

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, April 25, 2023 - 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

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

Finance Director Debbie Hall

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. WMPO's Presentation on the Be a Looker Road Safety Campaign

Carolyn Caggia of the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) gave a presentation about the 2023 Be a Looker campaign, which promotes safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. It encourages drivers to be on the lookout for bicyclists and pedestrians while encouraging bicyclists and pedestrians to be visible and behave in predictable ways when they're on the road.

Ms. Caggia shared the following statistics:

- Between 2017 and 2021, Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties averaged 90 pedestrian crashes annually with 12 deaths and 59 bicycle crashes with 4 deaths, according to the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT).
- In North Carolina, fatal and suspected and serious injury pedestrian crashes doubled between 2010 and 2019.

The Be a Looker campaign kicked off in 2019, and it runs April through September every two years. Ms. Caggia reviewed safety tips for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. She said more information may be found at www.gocoastnc.org/bealooker, including a pledge people can sign as a commitment to follow the safety tips.

Ms. Caggia shared campaign graphics as well as marketing and outreach opportunities, including the River to Sea Bike Ride on May 6. She said she is bringing outreach materials to the Town's Police Department today and would love to hear more ideas for how to reach the Carolina Beach community.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if there are plans to go to high schools for education opportunities to reach young drivers. Ms. Caggia said she has been in contact with the school board to do a presentation for board members to get their advice on effective ways to reach students and families.

Mayor Barbee emphasized the responsibility of others to be seen by putting things on their bike or person. He said even if other rules aren't followed, bicyclists and pedestrians are always safer with visibility.

Ms. Caggia said WMPO recently received a grant from DOT for 100 bicycle helmets for children and will get the helmets this week. She said the organization is also looking to purchase bicycle lights to distribute.

Mayor Barbee encouraged Council Members to think forward to events for ways to promote this campaign.

Council Member Hoffer asked if Ms. Caggia plans to visit bicycle shops on the island. Ms. Caggia said this is a great idea.

2. Update from the Beautification Committee

Cindy Dunn, Chair of the Beautification Committee, gave an update on the state of the committee for 2023. The group is a 10-member Council-appointed advisory committee.

Ms. Dunn reviewed the committee's mission and vision statements as well as ways they will be achieved:

- Review and recommend revisions to the Town's tree ordinance and continue to encourage the Town to pursue the Tree City USA designation
- Recommend landscaping standards for commercial and industrial development
- Make recommendations on proposals for installation of street furnishings and other aesthetics
- Suggest available grant opportunities
- Recommend a Master Plan for Beautification with detailed standards
- Organize, publicize, and participate in Town events
- Present beautification awards for commercial areas
- Work at the direction of council on planning and development of beautification projects

Ms. Dunn also reviewed goals for fiscal year 2023-24:

- Recommend that Council continue to pursue the Tree City USA designation on an annual basis to continue protection and management of trees on publicly owned land and located within public rights-of-way
- Continue the Public Beach Access Beautification Project (re-establishing since COVID)

- Pursue the support of Council for the addition of a budget line item for beautification, specifically watering resources for landscaping projects, within the town's fiscal year 2023-24 budget
- Continue efforts for the Master Beautification Plan for the Lake Park Corridor
- Continue to maintain the wildflower project area along Bridge Barrier Road and Old Dow Road
- Continue working with the Friends of CB Parks & Greenways and the N.C. Wildlife Federation Clean & Green program (CB Trash Walkers) to maintain and resupply the tree nursery
- Present to Council the concept of an annual business beautification awards program

Ms. Dunn said other possible projects include planting trees in Mike Chappell Park and improving the garden behind the Federal Point History Center. She said the group is not just about trees and plants but also about aesthetic improvements such as benches, banners, and some art. Ms. Dunn said water is a big thing for many of the committee's projects, so Town support is needed to be successful.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said the Town should do a better job embracing Earth Day.

Council Member LeCompte asked where things stand with the Tree City USA designation. Planning Director Jeremy Hardison said the Town received feedback that it needs to adopt an ordinance for management and maintenance of its existing trees.

