

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Budget Workshop

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 – 9:00 AM

Carolina Beach Fire Station 9 South Dow Road Carolina Beach, NC



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pierce called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

PRESENT

Mayor LeAnn Pierce

Mayor Pro Tem Jay Healy (Zoom)

Council Member Lynn Barbee

Council Member Council Member Garza Garza (Zoom)

Council Member Steve Shuttleworth

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

All Town Department Heads

At the request of Town Council, the Town Attorney was available and attended periodically through Zoom.

Council met at the Carolina Beach Fire Station at 9:00 a.m.

The fire department staff provided breakfast for all attendees.

Ken Richards with the Division of Coastal Management introduced District Planner Mike Christenbury.

Mr. Christenbury discussed potential rule amendments on how to measure oceanfront setbacks. Specifically, discussing rule amendments with Development Line, Static Line Exception Rule and Grandfathering.

The next CRC meeting is February 18, 2021.

Council asked Jeremy Hardison to continue monitoring these recommendations and respond accordingly.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked Mr. Hardison to send the list of CRC members to Council.

Chief Griffin requested a budget amendment in the amount of \$8,500 for a temporary lifeguard substation for the 2021 season. There will still be port-o-johns and conex boxes on the Hamlet lot. The temporary showers built by the Operations Department will remain on site as well.

Council Member Shuttleworth made a motion to approve \$8,500 for the budget transfer from the general fund to the ocean rescue fund. Staff will request a Room Occupancy Tax reimbursement. Motion passed unanimously.

Bruce Oakley opened the budget discussion and explained how the format of the meeting would go.

Mr. Oakley said the Town fared well financially, despite the pandemic. The ABC tax doubled from last year.

Ed Parvin led the budget discussion.

Global for Life (solid waste) is increasing their rates by 3.8% next year. This is in the current contract. The Town has 3 more years in this contract.

Council asked staff to investigate whether GFL is recycling the materials that are in the recycle bins or if it is being combined with the regular solid waste at the landfill. If it is not being recycled, Council would like to consider eliminating recycling.

Council Member Barbee would like to see the Town separate the water bill from the solid waste bill because residents get confused and think the total bill is all water expense.

Council Member Garza would like to have a meeting with GFL and have them explain the recycling program.

Mr. Parvin mentioned having other vendors sell Freeman Park passes. Businesses have offered to sell them just to get the foot traffic in their establishment with no cost to the Town.

Council Member Barbee would like to do away with the decals. He would like everything to be electronic. He suggested comparing Freeman Park to the south end to make sure we are offering amenities that justify the higher price.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked if staff had reached out to local contractors for the lake dredge project. Mr. Oakley said the advertisement is out and on the website.

Council Member Garza asked if staff was staying in contact with MOTSU.

Mr. Oakley said Mike McIntyre speaks with them on a weekly basis.

Mr. Parvin mentioned that Jerry Haire is retiring January 31st and staff wants to fill the position with a project manager.

Mayor Pierce feels staff is trying to create a new position with too many roles. All Council Members agreed and wanted the position to have a specialty.

Council Member Barbee would like to have this position focus on grant writing and if another person is needed for the other duties listed, hire someone specifically for those roles.

Mayor Pierce said she would like to see resolution on paving streets. She stated that is the number 1 topic the public wants to focus on.

Council Member Barbee asked to be educated on what is an acceptable standard for street maintenance. He feels that the criteria for the problem is not being heightened. Residents building \$700,000 homes, expect the streets to be maintained. He feels the same for other maintenance items such as the bridges at the lake. He wants the Town to be more proactive instead of reactive.

MPT Healy said that people are paying more for property on the Island and expect more.

Council Member Barbee asked if they were going to discuss COLA and merit.

Mr. Oakley said that topic will come up later in the budget season.

Mayor Pierce asked about the time clocks and if the department heads could review and make corrections in the system.

Mr. Oakley explained the timecard process and that department heads will have the ability to review and make corrections.

Mayor Pierce mentioned that she visited a beach that had one white trash can at each street side beach access and that eliminated the need for a can machine.

Council Member Garza suggested adding street end can pick up to the GFL contract.

Mr. Stanberry said that he has explored that, and it was very expensive because they would have to be out there 7 days a week.

Council Member Shuttleworth said that many communities do not have trash cans on the beach at all.

Council Member Garza said that it's all about educating the public. It may take a year or two, but he feels that it would eventually work out for the best to remove the cans.

Council Member Shuttleworth suggested only putting cans out in a four-block area around the boardwalk. That would save wear and tear on the can machine.

MPT Healy said that a beach he visited did not have any trash cans and the beach was pristine.

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Jelinski presented the capital requests from his department. Some of the projects being requested must be approved by MOTSU.

Council was supportive of adding restrooms to Mike Chappell Park.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked if staff would get the vendor that quoted the park restroom project to provide a quote for the boardwalk restrooms. Mr. Oakley said they are looking into that.

Council Member Barbee mentioned that he is pushing a playground as the Town centennial project. He suggested that Mr. Jelinski meet with Maureen Lewis about a location and design if they move forward with that project.

