

Town of North Topsail Beach

Joann M. McDermon, Mayor
Mike Benson, Mayor Pro Tem

Aldermen:
Richard Grant
Connie Pletl
Alfred Fontana
Tom Leonard



Alice Derian, ICMA-CM
Town Manager

Nancy Avery
Interim Town Clerk

Nature's Tranquil Beauty

Board of Aldermen Work Session minutes Friday, December 16, 2022, at 9 AM North Topsail Beach Town Hall

The Town of North Topsail Beach Board of Aldermen held a work session on Friday, December 16, 2022, at 9 am. There was a quorum of the Board present.

Board members present: Mayor Joann McDermon, Mayor Pro Tem Mike Benson
Aldermen: Connie Pletl, Richard Grant, Tom Leonard, and Fred Fontana
Board members absent: None

Staff present: Town Manager Alice Derian, Police Chief William Younginer, Fire Chief Chad Soward, IT Director Ricky Schwisow, Finance Officer Caitlin Elliott, and Interim Town Clerk Nancy Avery

Mayor McDermon called the meeting to order at 9 am.

Approval of the Agenda

Motion – Alderman Leonard motioned to approve the agenda with the addition of a new item under New Business to approve the Fish and Wildlife CBRA Five-year review memo from Mayor Pro Tem Benson; Alderman Fontana seconded; motion approved unanimously (5-0).

Committee business

Mayor McDermon reviewed the list of current committees and board assignments and opened the floor for discussion.

1. State Mandated boards

Mayor McDermon asked about whether Board members thought there needed to be a liaison for the Planning Board and or the Board of Adjustment:

Discussion highlights:

- If Aldermen were at meetings, they might be seen as trying to exert influence or might cause a special meeting to be held without realizing it. He thinks the boards can do what they are tasked with doing better without an Alderman present (Leonard).
- As a Board, individual Aldermen should not give direction to the boards and that might happen without a liaison at the meeting. He agrees there should not be a liaison (Grant)
- The boards will feel freer to discuss things without feeling like Aldermen are looking over their shoulders (Fontana)

Consensus - no liaisons for the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment

2. Town appointed committees

a. BISAC

Consensus – Mayor Pro Tem Benson and Alderman Grant remain assigned as liaisons as this is a new committee with set terms.

b. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) committee

Discussion Highlights:

- Committee’s purpose was mainly to move the firehouse project forward along with other budgetary capital projects. (Grant)
- Is there still a need for this committee? (McDermon)
- As a new member, is there a 5-year CIP plan? (Fontana)
- There is a need since we have not done capital budgets or planning in the past. (Grant)
- There is a list of things that need to be prioritized such as a ladder truck for Fire Department and update of the old Public Works building. (Benson)
- We itemized different initiatives in the last budget workshops. First was the fire station, then land acquisition, Police Department expansion and an offsite EOC area. We did go through a five-year projection and penciled in the next five years. (Derian)

Consensus - Aldermen Fontana and Grant are liaisons

c. Parking committee

Discussion highlights:

- There was more of a time commitment when the vendor was being selected (McDermon)
- Time commitment is minimal now and varies with time of year such as busier during spring and summer. She is very pleased with the vendor. (Pletl)
- Since parking is up and running it sounds like meetings are to provide guidance to the vendor. He is also impressed with the vendor. He would like to serve on this committee. (Leonard)

Consensus – Alderman Pletl and Leonard are liaisons

d. Parks and Recreation

Discussion highlights:

- Committee is floundering and needs to be bolstered as there is little citizen interest. She is the only Alderman on it and would like to see another Alderman serve (Pletl)
- She would volunteer to be on this one and the Chamber of Commerce is willing to help. (McDermon)
- Would like to see extension of bike lane down new inlet road and would like to help with that. (Fontana)
- The bike lane would be part of the transportation committee that she serves on, not this committee. (Pletl)

