

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, September 27, 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 Joe Benson

Council Member Mike Hoffer

Council Member Deb LeCompte

ALSO PRESENT

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

Town Clerk Kim Ward

Town Attorney Noel Fox

Mayor Barbee said a closed session was added to the most recent version of the agenda at the end.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Employee Recognition

Fire Chief Alan Griffin introduced the following new firefighters: David Shifter, Jackson Hudson, Nick Mullins, and Seth Taylor.

Public Works Director Brian Stanberry recognized Elizabeth Hewlett for 10 years of service with Public Works.

Police Chief Vic Ward recognized Sonny Russell for 10 years of full time service with the Police Department.

2. Presentation by the Bike/Ped Committee Regarding Carolina Beach Avenue South

Ricky Niec, Chairman of the Bike/Ped Committee, presented committee feedback regarding proposed improvements to Carolina Beach Avenue South. He said members looked at the following options that staff previously presented for the 30-foot right-of-way:

- Option 1 – no sidewalks, 11-foot one-way drive, two 5-foot bike lanes, 9-foot parallel parking
- Option 2 – 5-foot sidewalks on both sides, 15-foot one-way drive, 5-foot bike lane

- Option 3 – 5-foot sidewalks, 12-foot one-way drive, 5-foot bike lane, 8-foot parallel parking

He said option 1 was the closest to what the committee had envisioned, but the committee wanted to provide an alternative option consisting of six items:

- 1) Leave existing sidewalks as they are without adding additional sidewalks. (The committee discussed the fact that putting sidewalks directly behind cars backing out from under condos would be dangerous and expensive.)
- 2) Use the existing pavement for a drive aisle and a two-way bike path similar to the Cape Fear Boulevard multi-use path. There would be no parking spaces due to the limited availability of safe parking.
- 3) The bike path would be on the east side of the pavement and a minimum of 8 feet, but 10 feet would be preferred. This width would be based on the actual width of the pavement. The bike path would have a dashed line down the center of the path and be separated from the drive aisle by a double yellow line. At each intersection, there would be a highly visible vertical pipe on the bike path (like Cape Fear Boulevard) with signage to indicate no motor vehicles on the path.
- 4) The drive aisle would have the one-way arrows and use the remaining pavement on the west side.
- 5) The section of Carolina Beach Avenue South that runs east and west near Sand Pebbles condos is much narrower. This section would have a one-way bike path with a minimum of 4 feet designated for bikes to travel east (against the direction of the drive aisle).
- 6) At the south end of Carolina Beach Avenue South before the road turns west, there would be signage to indicate to southbound bike riders that their lane ends and to merge with traffic.

Council Member Hoffer said the committee found some fatal flaws with the options staff proposed. He said although there is a 30-foot right-of-way, it's compromised in a lot of places so it's important for those considering improvements to go on site to view the conditions firsthand.

Several Council Members mentioned paint on pavement as a cost-effective solution. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said if there is something in place to show that cars shouldn't hang off the road, drivers will learn not to do this. Council Member Hoffer said he's optimistic that if people can see the markings, they will adhere to them.

3. Speed Limits on Carolina Beach Avenue North and Carolina Beach Avenue South

Council requested staff assess the speeds on Carolina Beach Avenue North and Carolina Beach Avenue South. After meeting with the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Area Planning Organization (WMPO), Police Department, Fire Department, and other Technical Review Committee (TRC) members, no issues were identified with the current speed limit. The assessment found that changing signs to show lower than 25 mph will have limited to no impact on the current speeds seen on the streets. Striping is being considered for Carolina Beach Avenue South, which should limit drive aisle widths and, in turn, slow down traffic. Additional on-street arrows and lane design will help clarify for the driver that Carolina Beach Avenue South is one-way going south.

Mr. Parvin presented the details.

Mayor Barbee said he would like to wait to see if the proposed traffic-calming measures take care of the problems before resorting to a speed limit change.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said once Carolina Beach Avenue North is paved, the Town can get a true indication of the natural speed that people drive.

