

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, July 26, 2022 - 9:00 AM

Council Chambers, 1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach, NC



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

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

PRESENT

Mayor Lynn Barbee

Mayor Pro Tem Jay Healy

Council Member Mike Hoffer

Council Member Deb LeCompte

ABSENT

Council Member Joe Benson

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Employee Recognition

Public Works Director Brian Stanberry recognized Stormwater Equipment Operator II Tim Mattingly for 20 years of service with the Town.

2. Parking Update by Pivot Parking

Scott Diggs and Tina Reid of Pivot Parking gave an update on the second quarter of the 2022 parking season.

Freeman Park Daily Revenue/Transactions (YTD Total November-June; does not include annual passes)

- Paystation total \$258,149
- Paystation transactions 5,127
- Freeman Park reached capacity once on Saturday, May 21
- Highest gross day of sales was Sunday, May 29, with \$21,692 and 1,366 transactions
- Technical issues were limited to three and corrected on site immediately

Freeman Park YTD Camping Figures (camping starts Labor Day and ends the Thursday before Memorial Day; reservations required)

- Revenue \$67,095.33
- Reservations 1,029

Re-entry Decals

- Revenue \$10,520
- Registered 6,138
- Re-entry decals were available for free in February and March, and during this time 5,612 of the total above were registered

Residential Transaction Totals (YTD February-June)

- Residential registrations \$229,370
- Business registrations \$23,480
- Golf cart permits \$35,360
- Low-speed vehicle (LSV) registrations \$22,300
- Non-residential LSV registrations \$6,200
- Weekly pass \$1,900

Transient Revenue Q1/Q2 Comparison (Text2Park, paystations, and meters)

- Total Q1 (only March) \$128,345.90
- Total Q1 transactions 8,147
- Total Q2 \$916,195.59
- Total Q2 transactions 100,053

Memorial Day Weekend (Saturday, May 28, to Monday, May 30)

- Total revenue \$138,258.25

Citation Analysis Q2

- Total issued 234
- Total warnings 186
- Bootable scofflaws 4
- Total appealed 384
- Total paid \$116,620 (or 1,061)
- Total escalated 90

Overall 2021-2022 Comparison

- 2021 April-June \$1,343,413.23
- 2020 April-June \$1,518,399.59

Parking Program Gross Revenue (November 2021- June 2022)

- Total \$2,341,494.49

Q2 Operational Expenses

- Total actual expenses \$147,221.89
- Total budgeted expenses \$159,973.69
- Some of the reduction is due to the labor shortage/difficulty finding full staff
- Expenses are inclusive of operating, wages, repair and maintenance, insurance, and administrative; expenses not included are Town-paid expenses and incentive management fee

Occupancy Counts Update (June 10-June 20)

- Total spaces 865
- 10:30 AM 25%
- 1:00 PM 47%
- 4:00 PM 41%
- Palms, Tennessee, and Alabama Beach are top parking lots

Ms. Reid also reviewed operational updates during Q2 as well as 2022 customer service improvements.

Potential Parking Updates 2023

- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Meter conversion to Text2Park only
- Paint/maintenance/new curb stops
- More permanent 30-minute free signage
- More handicap spaces (current count 4)
- Freeman Park equipment
- Signal boosters (portable cell towers/cell on wheels)
- Permeable parking lot pavers

2022 Q2 Highlights

- Total parking transactions 100,053
- Total Freeman Park transactions 4,496
- Total camping reservations 457
- Total overall revenue had a favorable variance over 2021 actuals
- Average length of stay for June transactions was 3 hours and 15 minutes
- Prime parking lots are averaging 90%+ occupancy midday during June; all others are averaging 35%-87%
- Ambassadors and service staff received multiple customer compliments

Mayor Barbee said a professionally done presentation helps Council make decisions, and this was a key objective when changing parking companies.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he thinks the Town needs to do a better job of getting the word out about weekly passes. He also said he'd love to transition away from meters to Text2Park.

