



MINUTES
Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Town Council Worksession
125 W Fort Macon Road Emergency Operations Center
Monday, February 12, 2024 – 8:00am



The regularly scheduled meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council was held Monday, February 12, 2024, at 8:00am in the Emergency Operations Center, 125 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

Members Present: Mayor Danny Navey; Mayor Pro Tem Austin Waters; Councilmembers: Harry Archer, Renea Baker, Joey Dean, Joseph Starling

Members Absent: None

Others Present: John O'Daniel, Town Manager; Katrina Tyer, Town Clerk; Sabrina Simpson, Admin Services Director; Marc Schulze, Public Works Director; Jennifer Ansell, Planner; Sarah Currie, Finance Director; Dave Clifton, Police Chief; Mike Simpson, Fire Chief

Prior to the meeting Mayor Navey administered the oath to Police Chief Dave Clifton.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Navey called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Starling made a motion *to amend* the agenda to add Special Topics discussion before closing comments.

Councilmember Baker made a motion *to approve* the agenda as amended. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Waters. Vote was unanimous, 5-0. Motion carried.

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT HEAD UPDATE

POLICE

Chief Clifton is asking for a new position for Community Policing/Patrol Administration. He is also asking to increase part-time pay since it has not been increased in years and is not comparable to other towns. He explained what drives the headcount and the structure to determine this new position request. Councilmember Starling would like to see if the new position would have time for code enforcement if the ordinance were rewritten.

FIRE

Chief Simpson reviewed the requirement for radio frequency testing and explained he is not asking for money now but can wait and see what the County does since they just stated their plan to upgrade. His department is in very good shape, with full-time and part-time positions filled. He is asking for an administrative position to focus as an EMS coordinator, assist in managing continuing education, apply for grants, and perform other time-consuming clerical duties. They are the only department in the county that runs three on a shift instead of four. Instead of asking for manpower to run a four-person shift year-round, he is asking for one staff member year-round to work the shift and assist with the administrative duties.

PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS

Jennifer reviewed some pending projects before the planning department.

- Peppertree has submitted a Major Site Plan Phase II expansion plan, which has been reviewed and recommended to Council for approval.
- FMB Circle Master Plan annual update will be reviewed at Council's February meeting.
- Boardwalk Redevelopment: we do not have time this year to make the changes needed to increase our scoring for the PARTF Grant.

Mayor Pro Tem Waters wants to see emphasis put back on the boardwalk, whether it is through grants or working with the architect. Staff needs to come to Council to get what they need. He is not proud of the boardwalk and he wants to be. Councilmember Archer agrees.

- CAMA Public Access Grant Applications for Greenville Ave. and Beaufort Ave. Accesses. The pre-application is due April 15. We are waiting for Lee Dixon to design the accesses and provide cost estimates. We will then apply for grants to extend the walkaways over the dunes or renovate them.
- West Fort Macon Road Northern Sidewalk from Palm Suites to Dollar General. We were awarded a grant as part of the carbon reduction program but are awaiting a local agreement/award letter from NCDOT. Staff needs direction on an asphalt walkway or a sidewalk.

Councilmember Starling feels there is pressure on Council to hurry up and make decisions in fear of losing grant money and feels grant opportunities should be discussed with Council to see if they want to pursue them instead of establishing projects and then forcing Council to try and find the money. Councilmember Baker wants staff to take advantage of grant writing training.

- 2024 Community Rating System (CRS) 5-year Verification Visit is expected this summer; they are conducted every five years. If the Town does not establish a freeboard, we will lose the current CRS rating, and insurance rates will increase.

It was the consensus of Council to discuss freeboard at their next work session and proceed with approval.

Councilmember Baker would like for Council to be more informed about new projects and new businesses that are in discussions with staff. Council would like to be copied on the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment agendas and copied on the Technical Review Committee reports.

Councilmember Starling stepped out 9:43am and returned at 9:46am

Council requested that the effective date of the recently passed UDO Ordinance related to the Causeway Corridor be changed from July 1 to the present. Staff stated they would look into timelines and report to Council if there was enough time for advertising.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Marc reviewed ongoing projects for his department.