Mr. Parvin said the Bike/Ped Committee will take one more look at the issue before it goes back to the TRC.

Council Member LeCompte said Council Members should proceed with caution to make sure they get it right.

4. Clarendon Avenue Multi-Use Path

Council requested the Bike/Ped Committee review the Clarendon Avenue multi-use path project and bring back a recommendation. The committee voted to eliminate the project on Clarendon Avenue.

Mr. Parvin presented the details. He said he reached out to WMPO to see what the Town would need to do if Council doesn't want to move forward with this project, which is set to receive \$545,000 in grant funds from the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT). He said the proposed resolution would put the allocated money back and the project would be removed from future consideration for the funding. Mr. Parvin said the Town has not yet incurred any costs or drawn money for this.

Mayor Barbee asked what flexibility the Town has with the money. Mr. Parvin said the project could be revised into a smaller path or just 5-foot sidewalks and still use the money. Mayor Barbee said this is the first he's heard of this level of flexibility. He suggested that Council may want to look at options one more time.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked how long the money is available. Mr. Parvin said he is not aware of a hard deadline, but the Town should decide one way or another in the near future. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he wants the community to speak about this.

Mayor Barbee said he agrees that Council needs to understand what residents want. He said they may not want a multi-use path but a sidewalk instead.

Council Member Hoffer said he thinks it's time to let this go and be done. He said even if the Town just does a sidewalk, there could be utility, drainage, and logistics issues. Council Member Hoffer said the more he looks at this, the less he sees any value and there are a lot of other places where the Town can use the money with or without a matching grant. He said he's ready to stop this 10-year discussion and move on to bigger and better items.

Mayor Barbee said he doesn't see the harm in making one more pass. He said it's a different question to put out other options for the community to consider, and once Council votes the money is gone forever.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he agrees another look is wise. He said it will be interesting to find out whether the public really cares about this.

Mayor Barbee asked how the Town would move forward with getting public input. Mr. Parvin said the Town could host an open house showing sidewalk options to gauge interest. He said developing pointed questions might help generate better feedback.

Council Member Benson said he wants some specifics about the cost, and there is a lot to be determined.

Mayor Barbee said Council Member Hoffer has good points, but he wants to offer one more round of public discussion to be sure there's not another solution that hasn't yet been considered. He said the consensus of Council is to find some public vehicle to ask questions to the community.

5. Cape Fear Boulevard and Canal Drive One-Way Options

The Town has looked at reconfiguring Cape Fear Boulevard and Canal Drive in the downtown area east of Lake Park Boulevard on several occasions over the past 20 years. In 2010, an assessment was done by the WMPO and staff to recommend a one-way design going east on Cape Fear Boulevard and north on Canal Drive to Harper Avenue. The Town looked at this again in 2014 but opted to leave the traffic pattern the same when replacing the streets and all infrastructure.

Council has asked that staff assess this area again in 2022. TRC reviewed options for:

1. Remaining two-way
2. Remaining two-way on Cape Fear Boulevard and one-way on Canal Drive
3. Completely closing off these streets
4. One-way going east on Cape Fear Boulevard and one-way going north on Canal Drive to Harper Avenue

Staff and WMPO agreed option 4 would allow for the safest and most efficient movement of traffic.

Some possible alternatives could be:

1. Have a committee assess possible options
2. Hold a public workshop
3. Hire a traffic engineer to evaluate the area and engineer the design
4. Postpone discussions until the budget retreat
5. Other

Mr. Parvin presented the details. He said they do not have any cost estimates.

Council Member LeCompte said she has always been in favor of option 4 because the Town must find some safety mechanism to protect pedestrians as they cross Lake Park Boulevard.