Mayor Barbee said meters seem to be on the way out in most municipalities. Ms. Reid said many places are converting to paystations that cover 10 to 15 spaces instead of meters at every space. She also said the COVID-19 pandemic sped up the popularity of contactless options.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said signage is better than it has ever been, but there is still confusion out there, especially with private lots. He suggested looking into color coding.

Council Member LeCompte said getting rid of meters frees up walking space on the sidewalk.

Council Member Hoffer said meters seem like a maintenance nightmare, especially in a coastal environment.

Mayor Barbee said some people would like to see half-hour increments on Text2Park instead of the current minimum of one-hour increments. Ms. Reid said Pivot will have to look into this. She said the parking program has been amended so people can set up their Text2Park sessions before 8:00 AM to start charging at 8:00 AM, which is helpful for boat captains and patrons who are going out early in the morning.

Council Member Hoffer said he is worried about technically unsavvy folks who aren't comfortable with using Text2Park. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said it's time to learn. Ms. Reid said people can call the parking office and employees can do the transaction for them if necessary.

Council Member LeCompte said Text2Park offers the option for a weekly pass.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he met with boat captains who said people in the lots near the boats were getting tickets for cars not being exactly in front of the stop, etc. He said he would like to see better customer service by offering some flexibility if cars are parked a little over a line, etc. Mayor Barbee said some people are impeding others from using the adjacent space and thus taking up two spaces, so there will always be judgment issues in these types of scenarios.

Mayor Barbee said Pivot has done a fantastic job and when you disregard Facebook comments and talk to actual people, the feeling is that the program is going well. He said he has gotten more compliments than complaints, but there will always be complaints when it comes to parking.

Mayor Barbee recognized Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Wayne Rouse, who is also serving as Chairman of the Parking Committee, and said he and Pivot representatives should get to know each other.

3. Presentation on the Proposed Harper Avenue Project

Mr. Parvin gave a presentation on the proposed Harper Avenue project that includes parking and a multi-use path.

By the numbers

- Length: 1 mile
- Right-of-way: 90-100 feet
- 35 mph
- Sidewalks one-third of corridor

- Undesignated collector
- 1,522 vehicles per day

Mr. Parvin reviewed the process, which included community input from 21 participants (residents, business owners, and Council representatives). He went over specific feedback, which included ideas for a vision statement, parking, stormwater management, green elements, and bike/pedestrian considerations.

Mr. Parvin said this project originated in 2018, when the Town was looking for ways to finance it. He said after Hurricane Florence hit in fall 2018 and the Town switched Town Managers, there was a desire to build back some reserves before moving forward with this project, so things were put on hold.

Council Member LeCompte said the first few blocks of Harper Avenue are mostly short-term rentals, so you would be hard-pressed to find any permanent residents in that area. She said the Town will need to be proactive in finding parking spots to replace parking lots that are eventually going to disappear due to development, so temporarily looking at using this area for parking may be worth considering.

Council Member Hoffer said he thinks the dividing line should be at 3rd Street and not 4th Street because most homes west of 3rd Street are permanent residents. Council Member LeCompte said short-term rentals are migrating westward and the Central Business District is moving further back due lack of adequate parking.

Council Member Hoffer said he thinks the Town should protect from 3rd Street going west. He said sometimes the Town gets too caught up in an entire project rather than doing short-term improvements on a smaller scale. Council Member Hoffer said when he goes down Harper Avenue between 4th Street and 7th Street, it's not screaming for a remodel, but it is from North Lake Park Boulevard to 3rd Street. He said he'd also like to see Dow Road to 8th Street be improved for bicyclists. Council Member Hoffer said the Town should not do nothing while waiting to come up with money for the whole project when not all areas need a lot of work. He said there is nothing wrong with incremental improvements.

Mayor Barbee asked Council Members to think about how they would break down the project into a few pieces. He said he is struggling with the historic aspect of the area and wants Harper Avenue to be something the Town is proud of when the project is finished. Mayor Barbee said Harper Avenue has become a sea of cars in the first block, with for-profit entities on both sides of the road blocking parking spaces. He asked how that can be stopped.

Council Member LeCompte said she would be interested to know how much vehicle-per-day traffic has changed since 2018.