Karen Graybush of the Beautification Committee said there are volunteers waiting to help, but water resources are necessary before moving forward. She said if the committee knows how much money it's getting each year, then plans can be made around that.

Council Member Hoffer said he's going to fight for a line item specific to the Beautification Committee in the next budget.

Council Member LeCompte said the committee was moved from ad hoc to standing for a reason, so now the Town must support it.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said there are huge advantages to breaking off from the Town and becoming a 501(c)(3), including flexibility for fundraising and spending. He said it's an option that's out there. Mayor Pro Tem Healy also thanked the group of realtors who recently planted 200 plants downtown.

Mr. Oakley said the Town doesn't normally fund line items for advisory committees, but committees can advise on specific projects and then Council can fund those.

3. Consider Approving Resolution No. 23-2286 Supporting the Town's Application for the 2023 Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant

DOT is accepting proposals from communities for the 2023 Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant initiative. The program provides funding for municipalities and counties across the state to develop comprehensive multi-modal bicycle and/or pedestrian plans. The cost of such a plan is estimated to be \$60,000, with DOT paying 90% and the Town being responsible for the remaining 10% to satisfy local match requirements.

Council Member Hoffer gave some additional background.

ACTION: Motion to approve Resolution No. 23-2286 supporting the Town's application for the 2023 Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant

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

4. Manager's Update

Mr. Oakley gave an update on various projects:

- Carolina Beach Avenue South bike lane: The Technical Review Committee (TRC) agreed with the recommendation of the Bike/Ped Committee that right now the Town should not move forward on this because there are other needs that should be prioritized higher.
- 6th Street stop sign orientation for emergency route: WMPO and TRC reviewed this, and the recommendation is to eliminate the four-way stop sign at Hamlet Avenue and change it to a two-way stop sign as well as reverse the stop signs at Clarendon Avenue. This would require an ordinance change, which will come before Council for consideration in the future.
- Lake dredge and stabilization: The bidding period has closed, and the Town has received a bid for just over \$916,000. Funding for this project was \$2 million, so the remaining money will be used for a pump, directional drill, and pump house. Staff will come back to Council with a proposed contract to award, and current plans call for a possible June or July start date.
- Florida Avenue paving: Crews are hoping to have the asphalt started by the end of week if weather permits, and they are going to try to extend the project all the way out to the rest of Florida Avenue.
- Ocean Boulevard sidewalk: Staff just started sending notifications to property owners, and the Town is still awaiting DOT signoff on the encroachment agreement. The next step will be to prepare bid documents for construction.
- Island Women Boutique Bash parking passes: For the April 29 event, golf carts will have inflatable flamingoes on top so the parking company knows not to issue tickets, if Council has no issue with this. There was no opposition.
- Budget open house: The public will have an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback May 2 from 4:00 to 6:00 PM.

Council Member LeCompte asked if there is an update on the Town seeking DOT approval for a monument at Cora's Corner in remembrance of Cora Kruger, who was killed by a vehicle at the intersection in 2019. Mr. Oakley said there is a meeting with DOT next week.

Council Member Benson asked if the two crossings planned for the Saint Joseph Street multi-use path, at The Vault and Winner Avenue, are changes to the last version of the plan. Mr. Oakley said he's not aware of any changes, but he will ask staff and get back to Council about this.

5. Department Budget Presentations

Department heads presented their budget requests for fiscal year 2023-24. Mr. Oakley said this is an opportunity for Council Members to give feedback and ask questions.

EXECUTIVE

Mr. Oakley reviewed the organizational chart for this department, which includes a proposed change in title for Mr. Parvin to Deputy Town Manager. Mr. Oakley said this better reflects the job Mr. Parvin does and will not result in a change in salary.

Mr. Oakley said the communications position has not yet been filled because the Town's information technology (IT) method is going to change, so he thought this might result in some changes to the position duties. He said he is waiting to see what happens with recently submitted IT proposals.