Council Member Garza suggested looking into ROT funds for park projects.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked about summer activities at the Rec Center. Mr. Jelinski said they are planning to have them, but they are unsure if it will happen. The money from the current budget year is still in the budget because they were unable to have the activities due to COVID.

Council Member Shuttleworth wants to give the Manager the discretion on how to reappropriate those funds.

Council Member Garza mentioned that there are no parks south of the Lake. He suggested looking for an area to put one.

Mr. Parvin moved on to present other capital projects.

Council agreed they would like to take the Clarendon Avenue project off the list.

Council Member Garza expressed interest in supporting the HVAC unit in Town Hall. He mentioned that it has been put off for several years. He reminded Council that the Town Hall building was paid for by FEMA funding and the Town should maintain it.

Council Member Barbee said that he supported bike/ped projects. He stated that these projects are a community interest as well.

Chief Griffin said that the replacement of Engine 21 is critical. It has been put off for two years and will cause the debt service to stack up if it is not budgeted soon. He said there is a 12-16-month turnaround from the time a truck is ordered to delivery. This truck will replace the Hummer and the F-350 dually.

Council Member Barbee said that he wants to even out the big expenditures, so they do not all come at once.

Mr. Parvin reviewed the parking budget.

Three of the Council Members were in favor of having parking enforcement year-round.

Council discussed the option of eliminating paid private parking. There was no consensus on that issue.

Council agreed not to raise daily parking rates or non-resident parking decals.

Council was interested in allowing other vendors to sell Freeman Park passes.

Council agreed not to raise Freeman Park fees.

Mayor Pierce asked Reef Parking to separate Freeman Park expenses from parking expenses.

Bryant from Reef Parking said they send that report out every month.

Council Member Shuttleworth requested Mrs. Hall to create a simple spreadsheet for Council to see the true cost.

Council Member Barbee asked if the Town could get rid of decals and go to a license plate recognition option.

Bryant replied that the technology is out there, but it is expensive.

Mr. Parvin moved to discuss the harbor and marina budget.

Council discussed a post made by resident Maureen Lewis that the Town is losing \$1.8 million at the marina. Staff and Council agreed that statement was false and should not have been made by a committee member.

Mr. Parvin proposed that marina slip rentals be \$11 per foot with a minimum of a \$440.00. Council was in favor.

Council was in favor of increasing mooring balls and increasing the cost to \$25 per night.

Council was in favor of creating more transient slips but not reduce the number of contract slips.

Mr. Parvin reported that with GFL increasing their rates by 3.8%, the Town can choose to pass along the cost or have no change. Council agreed to mirror the increase and pass it along to the customer.

Council Member Garza was concerned that Council was making a lot of increases that affect the residents.

Mr. Parvin conducted a Poll Everywhere questionnaire with Council Members during the meeting. The following information was received from that survey:

Council was interested in putting a picnic area/photo area on the property where the shell building was located at 3 Carolina Beach Avenue South.

Council Member Garza asked if the Town could allow open container consumption at the boardwalk.

Chief Ward said he would have to research State law. (NCGS 18-B300)

Council was interested in exploring a Municipal Service District.

Council was interested in doing fund raising and completing phase 1 of the Ryder Lewis Park Project.

Council was in favor of fundraising for the Lake Park Playground Project. Council Member Shuttleworth wanted to make sure the lake dredge was complete before starting that project.

Council was in favor of planting native plants around the lake.

Council supported replacing the current restroom at Mike Chappell Park.

Council discussed the issue of homes that are occupied by many unrelated individuals. MPT Healy would like to get the Town attorney involved in this matter.

Council was generally interested in changing the storm water rate from \$15.50 to \$16.50 but Council Member Barbee said that he would like to have further discussion on storm water rates.

Mr. Parvin mentioned that the water/sewer connection fees have not increased since 2013.

Mr. Parvin moved into the discussion of committees.

The efficiency study reported that the Town had too many committees. Their recommendation was to reduce the number of committees and consolidate the ones that overlap.

Council Member Shuttleworth said that he wanted to hear from the committees on what their mission is and the projects they have coming up.

Council asked staff to review the committees and bring back recommendations on where they can consolidate and what committees could possibly change to volunteer groups.

Mr. Parvin asked Council to list out some of their goals for FY21/22. The following items were mentioned:

Mayor Pierce mentioned that a tax increase would need to be discussed at some point. Council will need to decide if they want to stay revenue neutral or propose an increase with the re-evaluation numbers coming out this year.

Council Member Barbee said that if you communicate the issues with the residents, they are more likely to understand and support the need for a tax increase.

Council Member Shuttleworth said that he supports a tax for open space, but it would have to educate the public on the purpose of it.

Council Member Shuttleworth asked about tax breaks for the elderly and those on fixed incomes. Mr. Oakley mentioned the Homestead Act but reminded Council that the Town cannot by law reduce water and sewer rates.

Council discussed some of the undeveloped areas of town and what could possibly move onto those properties.

Council Member Barbee said that he is concerned about Carolina Beach losing its character.

Council Member Healy said that he is in favor of exploring an open space tax.

Mayor Pierce made a motion to adjourn at 5:15 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.