

Board of Aldermen Regular Meeting
Wednesday, July 2, 2025
MINUTES

The Town of North Topsail Beach of Aldermen held its regular meeting on July 2, 2025. A quorum of the board was present. Town Manager Derian and Attorney Payson were in attendance.

Board members present: Mayor Joann McDermon and Mayor Pro Tem Tom Leonard
Alderman: Richard Gran, Laura Olszewski, Connie Pletl, and Mike Benson

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor McDermon called the regular meeting to order at 11:00AM. Aldermen Olszewski gave the invocation. Mayor McDermon led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor McDermon asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

Motion— Alderman Benson made a motion to approve the agenda as is. Aldermen Pletl seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Town Manager Derian provided the following report to the Board.

Beach Projects and Operations

Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 (PTC #8) beach operations work has paused for the season as of May 2, 2025. The work will resume after Turtle Season. This project continues to move through the process of FEMA for potential obligation of funds. The responses from the engineer have been uploaded to the request for information since the June 4, 2025, Board of Aldermen Meeting. Manager Derian also responded to the additional request for information on how plantings will be installed in the dunes. The project remains at the CRC level, with no set timeline for CRC completion. The PTC #8 information is available on the Town website, showing which areas will receive sand and which will not. The project is primarily in phases 1 - 3, with some areas in phase 4.

2018/2019 Projects

A lot of work has been completed on the FEMA portal for old projects. GWI provided a status of projects that was attached under the finance report. Manager Derian reported progress was made between her and Deborah Mack in the last two weeks with EHP certifications and approving the scopes of work back from the 2018/2019 timeframe. Manager Derian and Deborah Mack were

not employed during this period. Derian had Mack to prepare documentation that was submitted to engineer Fran Wei, who was presented during that period. Wei was able to verify the documentation, so Derian can certify the work through the portal.

Cost Share Project for Beach Plantings

The cost share project for beach planting with Coastal Transplants for Sea Oats and Bitter Panicum wrap up was scheduled for June 13th. The final number was 24,300 plants that were purchased and planted through the initiative. The project page has been updated.

Topsail Island Vitex Eradication Project

Each town received a proposal from the Project Contractor Michael Baker. North Topsail and Topsail Beach provided amendments to the contractor, and the final contract is pending. Alderman Grant provided insight on the destructiveness of vitex to the dunes.

Ocean City Jazz Festival

Staff have assisted with the preparation for the event. The event is scheduled July 4 – July 6, 2025. Mayor McDermon is scheduled to give welcoming remarks on July 4, 2025, at 4:00PM. Manager Derian provided a review of the steps of preparation town staff have provided.

GFL Contract

The GFL contract took effect on July 1, 2025, for trash and recycling services. All towns have individual agreements. The website has been updated to reflect the new information for scheduling, rates, and bulk pickups. The bulk pickup dates will be announced at a future time.

OPEN FORUM

There were no signups.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND HEARINGS

- A. Public Hearing Case #SUP24-000001 Osprey and Crystal Shores homeowners' associations request a Special Use Permit to develop a designated parking area for bicycles, golf carts, and low-speed vehicles (LSVs) at 380 New River Inlet Road, zoned Residential District (R-20).

Attorney Payson provided the Board with a general overview of the laws regarding public hearings and their duties as board members during a quasi-judicial hearing.

Motion – Mayor Pro Tem Leonard made a motion to open the public hearing. Alderman Pletl seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor McDermon swore in Deborah Hill and David Dalsimer.

Deborah Hill, Planning Director and Zoning Administrator, presented the item to the Board. Hill provided the Board with the zoning for parcels next to the proposed parking area. The area is .78 acres, and the Future Land Use Classification for the property is low-density residential. The request has gone through a technical review committee with the Division of Coastal Management. NCDOT will require an easement agreement, and a driveway application should the request be approved by the Board. The Fire Chief and Police Chief have reviewed the request and have no objections. Parking lots as a principal use require a Special Use Permit pursuant to the Unified Development Ordinance, section 4.1. The Planning Board met in June and reviewed the request, approving it unanimously. The application, CAMA permit, site plan, and other documents are attached to the agenda. Hill answered questions from the Board regarding the landscaping and any potential environmental impacts from the project. There will be no ongoing costs to the Town for the proposed parking lot. David Dalsimer, representative of the project, informed the Board that this would be a private parking lot that is monitored and kept clean. He reviewed the benefits of adding the parking lot. A crosswalk has been requested from NCDOT to be added as a safety precaution. The lease for the property is twenty years and is available for renewal. Alderman Pletl, Grant, and Mayor Pro Tem Leonard provided praise for the project's goal.

Motion – Alderman Pletl made a motion to close the public hearing. Alderman Olszewski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion – Alderman Pletl made a motion to approve SUP24-000001 as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Leonard seconded the motion. Manager Derian roll called the vote.

