



**Minutes**  
**Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina**  
**Town Council and Planning Board Joint Meeting**  
**125 West Fort Macon Road**  
**Tuesday, June 6, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**



The special joint meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council and Atlantic Beach Planning Board was held Tuesday, June 6, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom and in the Town Boardroom, 125 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

**Councilmembers Present:** Mayor Cooper, Mayor Pro Tem Austin Waters; Councilmembers: Renea Baker, Fred Joey Dean, Danny Navey, Joseph Starling

**Planning Board Members Present:** Vice Chair Curt Winbourne, David Johnson, Phil Jones, Llewellyn Ramsey, Sharron Wilson

**Members Absent:** Planning Board Chairman Neil Chamblee, Planning Board member Phillp Hursey

**Others Present:** John O'Daniel, Town Manager; Jennifer Ansell, Planning Director; Elisabeth Webster, Planner; Katrina Tyer, Clerk; Yard & Co (via Zoom)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilmember Baker made a motion *to approve* the agenda as prepared. Seconded by Councilmember Navey. Vote was unanimous, 5-0. Motion carried.

**MOTION TO EXCUSE ABSENT MEMBERS**

Johnson made a motion *to excuse* Chairman Neil Chamblee and Phil Hursey. Seconded by Wilson. Vote was unanimous, 5-0. Motion carried.

**ZTA-23-2 - CAUSEWAY SMALL AREA PLAN/COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR (COR) TEXT AMENDMENTS**

Mayor Cooper reminded the boards, the Town engaged with Yard & Company in June 2022 to develop a small area plan for the Causeway/Commercial Corridor (COR) zoning district. The main purpose of the proposed amendments is to ensure that the area remains commercial and mixed-use and does not turn into primarily residential. The Commercial Corridor includes all of the Causeway, the north side of East Fort Macon Road just past East Bogue Sound Drive, and the north and south sides of West Fort Macon Road to Cedar Lane.

Ed Sharrer with Yard & Company, via Zoom, reviewed their development process. He stated their task was to guide growth by anticipating the future and respecting the past, support local businesses, and create a walkable district that is sensitive to its neighbors and connected to the water. Public input was solicited in August 2022 by conducting mobile charrettes at various locations, public meetings at town hall, and a presentation on their findings to the public at Crystal Coast Brewing Company. An online survey was also conducted with 620 responses. Most of the responses received were that people want more shopping, restaurants, bars, and more trees and landscaping, but do not want to see the area overdeveloped. They want the area more walkable, bikeable, and golf cart accessible. They want a memorable greeting to Atlantic Beach. Based on the public input, Yard & Company prepared a set of ordinance amendments for review. The area of the current COR zone has not changed, but subdistricts have been created.

Kevin Wright from Yard & Company was very pleased with the public responses from this small town.

Ramsey asked for an update on the waste treatment project with Redbird. Mayor Cooper explained Redbird wants to replace the current Sugarloaf plant with a new one and they are still in the engineering process and trying to obtain permits. Completion of the project could take two years. The Town does not have funding for parking and placing underground lighting, we have asked for funding from the state and applied for grants.

Mayor Cooper explained the corridor is proposed to be separated into 4 overlay zones: COR 1 is proposed as the quiet residential zone with more activity and commercial requirements increasing to COR 4, which includes the main intersection.

Councilmember Navey asked about the proposed height restrictions for COR 1 at three stories and COR 4 at five stories, with the occupied floor height restriction at sixteen feet. He feels a height restriction should be set. People want to come across the bridge and see the ocean. Jennifer stated the theory from committee discussions is that the market and the ordinance dictating a maximum story limit would take care of building too high. Mayor Cooper explained this theory is a new way of doing things because people are maximizing the height restriction and installing flat roofs, which takes away character. The goal is to not cap the Causeway skyline at 55 feet with flat roofs.

Ramsey asked if we could regulate the design of the roof, so we do not have flat roofs the whole way down the Causeway.

