

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Projects and Watershed Resilience Department



MEETING DATE:	October 27, 2026
PROJECT:	Discussion of a Short-term Resilience Recommendations
PROJECT MANAGER:	Beth Lewis, Watershed Resilience Manager Andrea Moreno, Watershed Division Manager

REQUEST: Staff requests Town Council’s guidance on several proposed resilience opportunities. These recommendations resulted from work related to:

1. Developing a Resilience Ordinance for the Town’s consideration; and
2. A completed SC Sea Grant Consortium Resilience Planning Analysis (“Resilience Analysis”).

BACKGROUND: In January of 2025, Town Council approved a Master Service Agreement (MSA) task authorization with McCormick Taylor, Inc. and Center for Watershed Protection (“Consultants”). The Consultants were tasked with developing a Town Wetland Ordinance and a Resilience Ordinance to protect health, safety, and welfare of our citizens and natural resources.

Table 1. McCormick Taylor & Center for Watershed Protection Tasks.

CONSULTANTS’ TASKS – WETLAND PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE ORDINANCES		STATUS
1	Review current Town policies.	Completed
2	Identify and inventory wetlands within the Town’s jurisdiction.	Completed
3	Develop a map of wetlands to be protected.	Completed
4	Develop a Wetland Ordinance for the Town.	Completed – 2 nd Reading 8/2026
5	Apply comprehensive drainage study results to identify and map resiliency zones.	Completed
6	Identify primary stormwater drainage channel systems.	Completed
7	Develop a Resilience Ordinance for the Town.	In progress – following Council’s direction

In 2024, the Town engaged SC Sea Grant Consortium to conduct a Resilience Planning Analysis (“Resilience Analysis”) independent of the Consultants’ work. SC Sea Grant’s Resilience Analysis Final Report (completed June 2025) included the key findings below.

Table 2. SC Sea Grant Consortium Resilience Analysis Recommendations.

SC SEA GRANT CONSORTIUM RESILIENCE ANALYSIS OF THREATS & POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSIDER	
1	<u>Flood Vulnerability is Increasing</u> : Areas currently experiencing minor flooding are projected to face more severe events in the future. Parcels presently outside of flood-prone zones may also become vulnerable.
2	<u>Future Development</u> : New construction and land use changes increase the risk of flooding.
3	<u>Protecting Wetlands</u> : Preserving wetlands and requiring buffers significantly reduces flood risk.
4	<u>Land Elevation-Based Zoning</u> : Areas at lower elevations face higher flood risks, while those at higher elevations are less susceptible.
5	<u>Significance of Community Engagement</u> : Community input was instrumental in shaping the Resilience Analysis and emphasized the necessity for stronger flood mitigation policies.

RESILIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCUSSION: The following is a list of resilience recommendations that resulted from the Consultants’ scope of work and the Resilience Analysis. Detailed recommendations from the Consultants and the Resilience Analysis can be found in **Attachment #1** and **Attachment #2**, respectively. Staff is requesting Council’s guidance to prioritize which, if any, resilience recommendations Staff should explore further. Future Workshops with Council will occur as needed as these recommendations are further developed in a phased approach.

Phase 1 (proposed completion FY27):

1. Strengthen Wetlands Protection (Completed):

- Implement comprehensive wetland protections to steer new development away from ecologically sensitive wetlands and ensure long-term preservation.

2. Expand Land Acquisition and Partnerships:

- Collaborate with land trusts and conservation organizations to acquire and protect critical wetlands and floodplain areas. Conservation priority areas have been identified.
- Update the Town’s Land Acquisition Manual to expand the acquisition criteria to include identified conservation priority areas.

3. Update Flood Management Policies and Strategies:

- Strengthen the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to include compensatory storage requirements and expand on requirements that help prevent downstream flooding.
- Join the Community Rating System (CRS) to allow residents to receive discounted flood insurance premiums.
- Expand the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Hazard Area to include the 500-year floodplain to help protect life and property in areas facing increased flood risk due to future projections.

4. Implement Cove Buffer Ordinance:

- Adopt a buffer ordinance applicable to the coves of the May River to protect water quality, stabilize cove banks, and enhance flood control.
- Apply different buffer widths based physical characteristics of coves.

Phase 2 (anticipated, FY28):

1. Implement Resilience Zone Overlay District:

- Restrict development in flood-prone, low-lying areas by integrating land elevation criteria into local zoning regulations.
- Apply the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and an enhanced resilience-focused stormwater plan review to development in this overlay district.

2. Offer Financial Incentives for Resilient Development:

- Enhance programs like Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and considering additional financial incentives to encourage resilient construction and land use.

CONSIDERATIONS & NEXT STEPS: Below is a list of recommended items for Town Council's consideration, should you choose to proceed.

1. Update the Town's Land Acquisition Manual
2. Update Floodplain Management Regulations
3. Implement Cove Buffer Ordinance

If Council agrees, staff will move forward with these resilience recommendations per the tentative timelines, below.

Resilience Recommendation	Next Steps	Tentative Date
Update the Town's Land Acquisition Manual	Resolution	December 2026
Update Flood Management Regulations	Workshop	December 2026
Implement Cove Buffer Ordinance	Workshop	April 2026

ATTACHMENTS:

1. McCormick Taylor Memos
2. SC Sea Grant Resilience Analysis