints, the closed session is continued until March.

ADJOURN

There being no further action taken or business before Council the meeting stood adjourned. The time was 4:00pm.

These minutes were approved at the April 25, 2022 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council.

TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH

ATTEST:

(seal)


Katrina Tyer - Town Clerk




A. B. Cooper, III - Mayor