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Town Council Strategic Plan for the fiscal year 2023/2024

The strategic plan provides a framework, direction, and specific guidance for Town Council, Staff, and the citizens of Carolina Beach. For the second year in a row at the January 26-27, 2023, annual Town Council budget retreat the following four areas were prioritized. The priorities were weighted equally and are not listed in order of importance:

Four Key Priorities

Infrastructure
Communication
Quality of Life
Fiscal Responsibility

Using these 4 areas as priorities the Town Council agreed on specific objectives to be met.

Actions to meet the priorities and corresponding objectives.

1. The Town Council will receive periodic updates from the Town Manager.
2. At public meetings Town Council will provide strategies and updates on their actions to meet these objectives.
3. A July budget retreat will be held to review and evaluate (a) progress towards meeting objectives and (b) setting additional work goals to accomplish these objectives (c) evaluate, add, delete, or refine any component of this plan.

PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Infrastructure

- a) Develop a funding plan to address the upcoming Capital Improvement Projects (i.e. headworks, digester, water tank, etc). The plan should include design, permitting and construction timelines. The Town Manager will work with staff to solidify this plan and will update the community by holding an open house in the Spring of 2023.

At the March 28th Town Council meeting, First Tryon Advisors and Town staff presented a financial plan to pay for infrastructure needs over the next twenty years. The CB2045 Infrastructure Plan lays out the timing of over \$70 million dollars' worth of projects and the needed bonds to pay for the improvements. The plan also includes built-in rate increases and is adjusted for expected inflationary increases.

- b) The Town Manager will continue to implement the Lake Dredge Project and will keep Town Council and the public informed on the progress.

The Carolina Beach Lake Dredge and Stabilization project is underway A hydraulic dredging process is being used to fill geotextile tubes placed around the perimeter of the lake to create a stable and natural shoreline. All dredge spoils are to be utilized onsite. The goals of the project are (1) gain in stormwater capacity, (2) improved aesthetic appearance, (3) better water quality, and (4) overall healthier ecosystem. The expected duration of construction is November 2023. There will also be a third 12" pump to maintain lake levels and mitigate flooding. This will be implemented in 2024.

- c) Improve the safety of downtown by reconfiguring the traffic design for the portions of Cape Fear and Canal Drive located east of Lake Park Blvd.

This item is on the agenda for a separate discussion. Staff has provided the traffic engineering conducted in 2014 prior to creating the current streetscape. Additional funds were budgeted this year if we want to update the study.

- d) Add mooring balls to the Town's mooring field to increase safety in the harbor and continue to expand the draw for coming to Carolina Beach by water.

A design to add additional mooring balls has been developed. Staff has started the permitting process with CAMA and will be applying for a grant from NC Marine Fisheries to help pay for the moorings. Interviews for the part-time staff to help the Harbor Master will be conducted later this week.

- e) Maintain and expand public bathroom facilities with a focus on the boardwalk.

All variances from the BOA and CRC have been obtained. Engineering/design is underway and was reviewed by TRC yesterday. We will be moving forward with permitting and bid. We anticipate construction starting in early 2024 to be ready for Summer 2024.

Communications

- a) Devise a plan to bid out IT and look at the cost/benefits of adding an IT person that could help manage the Town's website and online communications as well as some key IT functions to improve internal and external customer service.

Staff completed the bid process and hired Hooks Systems Technology. They are here this week implementing our new IT system. The contract is set up to be reduced if we decide to have an in-house IT position.

- b) Town Council will serve as ambassadors to the Town by working together to develop strategic plans to communicate community needs with local, state, and federal representatives.

- c) Staff will work to redesign the front of Town Hall to be safer, user friendly, and informative. Renovations were completed that included, (1) upfitting the former HVAC room with office space, (2) a secure customer service office, (3) a new Chamber of Commerce space, (4) additional meeting space adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce, (5) Stormwater office, and (6) Planning conference room.
- d) Town Council will consistently communicate what they need from each committee on a routine basis. Committees should be evaluated to determine if they should transition to an existing or new 501C3. Town Council liaisons report back to Town Council to give the Town Manager Direction. Continue to avoid direction/updates bypassing the Town Council and going to staff. Friends of the Parks continues thrive and the PAC are looking at options for a 501C3 to help support public safety projects.
- e) The Town Manager will organize more open houses for upcoming initiatives to educate the public, gain community feedback, and improve transparency. Open houses this year have included nine meetings: three for the budget, one for emergency operations, one for water and sewer CIP, one for the 2050 WMPO multi-transportation plan, and three for the P&R Plan.
- f) Continue to update and promote the features of the Town's website. Identify areas that are not being used or updated and develop a plan to revise or remove these sections. Website news, calendar events, important notices all continue to be updated on a daily basis. SeeClickFix was released and has 485 documented issues addressed.
- g) Use workshops to discuss ideas for upcoming agendas. Share agenda items with all Town Council members so no one is surprised. For urgent matters give a detailed explanation of the item and why it needs to be on the next agenda and should not wait until it is discussed at a workshop.
- h) Clearly communicate and hold true to time limitations for new agenda items and their corresponding presentations and supporting documentation.
- i) Update the manager before the meeting on any discussions/questions Town Council plans to have in the meeting.
- j) Keep the meetings professional and only engage with the speaker during appropriate times. Use the Mayor to facilitate the discussions.
- k) Once a decision is made, support it as a member of Town Council. Don't continue to bring up the same issue unless there is new information to present.
- l) Follow the chain of command and use it strategically to efficiently and transparently to accomplish goals. Promote and educate others (committee members, other Town Council members, staff, citizens, tourists, etc) on the proper use of the chain of command and explain why that process is in place. Ensure all communications go through the Town Manager. Communications with and direction given to employees through Town Council undermines management/department heads and leads to confusion and frustration for all involved (employee, dept head, manager, TC member(s)). Maintaining transparency is key to our success.