- Stormwater improvements: Asbury/Henderson, Cooper Ave Ext., and Davis Blvd. projects are complete.
- Paving: repairs were made to Mobile Drive, New Bern Ave., West Bogue Sound Drive, Moonlight Ave, Ocean Blvd, West Terminal Blvd, Center St, and South Kinston Ave for \$26,000. Withers Ravenel has completed fieldwork for a townwide pavement condition survey and will deliver a report within a few weeks. The cost was \$17,500.
- Regulatory signage is constant maintenance. Staff just recently replaced over 70 regulatory signs. Each employee is assigned a section to monitor and keep up with replacements.
- Main bathhouse: recently completed required safety maintenance on the handrails and decking boards.
- Dredging: In the last project, we dredged 2,500 cy at \$17,000. We plan to schedule another dredging committee meeting soon and apply for another grant.
- Moonlight Boat ramp: Staff recently installed a privacy fence, posts, rope fence, wheel stops, bulkhead repairs, and gravel, which cost \$4,000.
- Center Street and Shore Drive: Staff graded and removed enough soil from the driveway to maintain positive drainage to the north. At this time, we will leave the flower garden planted by the neighbor. Staff will add bollards and rope to ensure this lot is not used for public parking.
- New Bern retaining wall: Materials have been ordered, and the contractor will start at the end of February.
- Water tank Maintenance: routine painting of Tower 1 and 2 is complete.
- Well 4 Generator Installed: we reused the old town hall generator and added an automatic transfer switch. This replaces the portable trailer-mounted generator.
- Well 6: rebuilt pump motor due to failure
- Chlorine Analyzer: Staff self-installed it in the high-service pump room, running the new 4/20 output wire to assist in monitoring water quality.
- High Service Pump Electrical Panels: Transformers and fault detectors in each pane were replaced due to malfunction.
- Main intersection. All road work must be completed by the NCDOT contractor by March 22. They have until the end of April to install permanent markings, lights, and signage.
- Hwy 58 Crosswalk west of Palm Suites: NCDOT has the concrete poured and waiting on signage and crossing lights.

FINANCE - BUDGET UPDATE

John and Sarah provided an overview of the current revenues, expenditures, and fund balances.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Councilmember Baker would like a count on the KMT banners used on the Causeway so they can plan to order more if needed.

Mayor Pro Tem Waters stepped out at 10:46am and returned at 10:49am.

Council would like to see sun shirts ordered with the blue dot since the Columbia shirts are not selling that well; maybe order some in short sleeves.

We are working on obtaining assessments to update the splash pad, pricing a new merry-go-round since the other one was removed due to rust, and installing a gaga ball play area. We are also working on obtaining quotes to re-carpet some of the mini golf holes.

Councilmember Archer stepped out at 10:53am and returned at 10:56am.

NCSU NLI PLAYGROUND PRESENTATION (via Zoom)

Robin Moore, Brandon Dupree, and Mary Archer presented their design for the natural play area. Highlights included:

- walking, strolling, and chasing trails that include seating.
- an active play area includes a pirate ship. They can recommend a vendor for the pirate ship.
- dedicated three-year-old and under-play area to include a small boat to be built by a local carpenter and seating for adults.
- maritime play forest in the northern right corner
- small gazebo
- leave the live oak trees because they add play opportunities.
- covered gathering area near the splash pad and the basketball court. Both can be rented out.
- use vegetative fencing to keep people on the pathways.
- the retention pond is a beautiful environmental area, so add plantings.
- add more shade areas and pergolas. Recommend working with NC Cooperative Extension to fund plantings.
- create mounds throughout the site with pathways.
- The Crystal Skipper Butterfly are only found within a 30-mile radius of our area, so we have the potential to plant their host plants.

Council discussed relocating the basketball court to allow more shade and enlarging the play area for more play equipment. Councilmember Archer likes what they have presented; it resembles the heavily used trails at the Aquarium. Councilmember Baker wants to ensure they are incorporating ADA requirements. Councilmember Dean wants dog-friendly and dog rules to be determined, if dogs are allowed on the trails.

They designed the plan to have concrete and mulch trails, but they can be any material the Town decides. They recommend doing the strolling trail and play equipment in phase one.

It was the consensus of Council that they did not like the idea of moving the basketball court to the back of the park. Staff is to obtain quotes for a merry-go-round and installation costs. Staff will also follow-up on fence quotes for the fence repair along Fort Macon Road. Staff will continue to seek grant opportunities, looking into grants for walking trails with exercise focus and the Big Rock and Jarrett Bay grants.

Break for lunch 12:03pm.

Resume 12:28pm.

PARKING PROGRAM UPDATE AND PARKING PERMIT DISCUSSION

All golf carts and LSVs will be paid parking. It was the consensus to provide property owners with two free passes and change the annual parking pass fee from \$100 to \$200. Hours will be from 9:00am-6:00pm.