4. Stormwater Update

Mr. Stanberry gave an update on some of the top stormwater projects. He focused primarily on Henniker's Ditch due to a recent inquiry from Council Member LeCompte. Annual maintenance and

cutback of Henniker's Ditch from Sumter Avenue to Dow Road, to allow for proper flow of drainage in the Town's primary drainage tributary, is scheduled for winter 2022.

Mayor Barbee asked how much rain Henniker's Ditch can handle before it's full. Mr. Stanberry said to his knowledge a study has not been done, and he thinks the Town needs to work with Kure Beach because it contributes to the ditch.

Council Member LeCompte said she would like to walk the ditch one day in the winter.

Detailed information about all of the Town's stormwater projects is available on the Town's website by clicking the "Projects" button toward the middle of the page and then clicking the blue icons on the map. Mr. Stanberry said this data is updated regularly.

Mr. Stanberry said Council Member Hoffer had recently asked about phragmites at the lake. He said there are some on the southeast corner of the lake and a large amount was found previously near the pump station before dredging the west end. Mr. Stanberry said he is talking to the contractor, Dragonfly Pond Works, about methods for killing and removing the phragmites.

5. Mooring Field Overview

Mr. Parvin gave an overview of the mooring field, which currently has nine mooring balls and has opened up access to the Town for boaters traveling through the area since its inception in 2012. He praised Harbor Master Larry Denning for his work with the mooring field.

Mooring field overview

- Vessel size: 26-55 feet
- Length of stay: maximum of 10 days
- Dinghy docks: Sandpiper Lane and Town marina
- Cost: \$20 and increasing to \$30 on January 1
- Management: full-time Harbor Master, part-time contractor, and Executive Department
- Revenue: \$30,000 last fiscal year
- Maintenance: 4-5 years

The moorings were originally funded by the Town and a boating infrastructure grant through the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries. Last fiscal year the Town had the chains analyzed by a contractor. It was determined that the chain directly connecting to the mooring balls will need to be replaced within the next five years. Due to the difficulties with maintenance on the existing mooring tackle, staff has investigated installing helical anchors to replace and expand the moorings. The helical anchors would replace the massive block-and-chain system currently in place. The helical anchors would allow for access to maintain the tackle without full replacement. There is a large range in anchor cost with many variables to consider. The size of the Helix Mooring anchor depends upon the site location bottom and holding requirements. Compared to other anchors on the basis of delivered holding and effective life, the Helix Mooring anchor is the most cost-effective option.

The grant the Town previously used was just released and is due on August 15. It requires a 25% match by the municipality. Currently the Town does not have this project in the budget. The Town does not have plans, permitting, or cost estimates. If Council is interested, staff could (1) move forward this year if additional resources are dedicated to developing the project ASAP or (2) spend additional time planning and be ready to submit in August 2023.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if boaters can move to another mooring ball after 10 days. Mr. Parvin said State regulations say they can't stay more than 10 days so typically they would have to move on, but if mooring balls are not reserved sometimes boaters can be moved after the 10-day maximum.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he heard the Harbor Master is incurring about 40 hours of overtime every two weeks. Mr. Parvin said yes, Mr. Denning usually puts in about a 60-hour week. Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked about the part-timer. Mr. Parvin said he is a contractor but limited in how many hours he can put in due to also being a boat captain. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said the Town may need to consider adding another full-time position, especially if mooring balls are added because it will be more to manage.

Mayor Barbee said Mr. Denning gets lots of compliments. He said the mooring field has made the Town a destination for the boating community, and he thinks the Town should consider expanding the mooring field if the numbers work.

Council Member LeCompte asked if the proposal is to bring the number of mooring balls to 25. Mr. Parvin said the Town is hoping to get 20-25 mooring balls. Council Member LeCompte said it's important to look at expanding the mooring field because it has made the Town a stopping point for boaters traveling the East Coast. She asked if the transient docks have a maximum number of days. Mr. Parvin said the Town didn't get a grant for that, so he's fairly certain there is no limit.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said the Town might want to consider adding a fuel tank. He said getting fuel is a major concern among local boat captains.