Roll Call

- Alderman Pletl – yes
- Alderman Benson – yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Leonard – yes
- Alderman Olszewski – yes
- Alderman Grant – yes

The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda items include:

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Department Head Reports
- C. Monthly Coastal Engineer Report
- D. Settlement Agreement and Release
- E. WB Brawley Change Order #6
- F. Rental Agreement

G. Committee Reports

Motion – Alderman Benson made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Leonard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

GWI Tax and Accounting Contract Consideration

Town Manager Alice Derian presented the item to the Board. Derian, Attorneys Ferguson and Payson, and Beth Wood (GWI) met to address the Board's previous concerns. The contract with GWI was previously extended through June 30, 2025. This contract presented to the Board now is to continue services going forward. The new contract includes a provision that either party can terminate the contract with thirty-days' notice.

Motion – Alderman Grant made a motion to consider the contract with GWI Tax and Accounting. Alderman Benson seconded the motion. The Board opened the floor for discussion.

Alderman Grant reviewed policy issues with the agreement. The contract includes language that GWI is limited to eight (8) hours a day, which GWI has interpreted as no more than forty (40) hours a week. Alderman Grant requested the Board clarify which time frame is correct. He also noted in the engagement letter that North Topsail staff have been deemed responsible for overseeing the preparation of documents. Alderman Grant commented that he was comfortable with staff overseeing the preparation but did not feel staff should be representations as to the accuracy of the documents since they did not create them. Alderman Grant vocalized the idea of outlining hours in which GWI works during Town hours. Alderman Grant asked for clarification of the term "salary." Alderman Grant vocalized issues with liability and the utilizing of third parties. Lastly, Alderman Grant vocalized the need for utilizing a system in which data is transferable between GWI and the Town of North Topsail Beach (TNTB).

Manager Derian responded to the comment on the transferring and retention of data between GWI and TNTB, stating there are two computers set up in the server room. The computers are assigned to Sylvia and Debra with DWI. The GWI employees log into the computers as if they were TNTB employees. The data is stored in a Fed Ramp and in the Cloud. The data is backed up daily and the templates are housed within the finance records. Ricky Schwisow, ITS Director, assisted Manager Derian in verifying the financial system utilized is North Topsail's and the data created is retained.

Mayor Pro Tem Leonard asked Attorney Payson for clarification on salary and benefits and working hours mirroring those of the Town. Attorney Payson reserved commentary on salary and benefits for the closed session. He offered clarification on mirroring work hours. Attorney Payson commented that there can be risks with independent contractors being deemed

employees. Manager Derian confirmed for Mayor Pro Tem Leonard that she has had no issues with being able to connect with GWI employees.

Alderman Benson reminded the audience present that GWI has moved the Town forward with the FEMA projects and the Town can now closed out projects from seven years ago. Alderman Benson vocalized his support for the contract.

Alderman Olszewski vocalized she felt there was a need for legal council regarding the scope of work and contractual issues. She requested counsel be given to the Board before approving the contract.

Motion – Alderman Olszewski made a motion to table the contract for closed session. Alderman Grant seconded the motion. Alderman Pletl, Grant, and Olszewski voted in favor of the motion. Alderman Benson and Mayor Pro Tem Leonard voted against the motion. The motion carried 3-2.

BISAC Update

BISAC Chair Strother presented the item. He reported to the Board that the BISAC held a meeting on June 17, 2025, and was updated by Manager Derian. The BISAC discussed the results of the one-stop meeting that was held with the Coastal Engineering Firm. Chair Strother reviewed what a one-stop meeting was and informed the Board BISAC project approved by the different agencies that were part of the meeting. Chair Strother explained this was expected and changes will be made to receive the permits. The only area of the project that received a hard rejection was the temporary retention structure. The agencies felt the temporary retention structure was more closely labeled a terminal growing, which has a separate process of approval. There were also concerns of the quality and color of the material being used. The darkness of some of the dirt was discussed at the meeting. Strother stated the color was not an issue. The impact to the North End was also a conversation of concerns with birds nesting in that area. The environmental impact study will be completed in August of this year. BISAC will review the comments from the one-stop meeting, finalize the beach placement, review Geotech data, and make the necessary changes to the project to apply for permitting in September late this year. BISAC will also review the placement of sand in the North End without using a temporary structure. Placement and a permit for the pipeline will need to be obtained. CAMA takes five to six months to review a permitting application. BISAC will be able to put the project out to bid later this year.