Council Member Hoffer said he doesn't love the idea of one-way on Cape Fear Boulevard and asked if the Town can keep it the way it is and have a turnaround at the gazebo. Mr. Parvin said there is not enough right-of-way there to accommodate that. Council Member Hoffer said he feels like there is room for this. He said he loves the one-way concept for Canal Drive, but he's worried that changing all the parking spots on Cape Fear Boulevard will cost a fortune. He said traffic going both ways on that street will keep things moving all year long.

Mr. Parvin said there is nothing budgeted for this project during the current fiscal year, but if Council is interested he can bring this back to the budget retreat with some firmer numbers.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he would like to get input from local businesses about what they want to see.

Council Member LeCompte said she would like to see the feasibility of doing a turnaround circle.

Council Member Benson said he'd like to tie this project in with burying power lines.

Council Member LeCompte said it would be good to have an open house on site so the public can see exactly what is being considered.

6. Primary Response Route

Council received a petition to access stop signs in the Wilmington Beach area. After meeting with traffic engineers and Town public safety departments, it was determined that the first step would be adopting a primary response route. This is the primary route first responders use to get to an emergency in the safest and most efficient manner. Once this is in place, stop signs can be further assessed.

Mr. Parvin presented the details. This item will be on the agenda for Council's October regular meeting.

7. Parking Discussion

Council appointed an ad hoc Parking Committee in June to review several aspects of the parking program and bring back recommendations about the following topics:

- Current parking rules, regulations, rates, and fees
- How to improve communication and guest experience
- Parking zones
- Residential zones
- Handicap parking
- Private lots

The committee completed the review and presented recommendations at the August 23 Council meeting. Staff utilized the TRC and expertise from the Town's parking contractor to put ordinances together consistent with committee recommendations.

The Town will need to renegotiate a contract with Pivot Parking consistent with the current vision and ordinances. To complete this task, staff is requesting Council feedback so final ordinances/policies can be brought to Council for adoption no later than October 11.

Mr. Parvin presented the details.

Parking code: undesignated right-of-way

- Defined “undesignated parking” as unimproved right-of-way. In these shoulder areas, parking is allowed as long as the vehicle is off the drive aisle and not blocking a fire hydrant, crosswalk, intersection, driveway, etc.
- Undesignated right-of-way west of Lake Park Boulevard and 3rd Street from Alabama Avenue to Goldsboro Avenue is treated differently because you can only park in these areas if you have a residential pass.

Council Member Hoffer said he’s glad the Town is looking at this and being forward-thinking. He said the Town may have to get strict about enforcing this, but he doesn’t think it’s time yet.

Council Member LeCompte said there are already remedies on the books for violations such as parking in the drive aisle or next to fire hydrants, but it’s mostly complaint-driven at this time. She said the issue is enforcement.

Council Member Hoffer said the answer to overflow parking could be to let property owners manage what’s in front of their property. He said they could put rocks or bushes in the right-of-way if they don’t want people to park there.

Council Member LeCompte said Council needs to vet all options well because they could have unintended consequences. She said her kids park in front of her house when they visit, but they don’t have passes because they aren’t Town residents. Council Member LeCompte said the Town can put as many rules on the books as it wants, but it’s not enforcing the ordinances it already has.

Mayor Barbee said the Parking Committee was clear that the Town needs to do something in residential areas before it becomes a big problem. He said changing behavior is more difficult than setting behavior.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said parking in residential areas is a problem now.

Parking recommendations

- Handicap: identify and implement additional spaces
- Clearly delineate public lots vs. private lots in the Central Business District (CBD)

Mr. Parvin said wayfinding is a potential solution for delineating lots.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he thinks the Town is wasting its money putting signs out, especially those without an identifiable symbol such as a starfish. He said tourists don’t care if a lot is public or private.

Mr. Parvin said the Town logo is already on every sign in public lots. Mayor Pro Tem Healy said that isn't going to work.

Mayor Barbee said this brings up an interesting question of who the signs should target. He said there is an online parking map that many people don't know exists, so the Town may want to consider printing it out and distributing it.