Mayor Barbee asked if the Parking Committee agenda item could be moved ahead so it's next, and no one objected.

6. Appointments to Ad Hoc Parking Committee

Mayor Barbee said when the Parking Committee was created to include the Chairman of each of the already existing Town committees, Council did not anticipate changes in committee leadership that routinely happen during this time of year. He said with the Parking Committee's work well underway, the committee is requesting that membership be frozen and no changes made moving forward.

Council Member LeCompte said continuity is imperative.

Parking Committee Chairman Wayne Rouse said it could be problematic if there are changes to membership, so he is asking that the committee remain the way it is now so work can be completed.

The consensus of Council was to freeze the Parking Committee membership as it currently stands.

Council Member LeCompte said there are only four more meetings of the Parking Committee.

Mayor Barbee said any changes late in the game would make things difficult.

7. Review Code Enforcement Procedures and Policies

During the regular Council meeting on July 12, Mayor Pro Tem Healy requested a review of the Code Enforcement Officer job description. Mr. Hardison presented the details, including policy, process, and procedures.

The job description of the Code Enforcement Officer, also known as the Code Compliance Officer, is as follows: to enforce Town Code and administer the compliance process while also conducting plan review and inspections for compliance with State Building Code. Mr. Hardison said the goal is to ensure compliance with Town Code through education, not generating revenue or punishing violators. He said Town ordinances are enforceable within the corporate limits and extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

When can the Code Compliance Officer start an investigation?

- When alleged or potential situations come to the attention of the Town
- An immediate health and/or safety issue is present
- When the Town receives a signed complaint

Mr. Hardison said people can make complaints thorough the Town's website by clicking "I Want To" on the top left and then "Request Service." He then went over the enforcement process and explained that enforcement is directly related to what is adopted and addressed in Town Code; no action can be taken otherwise.

Types of violations

- Junk vehicles
- Working without permits
- Signs
- Illegal rentals
- Junk/debris
- Building materials
- Tall grass
- Illegal stormwater dumping
- Unlicensed businesses
- Abandoned structures
- Minimum housing

Not violations

- Noise (Police)
- Working after hours (Police)
- Vicious animal (County Animal Control)

- Grilling on deck/open burning (Fire)
- Damage and erosion (Stormwater)
- Unsanitary conditions in restaurants and hotels/motels (County Health)
- Short-term rentals (County Tax)
- TV not working (property manager)

Council Member LeCompte asked if most issues are complaint- or staff-driven. Mr. Hardison said it's a mix of about half and half. Council Member LeCompte asked if complaints can be anonymous. Mr. Hardison said yes, but it's helpful to attach a name for communication purposes and staff accountability.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he learned a lot from the presentation. He said the Code Compliance Officer has a lot on his plate, and he didn't realize how much of the work is driven through written complaints.

Mayor Barbee said the online system for logging complaints is a great way to start an official record and hold staff accountable. Mr. Hardison agreed and said it also starts a time clock for a response. Mayor Barbee encouraged people to use the system for any issues they see.

8. ROT Reimbursement Request

The Town is requesting a room occupancy tax (ROT) reimbursement in the amount of \$288,664.02. The expenses include the following:

- 21/22 debt service payment for Hamlet bathroom/lifeguard facilities: \$75,597.13
- 21/22 donation to Pleasure Island Chamber of Commerce: \$10,000
- 11/1/21-6/30/22 expenses for lifeguards/Ocean Rescue: \$160,534.74
- 11/1/21-6/30/22 expenses for Parks & Recreation (movies, fireworks, bands, etc.): \$42,532.15

Mr. Oakley presented the details.

ACTION: Motion to approve the ROT reimbursement request in the amount of \$288,664.02

Motion made by Mayor Barbee

Voting Yea: Mayor Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem Healy, Council Member Hoffer, Council Member LeCompte

Motion passed 4-0

MANAGER'S UPDATE

Mr. Oakley gave an update on current and future projects.