Chair Strother answered questions brought up by Board members since the last presentation. Strother reported FEMA would cover engineered beaches. A terminal growing would still be an option and would cost around \$10 million for the Town. BISAC will investigate soft solutions for the North End like reshaping it or making it an environmental island sanctuary. Currently

FEMA covers 75% of damages and North Carolina State covers 25% of damages. Long term projects looking for FEMA funds must go through an environmental study process which delays it two to three years. Regardless of if FEMA, the entity, goes away, the funding will still be provided. Currently, there is nothing the Town needs to do financially to move forward with this project. There is a BISAC meeting scheduled for July, but the meeting will likely be pushed to August. Should BISAC change the project plan to something outside what the Board has already approved, Coastal will return to the Board for consideration.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Board of Adjustments Vacancy and Applications

Mayor McDermon presented the applications to the Board. In previous appointments, the Board has used a ballot method. Attorney Payson agreed using the ballot method would be consistent with past votes. An audience member informed the Board that Christy Barefoot's application would need to be removed from consideration. Alderman Benson notified the Board that there would two positions on Board of Adjustments available. He suggested moving Jason Stahr from Alternate to Full Member on the Board of Adjustment and voting in a new member to fill the last vacancy. Alderman Pletl agreed with Alderman Benson's suggestion.

Motion – Alderman Benson made a motion to elevate Jason Stahr form Alternate to Full Member on the Board of Adjustments and to appoint Grey Chapman as the second member. Alderman Pletl seconded the motion. The Board decided they would vote unanimously instead of the ballot method since there was only one applicant. The motion carried unanimously. Manager Derian verified the Board wished to advertise an alternate position as vacant for the Board of Adjustments. The board confirmed.

B. Planning Board Vacancy and Applications

Mayor McDermon presented the applications to the Board members. She announced Christy Barefoot would also be removed from the application pool. The Board agreed to vote by ballot. Manager Derian read aloud the votes as presented to her. The votes are listed below:

Ballot Results

- Lisa Brown: four votes
- Jason Smith: one vote

Mayor McDermon thanked the applicants for applying and congratulated Lisa Brown for her appointment.

C. Thank You Letters to Senator Tillis and Senator Budd

Mayor Pro Tem Leonard presented the letters to the Board. He informed the audience that in addition to the House Resolution (HR 185) that is going forward in congress, Senators Tillis and Budd filed a bill (S. 1724) on the senate floor. Mayor Pro Tem requested the Board's

consideration on signing the thank you letters to the Senators for their support. Additionally, HR185 was before the Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee and Natural Resources Subcommittee to review details in the language of the bill regarding roadways.

Alderman Grant vocalized his support for the letters but also invited the addition of asking what the Board and citizens could do to advance the bill to the senate. Mayor Pro Tem Leonard agreed with the addition.

OPEN FORUM

Kip Malcolm, 3102 Green Street, spoke on behalf of the Ocean City Citizens Council. Malcolm spoke about the upcoming Ocean City Jazz Festival taking place on July 4 – 6, 2025. He spoke about the historical importance of the event and invited the members of the Board and public to attend the event.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Payson stated there was no new information to report.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor McDermion wished everyone a happy 4th of July and encouraged everyone to stay safe throughout the weekend.

ALDERMANS' REPORT

Alderman Pletl provided a sea turtle report. Currently, North Topsail Beach has thirty-three sea turtle nests. Surf City has nine nests and Topsail Beach has seven. She requested beach front properties to keep their front lights off for the sea turtles. She encouraged citizens to attend the Ocean City Jazz Festival and wished everyone a happy 4th of July.

Alderman Benson wished everyone a happy and safe 4th of July.

Mayor Pro Tem Leonard thanked the audience for attending the meeting and wished everyone a happy and safe 4th of July. Mayor Pro Tem Leonard announced he was excited for the Jazz Festival and his contentment with the progress of Cobra.

Alderman Olszewski thanked the audience for attending and announced the Town does have jobs available. She informed the audience of the upcoming election and the seats that will be available.

Alderman Grant announced the pump station is working. He announced that Onslow County will not be raising their tax rate this year and that North Topsail had the lowest property tax rates in comparison to the surrounding towns. He announced the Town is almost debt free.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion – Alderman Olszewski made a motion to go into closed session for item three (3) Consultation with the Attorney. Mayor Pro Tem seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The Board went into closed session at 12:23PM.

Motion – Mayor Pro Tem Leonard made a motion to return to open session. Alderman Pletl seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The Board returned to the open session at 1:26PM.

Mayor McDermmon announced the Board discussed the contract with GWI while in closed session. The Board agreed to three amendments to the contract. The first amendment is that the vendor works eight hours per day but does not exceed forty hours per week unless approved by the town manager in writing. The second amendment is to the language for if the Town of North Topsail Beach were to hire a GWI employee. The Board agreed to amend the language from “compensation” to “salary” and add a ninety-day timeline. The third amendment pertained to travel. The Board agreed to strike hotel and meal from the language.

Motion — Alderman Pletl made a motion to approve the contract amendments. Mayor Pro Tem seconded the motion. Alderman Pletl, Benson, Grant, and Mayor Pro Tem Leonard voted in favor of the motion. Alderman Olszewski voted in opposition of the motion. The motion carried 4-1.

Alderman Grant commented he would bring up the pay schedule regarding the GWI contract at the next meeting. He vocalized his opposition to paying GWI for work they performed outside of the contract.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion — Alderman Pletl made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Leonard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:31PM.