Councilmember Starling says it is hard to dictate story limits in this area due to flood zones and unoccupied spaces. People can argue if the raised unoccupied space is a story. He thinks it would be better to be generous with the stories and restrict the height.

Mayor Cooper reminded the proposed height limits are different in each zone. Also, we only have a certain amount of wastewater capacity, if the first few buildings max out their height limits it could take all of the capacity.

Winbourne agrees the concept makes sense, it would prevent everyone from maximizing their height and flat roofs.

Councilmember Baker understands the visual concept, but she is still concerned about the amount of parking and people in the busiest areas.

Councilmember Starling thinks the requirement for retail needs to be defined, it could include small offices or other commercial spaces. And determine if we want the commercial requirement in all COR zones.

Jennifer feels the idea of the committees was to encourage shared parking and other modes of transportation. The current draft proposes a minimum of one parking spot per bedroom. There was a lot of discussion on parking and it was noted that requiring too much parking could leave the area vacant the majority of the time.

This draft requires water access points or a visual connection. Currently, we can drive down the Causeway and see the water. In certain places along the Causeway, the visual aspect will be maintained allowing for cut throughs to view and access the water.

There was discussion on outside sales and the display of merchandise. Currently, the ordinance reads that all business needs to be contained inside the business space, and sidewalk sales require a certain permit. Should we control what happens outside of the business? Councilmember Baker suggests we allow a percentage of outside business based on building space. Councilmember Starling suggested they apply for a regulation permit and staff determine what is allowed based on business type. We want to encourage active storefronts and outdoor seating.

Jennifer stated the committee felt vinyl and stucco fences should not be allowed on the front of buildings. Council was asked to decide what kind of materials they would like to see in the area as they drive by. It may be best to provide a list of preferred materials.

The vision is for sidewalks to be next to the businesses for buzzing and storefronts, not next to the main highway. In the proposed draft, a minimum sidewalk width was not included in COR 2. Yard does not see an issue with including a minimum width and copying the requirements from COR 1. It was the consensus for the sidewalk to be six feet wide.

Ed Sharrer with Yard explained their height restriction decision again. If you choose a maximum height restriction you end up with tall buildings all the same height with flat roofs. In regulating the ground floor height at 16 feet and limiting it to five stories you get a variety of buildings. He thinks the market is going to dictate the height limit and no one will build a 30-story penthouse. Kevin thinks this allows the builders to create different, not boring buildings.

Councilmember Dean does not want to see mechanical units and other items on the roofs as you cross the bridge, requiring pitched roofs would prevent this.

Councilmember Navey wants to make sure accessory structures are discussed and regulated in this amendment. Elisabeth stated staff will look into it and possibly allow this section to refer to the Accessory Units section.

Councilmember Starling supports not allowing chain-link and vinyl fences but thinks other requirements should be entered for height and material size.

### **Public Hearing**

Winbourne entered into public hearing at 7:35pm.

Richard Lee, 205 Moonlight Drive. He thinks the Town should be careful with height restrictions. He feels restrictions should be 50 ft or 5 floors, but that leads to questions about the roof design and ground floor as parking. He agrees with fence height and construction material limits. The Town also needs a good landscape ordinance that is enforceable. He wants to see the Causeway cleaned up. Chasin Tails needs large parking to accommodate trucks with boats. Walking safety and sidewalks are a big issue. He is excited about this and thinks this is going in the right direction. He really wants to see more control over landscaping.

Winbourne closed the public hearing at 7:46pm.

### **MAYOR/COUNCIL/PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS**

It was the consensus to send the amendments and questions discussed tonight to Yard & Co. for the Planning Board to review at their July 11 meeting. The boards need to further discuss building height and parking in more detail.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned. The time was 7:52 p.m.

These minutes were approved at the August 28, 2023 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council.

TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH

ATTEST:

(seal)  
  
Katrina Tyer-Town Clerk

  
A. B. Cooper, III - Mayor