Mr. Parvin said a marketing brochure is a great idea once any upcoming changes are implemented.

Council Member Hoffer said he agrees with Mayor Pro Tem Healy that the Town logo doesn't quite jump out at people.

Council Member Benson suggested giving the parking map to people when they buy a parking pass.

Council Member LeCompte said the map could also go in short-term rentals.

Pleasure Island parking pass

- Users are included in Carolina Beach and Kure Beach Sewer Authority
- Pleasure Island shares in holding events, such as New Year's Eve
- Passes to all those needing re-entry after bridge closure due to emergency events
- Pleasure Island works together on coastal storm damage reduction

Mayor Barbee said he has had discussions with Kure Beach Mayor Craig Bloszinsky, and there is consensus to at least hold discussions about the possibility of a Pleasure Island parking pass and how it might work. Mayor Barbee and Mayor Pro Tem Healy said they will participate in further discussions with two Kure Beach representatives.

Currently there is two-hour parking west of Lake Park Boulevard on:

- Raleigh Avenue
- Cape Fear Boulevard
- Charlotte Avenue

Mr. Parvin said the proposal is for these areas to have standard parking without a two-hour limit.

Mayor Barbee said these areas are underutilized because there are no businesses back there to warrant frequent turnover of parking spaces.

The next topic was parking tickets. Mr. Parvin said currently, the fine for a parking ticket is \$100, and if not paid this goes up after five days and then again after 10 days. He said the committee asked the Town to look at an incentive for prompt payment.

Parking tickets

- 50% reduced cost if paid within 24 hours
- 25% reduced cost if paid within 48 hours

- \$25 in areas where parking has been paid but one of the designated parking space violations exists and does not cause any loss of access to surrounding public facilities such as parking spaces, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.

Mayor Barbee said NC Parking Co. claims it has a higher collection rate using a discount method instead of a punitive method for parking fines. He said he gets a lot of calls from people who admit they did something wrong but need more time to pay.

Council Member LeCompte said she has always been a fan of incentivizing instead of penalizing.

Mayor Barbee asked if the fines would still increase as they do now after five and 10 days. Mr. Parvin said yes. Mayor Barbee said he would like for the fine to remain at \$100 for 30 days because he worries about people who are struggling financially.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he likes the idea of keeping the fine fixed for 30 days.

Parking rates

- March-October 9:00 AM-8:00 PM (\$5 per hour/\$25 per day)
- November-December 9:00 AM-5:00 PM (\$2 per hour/\$10 per day)
- January-February no charge

Council Member LeCompte said communication is a huge part of the parking program. She said many people don't know about the lower rates November-December.

Mayor Barbee suggested distributing a list of rules to people when they buy their parking passes.

Freeman Park

- Although the Parking Committee did not address Freeman Park, staff is recommending that the time limit for annual pass sales to specific months be eliminated
- License plate recognition
- For Freeman Park passes and re-entry decals, the Town needs an eight-week lead time to design/produce/deliver

Mr. Parvin said cutting off the sale of annual Freeman Park passes early didn't work to increase the sale of daily passes.

Mr. Parvin said the Town needs to consider whether license plate recognition for entry to Freeman Park is what it really wants to do. Council Member LeCompte said this would involve a gate. Council Member Hoffer said it seems like it would be easy to slip in behind someone. Mayor Barbee said Council would need to see how that would work.

Mayor Barbee said a re-entry permit fee after a certain date would be punitive for people who move to the Town later in the year.

Mr. Parvin said staff will amend the proposed ordinances based on these comments and bring back most of the items next month.

Council Member LeCompte said the Town needs to ensure the public understands every piece being considered in advance so they can comment.

Council Member Hoffer asked if Council should consider a special meeting for voting on parking. He said he hasn't let go of the idea of having a non-resident pass for those who don't live on the island.