Mr. Parvin gave details about two part-time positions proposed to help with Harbor Master duties. He said Harbor Master Larry Denning does a great job but could use some assistance so he is not always on call when issues arise with the mooring field, marina, and the harbor in general.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if the Town still plans to get 10 more mooring balls. Mr. Parvin said yes, the Town is exploring what needs to be done for grant eligibility to help with that project.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked about the cost of the two part-timers. Mr. Parvin said approximately \$23,000 each, and the plan is to keep them year-round if possible.

Mayor Barbee said the Town has become very popular with transient boaters, so if the additional positions can fit in the budget he is all for them.

Council Member LeCompte said the Town is considered a safe harbor for boaters during storms.

Mr. Oakley said the total proposed Executive budget is \$1,533,934, an increase of 10.43% from the current year.

Highlights

- The Town will transition to a new managed IT vendor and replace leased computer equipment with Town-owned materials; support will overlap for three months or less.

Mr. Oakley said the total proposed Non-Departmental budget is \$263,890, an increase of 2.5% from the current year.

Highlights

- No request yet from Wave Transit
- Reduced property taxes by eliminating debt on one of CBP3 properties
- The Centennial Committee request was added into non-profit requests

FINANCE

Ms. Hall reviewed the organizational chart for this department.

She said the total proposed Finance budget is \$590,325, an increase of 15.7% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Increase of \$5,000 for New Hanover County tax collection fees due to property growth
- Cost-of-living increase of 6%

Ms. Hall said the proposed Debt Service General Fund budget is \$1,288,077, a decrease of 3% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Grant funds will pay off the Freeman Park loan from April 11, 2022 (\$3.25 million/10 years). This year's debt service payment is \$399,750, but the Town hopes to receive funding by the end of this fiscal year to pay off the entire loan with no prepayment penalty.
- Two new loans in fiscal year 2023-24 include 1101 North Lake Park Boulevard, approved on April 27 for \$2 million/10 years with a debt service payment of \$279,600, and a placeholder for the Town's match in case it is awarded a grant for 1808 and 1810 Canal Drive, which would be \$400,000/5 years with a debt service payment of \$88,400.

Ms. Hall said the proposed Vehicle Leases General Fund budget is \$116,193, an increase of 20% from the current fiscal year.

Takeaway points

- 7 Police vehicles
- 2 Parks & Recreation
- 4 Environmental
- 1 Planning
- 1 staff

Ms. Hall said the proposed Debt Service Utility Fund budget is \$2,358,859, a decrease of 6.2% from the current fiscal year.

Takeaway points

- Inflow and infiltration loan paid off in April 2023
- 2018 street sweeper loan will be paid off in June 2023

Ms. Hall said the proposed Vehicle Leases Utility Fund budget is \$32,821, an increase of 35% from the current fiscal year.

Takeaway points

- 1 Water
- 1 Wastewater
- 2 Stormwater

CLERK

Ms. Ward said the proposed Clerk budget is \$189,504, an increase of 4.5% from the current fiscal year.

Highlights

- The \$8,130 increase in the Personnel & Benefits category includes a 6% market adjustment and cost of benefits.

Ms. Ward said the proposed Legislative budget is \$263,612, a decrease of 25.6% from the current fiscal year.

Highlights

- Removed contingency line item of \$150,000
- No capital outlay request trimmed \$7,000

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Oakley said the proposed Human Resources & Retirees budget is \$670,258, an increase of 3.8% from the current fiscal year.

Highlights

- Retiree insurance for 30+ retirees \$150,000
- 2024 pay study, which is done every 5-6 years \$15,000

POLICE

Police Chief Vic Ward reviewed the organizational chart for this department. He said he is in the final stages of hiring for the Beach Ranger position, which is moving over from Ocean Rescue.

Mayor Barbee asked if the Beach Ranger will be a sworn officer. Chief Ward said yes.

Chief Ward said the proposed Police budget is \$3,892,224, an increase of 15.91% from the current fiscal year.