m) Utilize the Town’s resources for conveying information on projects, daily activities, service requests. With the visibility of all of Town Council work with the Manager if adequate information is not being provided. Continue to promote website resources on the homepage: “Get Help,” “Report a Problem,” “Projects,” “Pay my Bill,” and “Construction Near Me.”

Quality of Life

a) The Town will continue to pursue components of the Carolina Beach Pedestrian Plan: (a) SLPB and Spartanburg crossings, (b) St Joseph Street, (c) Hamlet Avenue stoplight, (d) Ocean Blvd 6’ sidewalk on the south side, and (e) CBAN improvements.

The Town was awarded a grant to develop a combined bike and pedestrian plan. We are working with the MPO on reviewing the guidelines and developing a timeline. St Joseph Street full application with a resolution from Town Council is due in September. If awarded, we would be ready to start construction in the Fall of 2024. Ocean Blvd is still under review. Our engineer is working to finalize comments from DOT. Once DOT gives us the green light, we will start the bid process.

b) Continue to provide a safe community and beach. Monitor and look at options for ordinances that could mitigate concerns with Golf Carts, fireworks, short term rentals, E-bikes on the beach, and other trending activities. Continue to review long range plans and identified projects to see how they can support needed changes.

The Planning and Zoning Commission continues to have monthly meetings to develop the Town’s first Unified Development Ordinance. The Police and Fire Department have researched best practices in other coastal communities and are working on strengthening the Town Codes with their findings.

c) Finalize the conservation easements on Freeman Park. Develop a Freeman Park Management Plan and ensure it addresses safety, environmental protection, tourism, and is consistent with local, state, and federal laws. Flags on Freeman Park should be addressed.

The HUD statement is being finalized this week which is the last piece needed prior officially establishing the Conservation Easement. Once complete staff will need to complete a maintenance plan for dredging.

d) Finalize the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update.

Conducted outreach through surveys and public meetings. The contractor is finalizing the plan for review through the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. We anticipate this being in front of Town Council late 2023 or early 2024.

e) Continue to work with the ACOE on funding of Coastal Storm Damage Reduction.

The last project was completed in the Spring of 2022. The next project is planned for Spring of 2025. Ensuring this project occurs efficiently and effectively remains a legislative priority.

f) Continue moving forward with improvements to Carolina Beach Lake Park and Mike Chappell Park Brandy Myers Memorial Playground will have site work beginning in the Fall. Playground is anticipated to be completed in early 2024.

Fiscal Responsibility

- a) Continue to optimize and refine parking opportunities for residents and tourists and communicate those opportunity using multiple mediums. For example, addition of more parking lots, ADA compliant spaces, and visibility as to where spots are located.

The Woody Hewett Lot was added this year. In addition, Town Council and staff are working to ensure we invest in and preserve public parking across town.

- b) Utilize the budget process to assess service wants/needs and make cuts utilizing Town Council values, gathered information from the community, and staff expertise. Use cuts to help continue to grow the Town's fund balance as feasible.

There is a dedicated agenda item for Town Council to discuss any additions/modifications to the strategic plan.

- c) Staff will continue to research grant opportunities and bring those before Town Council for planning and consideration.

Staff and Town Council continue to work with our partnering agencies and representatives to obtain funding. Projects with additional funding include: Ocean Blvd Sidewalks, St Joseph Street multi-use path, Sidewalks on LPB from the Lake to Carolina Sands, additional moorings, Brandy Myers Park, CB Lake dredge and beautification, Town Marina, Starfish access, Freeman Park, Florida Avenue paving and stormwater.

- d) Develop strategies for increasing flexibility in the use of room occupancy tax for projects designed to develop permanent improvements that will enhance tourism. Identify and implement plans to strategically present these options to key government leaders (i.e. beach breakfast).

This remains a legislative priority.

- e) Continue to evaluate the needs for Municipal Service Districts (MSD) in areas of Town where additional taxpayer dollars are required.

The Town can continue to evaluate cost/benefits of implementing a MSD in areas where portions of the population receive a benefit from taxpayer dollars (i.e. oceanfront, Canal Drive, boardwalk).