Council Member Benson said he would like to see a very nuanced consideration of non-resident passes, such as September 15-May 15 west of Lake Park Boulevard for \$200 to be picked up in person one per person.

Mayor Barbee said the Parking Committee voted against non-resident passes for those who don't live on the island. He said going against this is just delaying the inevitable because the parking inventory will make this unsustainable.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said it's not fair to residents who pay higher taxes, and that's who Council needs to consider.

Council Member LeCompte asked Finance Director Debbie Hall to provide net parking revenue for after Labor Day, which should give an idea of who is paying for parking at this time.

Council Member Hoffer said he thinks there are some faulty assumptions.

Mayor Barbee said the Town needs to get ahead of the curve, set what it wants to see five years from now, and drive behavior toward that. He said constantly measuring and adjusting in small increments creates political drama, so the Town needs to know where it's going and go there.

8. Manager's Update

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

Storm Preparation

Staff is working hard to prepare the Town for Hurricane Ian. The area could experience some bands of rain and wind even though the track shows it staying west of here.

Mike Chappell Park Bathroom

This is scheduled to open this week. Landscaping is about to go in, which is the last step, and then the facility can open in the next day or two.

Mayor Barbee asked if the facility will be open 24/7. Mr. Parvin said no, there will be timed locks for certain hours.

Council Member Hoffer asked if there will be a provision for shade around the building. Mr. Parvin said that is not included in this budget. Council Member Hoffer said it would be helpful to have a sail or something else to provide shelter from the sun while parents wait for their kids.

Marina

A massive check valve has gone in, so the south side infrastructure is almost complete. Floating docks will go in next week, and then shuffling of boats to enable starting on the east side will happen. The project is still on schedule.

Council Member LeCompte said there are lots of cigarette butts on the ground in the gravel lot behind the old Sharkies/Tangerine. She said people who are waiting to board charters are likely responsible for this.

Reminders

Saturday is the season's last market at Lake Park.

The lifeguard program ends this weekend.

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) kickoff meeting is October 19. The Planning and Zoning Commission will serve as the advisory board for this process.

Firefighter training on November 5 will involve burning a structure at the northwest corner of 5th Street and Raleigh Avenue.

Staff is proposing to move the November 8 regular Council meeting to November 9 due to the election.

ACTION: Motion that Council move the regular monthly meeting in November from November 8 to Wednesday, November 9, at 6:00 PM

Motion made by Council Member Benson

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

Motion passed unanimously

COUNCIL COMMENTS

9. Council Comments and Requests for October Agenda Items

Council Member LeCompte said she would like to hear an update on how effective the Beach Patrol was.

Council Member Hoffer said he wanted to apologize to Cindy Dunn and Karen Graybush of the Beautification Committee, who were hoping to talk about ideas for landscaping improvement plans to the area over Snow's Cut Bridge. He said he would like to see this on an agenda very soon.

Council Member LeCompte said representatives from Town committees were at the market at Lake Park this past Saturday, and this was a great success. She said they will be back again this week weather permitting to let the community know what they are doing.

Mayor Barbee said Ms. Dunn has asked to hand out some information for Council to review. He said she can do this at the end of the meeting.

Council Member Benson praised staff for Hurricane Ian preparation efforts. He reminded residents to secure loose items and take care of neighbors who may not be home.

Council Member Hoffer praised staff for the preparation that went into this workshop.

Mayor Barbee said staff did a lot of work toward making the purchase of Freeman Park possible, which was a huge win for the Town.

Council Member LeCompte said the Town could've gotten less than the \$4 million in grant funding it secured for the Freeman Park purchase, so getting the full amount was amazing.

CLOSED SESSION

ACTION: Motion to go into closed session to discuss attorney/client matters as well as a real estate matter in accordance with NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) and (5); the property being discussed is Parcel ID R08814-001-007-000

Motion made by Mayor Barbee

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

Motion passed unanimously

Mayor Barbee called the meeting back to order and said Council took no action during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.