Council discussed charging higher rates for star spaces closer to the beach or a max all-day \$25 rate but decided to begin the program as is this year and look at extra items next year.

FIRE TRUCK FINANCING

Staff reminded Council we have a loan for \$1,094,356.35 at 3.35% interest for the fire truck. Loan proceeds in the First Bank money market account are \$1,200,461.69, with an interest rate of .03%. Money can be moved to NCCMT with a current interest rate of 5.38%. NCCMT is very liquid, but rates can fluctuate quickly at any time. Option A: Put loan proceeds into GF fund balance. This would increase the fund balance from 31.1% to 42.79%. Continue to make annual Debt payments of \$112,560.44 for 13 years. Option B: Pay off the loan. Re-allocate the annual payments to start a capital reserve fund. Reminding Council, on January 24, 2022, Council passed a resolution setting a policy for the Town to strive to maintain an unassigned fund balance of approximately 35% of expenditures.

It was the consensus to move the money to the higher interest rate account and continue to make payments using Option A. Mayor Navey instructed staff to come up with a plan to allocate the interest gained and present it at a work session.

BOARDWALK PROJECT

Council briefly discussed the boardwalk project design and funding. Marc will prepare an estimate for remodeling the bathhouse at the Circle. John will reach out to Fred Bunn regarding connecting the bathhouse to his wastewater facility. John will also advise the architects and engineers the project is on hold until further notice and to discontinue work to prevent future billing.

It was the consensus of Council to conduct a special meeting on Thursday, March 7 at 9:00 am in the EOC to further discuss the Boardwalk project and possibly approve design concepts.

WATER PLANT

The existing water treatment facility is in good condition considering its age and harsh salt-air environment. Much of the equipment is at or well beyond its useful life and should be replaced on a systematic basis that is priority-driven. We recommend developing a comprehensive Capital Improvements Plan. Capital Reserve is established within the budget each year to fund the items that need replacement. Staff is requesting to begin working on a Request for Qualifications to find an engineering firm for the project. There was discussion on rate increases, possible grants, and loan options for a possible expenditure in 2025.

Staff was directed to inquire how Emerald Isle just funded their new RO system. It was the consensus to begin work on the Request for Qualifications.

COUNCIL PLANNING RETREAT ITEMS

John updated Council on some items from last year's retreat.

- EOC and Boardroom Soundproofing: Marc is working on obtaining some quotes to mask some of the echoing.
- Website: we have obtained a quote from Civic Plus but would like to discuss updates at a later time.
- Citizen Survey: a survey has not been conducted in many years and he wants direction if they would like one issued and what topics they would like to discuss.
- Townwide white benches along Hwy 58: the benches around town are in bad shape, most beyond repair. We are working on a plan to still honor those who purchased the benches even if we are unable to replace them.
- Code Enforcement: still working with the planning department on updating the ordinance.
- Beautification Committee: does not feel this is necessary or would work with the way our ordinance is written.
- Shellfish moratorium: this was extended until 2026, we need to continue to work with our elected officials.
- Canal Name Signage: on hold due to logistics.
- ROW Encroachments: staff is working on identifying street ends, alleys, encroachments, and other areas around town to ensure they align with the Town's Powell Bill map.

SPECIAL TOPICS

It appears there have been some issues in the past where engineers and other specialty services have been hired without quotes and purchase orders before their beginning work. We just need to make sure management is in charge of all projects. We also need to obtain a copy of the Cullipher invoice to understand what is owed to date on the boardwalk project.

Councilmember Starling proposed that each Councilmember be more involved early on, assigning each Councilmember to a specific department as a champion/liaison. They would be assigned as follows: Starling, Fire; Archer, Police; Baker, Parks and Rec/Town Admin; Waters, Planning; Dean, Public Works/Water; and Mayor Navey, Events.

CLOSING COMMENTS

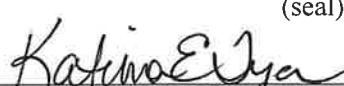
None

ADJOURN

There being no further action taken or business before Council the meeting stood adjourned. The time was 3:51pm.

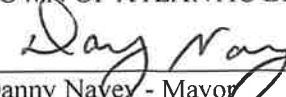
These minutes were approved at the April 22, 2024 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council.

ATTEST:

(seal)

Katrina Tyer - Town Clerk



TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH


Danny Navey - Mayor