Highlights

- Equipment and upfit for 2 vehicles \$20,000
- Beach Ranger position (wages and benefits) \$76,590
- Utility terrain vehicle (UTV) for Beach Ranger \$15,000
- Phase Two of perimeter fence project \$64,348

Chief Ward also reviewed some additional budget needs not included in the request.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if the Beach Ranger position will fall back as an Officer during the off-season. Chief Ward said yes, but he will focus on the Boardwalk area and hopefully set up a substation there where people can find him for non-emergency situations.

Mayor Barbee said he is concerned about someone starting the Beach Ranger position without having a UTV available. He said he would be supportive if there is a way to get that done during the current fiscal year. Chief Ward said the current Gator may be used if necessary until a new UTV is available.

Mayor Barbee said the Town has tried the Beach Ranger position multiple ways over multiple years, but he thinks this plan is honing in on a permanent solution.

Council Member LeCompte said the Town needs to find some availability in the Boardwalk area for a substation. She said this is a great idea, and business owners and residents would appreciate the increased police presence.

Mayor Barbee said most of the major crime in the Town is concentrated in the Boardwalk area.

FIRE

Fire Chief Alan Griffin reviewed the organizational chart for this department.

He said the total proposed Fire budget is \$2,082,167, an increase of 0.09% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Personnel & Benefits: 6% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)
- Maintenance & Operations: completed communications project and reduction in contract services
- Capital: Airpack upgrades and equipment for new apparatus

Chief Griffin said the proposed Ocean Rescue budget is \$658,306, an increase of 3.88% from the current year. Mayor Pro Tem Healy pointed out that the numbers for the proposed budget don't add up correctly. When adding up the Personnel & Benefits, Maintenance & Operations, and Capital Outlay categories, the figure is \$682,212, an increase of 7.65% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Personnel & Benefits: decrease due to moving Beach Patrol to Police
- Maintenance & Operations: add internet, electric, and pre-employment cost
- Capital: 4-wheelers, jet ski, and UTV

Chief Griffin said the Ocean Rescue budget comes from room occupancy tax (ROT) funds.

Council Member Hoffer said his kids have considered being lifeguards but decided they can make a lot more money and have less responsibility working at restaurants. He said he would have a hard time arguing against raising lifeguard salaries.

Council Member Benson said the Town is competing with other beach towns for hiring lifeguards.

Mayor Barbee said this is another instance of the budget season not aligning with tourist season, stressing the need for a jet ski and UTV before the next fiscal year begins.

Council Member LeCompte said it may be interesting to take a look in the future at drones that can deploy life-saving devices.

PUBLIC WORKS

Public Works Director Brian Stanberry reviewed the organizational chart for this department. He said two new positions are being proposed in Environmental: General Maintenance III and General Maintenance I. Mr. Stanberry said staff is hyperextended because the island is so popular and amenities are numerous, so it's difficult to keep up despite the hard work of current staff. He said the General Maintenance III position would be focused on paving, while General Maintenance I would be cross-trained in various duties.

Mr. Stanberry said the proposed Environmental budget is \$4,432,197, an increase of 13.28% from the current year.

Highlights

- 2 new positions \$125,000
- Meridian transportable safety bollards for the Cape Fear Boulevard/Boardwalk area \$75,000
- Lighting improvements for Lake Park Boulevard \$80,000
- GFL waste contract 5.3% consumer price index (CPI) increase \$2,074,850
- Boardwalk/Central Business District (CBD) decorative lighting contract \$50,000

Mayor Pro Team Healy asked when the Town last invested in the Christmas decorations that hang on street lights. Mr. Stanberry said the lighting on the strands has all been replaced with LED, but the fixtures themselves have been around for a while. Council Member Hoffer said they look tired.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy asked if new decorations might fall under ROT. Mayor Barbee said this would be a tough sell because that money is to put "heads in beds," so Christmas decorations may be a stretch when it comes to attracting tourists for overnight stays. Mr. Stanberry said his staff can look into replacing the decorations, which have a going rate of about \$800 each.

Mr. Stanberry said the proposed Stormwater budget is \$1,749,350, an increase of 20.97% from the current year. He said there are no proposed changes to personnel.