Ocean Heights Petition

Staff reviewed the complaints from Ocean Heights residents, and Mr. Oakley recently realized no one had responded to them in writing so that is in the works. He gave the following updates on the area:

- Speed limit signs have been ordered, and 11 signs will be going in throughout the development.
- SunFun Rentals has installed an 8-foot fence but is not required to do any landscape buffering unless the business develops the property further.

- The Town typically does not prohibit through-traffic if streets connect to other streets, but the Town may be able to direct some areas where trucks should go through. Town employees have been instructed not to go through there unless absolutely necessary.
- Town employees have been instructed not to start work at the Bridge Barrier Road and Dow Road facilities before 7:00 AM, and while occasional circumstances will require someone to be there earlier, this is limited as much as possible. Staff members have also talked to GFL and asked them to limit their hours for emptying dumpsters.
- SunFun Rentals does have a vehicle in the right-of-way, but there are a lot of vehicles and equipment in the rights-of-way throughout Ocean Heights, so the Town would have to enforce this unilaterally across the neighborhood. SunFun Rentals is trying to find a different location for the trailer.

Council Member Hoffer asked if the Town can prohibit through-traffic in Ocean Heights for heavy commercial traffic such as tractor-trailers. Mr. Oakley said the Town might be able to adopt something like this, but it would be difficult to enforce. Mayor Barbee said a shortcut through Ocean Heights has developed because of the recent growth in that area. Mr. Oakley said he will work with Mr. Hardison to come up with ways to keep commercial traffic out. Mayor Barbee said a turn lane at the State Park will help.

Ocean Boulevard Sidewalk

Council must decide on which side of the street the Ocean Boulevard sidewalk will go. The Town will schedule a drop-in community input session, likely in early August, so the public can share feedback.

Council Member LeCompte said it looks like there are more trees on the south side than the north side.

Paving Projects

The Town got lots of complaints about utility cuts and potholes, and those have been repaired. The bids for paving of Florida Avenue are due tomorrow.

Staff met with the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) about a possible savings of \$300,000 on Carolina Beach Avenue North paving, but if the Town takes this route the DOT won't be able to do the project until next fall, delaying it by a year. Council Member LeCompte said she likes the idea of saving money, but this would be kicking the can down the road continually. Mr. Oakley said it would be great to save money, but if other problems with the street arise during the delay then it could end up costing more money later, so staff's recommendation is to move forward and get this done on the original timeline.

Lake Park Boulevard Paving Project

The Town may want to consider hiring a designer or landscape architect to help outline wishes and desires for what kind of sidewalks, beautification, and other improvements can be done when the DOT paves Lake Park Boulevard in 2025.

Council Member LeCompte suggested setting up a display at the Saturday market at the lake to get the public involved at the planning stages. She said perhaps a professional could help with an overall sketch now, and engineering would come later.

Mayor Barbee said he wants to figure out what the cost of a consultant will be but thinks it's a good idea to help with an overall picture.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if a plan gives the Town the opportunity to apply for more grants. Mr. Oakley said it makes it easier.

Council Member Hoffer said he would like more information about the width of the right-of-way and where utilities are, so he thought this might be a good project for someone in the Planning Department. Mr. Hardison said there are new construction surveys with adjacent properties on Lake Park Boulevard, and staff has reached out to DOT to see what they have on file about U.S. 421. Mayor Barbee said Council does not want to request something that can't be done, so it's best to find out sooner.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member LeCompte asked if beach violations involving dogs, holes, glass bottles, and dunes are actual citations or just warnings. Mr. Oakley said for the year as of July 15, there were 12 citations for digging holes on the beach, 16 for dogs on the beach, and five for bottles on the beach.

Council Member LeCompte asked Council to direct staff to look into a variance with Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) so the public restrooms on the Boardwalk may be remodeled. She said she has talked to Mr. Hardison, and he said this could be done at minimal cost. Council Member LeCompte said the request could be made by November 1 so Council can proceed with budgeting in the next fiscal year. The consensus of Council was to move forward with this.

Mayor Barbee thanked staff for a good information session.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 11:38 AM.