Highlights included a list of 10 projects. Mr. Stanberry gave details about a few and showed a map of all of them.

Mr. Stanberry said the proposed Powell Bill budget is \$215,500, a decrease of 75.04% from the current year.

Highlights

- State Powell Bill allotment \$215,500
- Equipment to internalize road-cut repairs \$130,500
- Paving project based on pavement condition index (PCI) study \$100,000

Mr. Stanberry said the proposed Beach Maintenance budget is \$644,348, a decrease of 18.14% from the current year.

Highlights

- Clam Shell Lane bulkhead \$75,000
- Florida Avenue bulkhead \$100,000
- Beach access repairs \$50,000
- Inlet dredging payment \$10,894
- Raising of Boardwalk east-west walkways \$100,000

Mayor Barbee asked if he could take a moment to read the proposed legislation for a moratorium on shark fishing tournaments to make sure Council agreed with the wording. No one expressed any issues.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public Utilities Director Mark Meyer reviewed the organizational chart for this department.

Mr. Meyer said the proposed Water & Sewer Administration budget is \$1,390,187, a decrease of 0.94% from the current year.

Mr. Meyer said the proposed Wastewater Treatment budget is \$1,165,769, an increase of 15.52% from the current year.

Highlights

- Cost of materials, chemicals, and services \$100,000

Mr. Meyer said the proposed Wastewater Collections budget is \$1,807,595, an increase of 17.27% from the current year.

Highlights

- Replacement of lift station \$169,687

Mr. Meyer said the proposed Water budget is \$1,389,662, a decrease of 17.34% from the current year.

Mr. Meyer said the proposed Enterprise Fleet budget is \$291,000, a decrease of 3.96% from the current year.

Mr. Meyer said the proposed General Fleet budget is \$323,000, a decrease of 3.65% from the current year.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Hardison reviewed the organizational chart for this department.

He said the proposed Planning & Development budget is \$834,867, an increase of 1.8% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Year two of Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)

PARKS & RECREATION

Parks & Recreation Director Eric Jelinski reviewed the organizational chart for this department. He is requesting one additional position, a Recreation Specialist, and said it's probably been about 15 years since the department added a full-time position.

Mr. Jelinski said the proposed Parks & Recreation budget is \$1,601,082, an increase of 28.46% from the current year.

Takeaway points

- Skate Park project match with Friends of CB Parks & Greenways \$175,000
- Replacement of HVAC in Rec Center gym \$65,000
- New Recreation Specialist (wages and benefits) \$62,666
- Lake Park improvements (concrete and electric repairs) \$20,000
- ROT programs (added family-friendly New Year's Eve event and funding for Boardwalk Christmas decorations) \$240,000
- Rec Center upstairs renovations \$30,000

Mayor Barbee asked if there is an issue with the HVAC system or if this request is complaint-driven. Mr. Jelinski said a contractor recommended replacement during a service call. He said he thinks the HVAC system is original to the building.

Mayor Pro Tem Healy said he agrees that Parks & Recreation needs more personnel with the responsibilities the department has taken over during the past couple of years. He said he would like to look into the possibility of getting a sail covering for the Gazebo stage to protect musicians from the weather.

Mayor Barbee asked Mr. Oakley about property taxes. Mr. Oakley said he thinks the budget can be balanced holding the line on property taxes. He said this is the 18th or 19th budget he's done, and he has never proposed a rate increase and doesn't plan to for the next fiscal year.

6. Discuss Agenda Items for Upcoming Council Meetings

Council Members asked that the following items be placed on an upcoming agenda:

- A review of capital projects that were started during the current fiscal year but not yet finished
- A request to increase the frequency of updates on matters that will affect the public this summer
- A rendering of what the lake will look like with bank stabilization
- An update on legislation and court cases regarding short-term rentals
- A review of options for rectifying issues with the recently passed event venue ordinance

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Barbee praised staff members for their efforts in preparing for peak tourist season.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 11:55 AM.