Consensus – Mayor McDermon and Alderman Pletl are liaisons

e. Revetment committee

Discussion highlights:

- This has been in place since the plaintiff sued the Town over construction in 2016 or 2017. Nothing has been accomplished over the five years (Benson)
- We need to keep things moving. She volunteers to serve, replacing Mayor Pro Tem Benson. (McDermon)
- This committee was a requirement of the settlement and there is not a lot of wiggle room. (Leonard)
- We need to be careful to follow the legal settlement the Town has. (Grant)
- The Town Attorney will attend any future meetings. (Derian)

Consensus – Mayor McDermon and Alderman Leonard are liaisons

f. Camp Lejeune liaison

Discussion highlights:

- She recommends Alderman Leonard and does not feel she is the right liaison. (McDermon)
- We all get invited to the social events. We need to make sure that the message the liaison gives at these meetings matches the Board of Aldermen message. (Grant)
- As the Board sets its goals, that should help set the message. (McDermon)
- Time commitment is two meetings of month for about two -three hours each plus travel time. (Grant)
- He would like to serve on this board. (Leonard)
- He has attended meetings for the last few years and wants to continue to be involved. This is a great networking opportunity. (Benson)

Consensus – Mayor Pro Tem Benson and Alderman Leonard are liaisons

g. Legislative liaison

Discussion highlights

- These are annual meetings led by Mr. McIntyre. She needs to stay on as liaison but would welcome another person. (McDermon)
- He is interested in serving on this. (Leonard)

Consensus – Mayor McDermon and Alderman Leonard are liaisons

h. Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission

Discussion highlights:

- The line item should say State and Federal liaison and needs to be moved to the Town appointed committee section. This commission needs to be involved in communications with State and Federal representatives to keep them in the loop. BISAC also needs to be kept in the loop with this commission. (Benson)
- We are not the only town on this commission. Do the other towns tell us when they communicate with their representatives? We need to look out for the Town first whether that aligns with Shoreline Protection or not. (Grant)
- Should we change how we appoint members to the Shoreline Protection Commission since there are no BISAC members on it? (Benson)
- Shoreline Protection meetings are open to the public. (McDermon)
- Other towns do not have an inlet that causes problems like ours does. Also other towns on the commission have different needs than we do. Two elected officials and one member of the BISAC committee should serve on this commission. (Leonard)
- Think there is real problem with BISAC staying in its lane. It is not his understanding that BISAC members are to interact at the State and Federal level. He thinks we are better off with two aldermen as members on the Shoreline Protection Commission. Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings. If we changed the make up on Shoreline Protection, then who is going to D.C. and Raleigh. Is it the Mayor and an Alderman or BISAC members? (Grant)
- Why is there opposition to giving greater recognition to BISAC for what they do. If you do not want them to be active at the State and Federal level, then what do you want them to do? Why should they not be involved with Shoreline Protection as a learning opportunity? (Benson)
- BISAC is still coming up to speed and learning. She is more comfortable with representatives being from the Board of Aldermen. (McDermon)
- Term limits on BISAC means there may not be experienced members on the committee to be on Shoreline Protection. (Benson)
- Shoreline Protection representatives should be Aldermen. BISAC is such a new committee. This can be addressed again next year. (Pletl)

Consensus: Mayor Pro Tem Benson and Alderman Fontana are liaisons

3. Outside agencies

a. Chamber of Commerce

Discussion highlights:

- There is a once-a-month meeting plus there are other events that can be attended. Time commitment is what you make it. There is a lot of good networking involved. Easy committee but she thinks it is important to keep a liaison. (Pletl)
- It ties in nicely with Parks and Recreation Committee. (McDermon)

Consensus – Alderman Fontana is liaison

b. NCBIWA

Consensus – Alderman Leonard has term established and will remain as liaison

c. ONWASA

Consensus - Mayor McDermon will remain as liaison

d. JUMPO (Jacksonville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization)

Mayor McDermon said Alderman Fontana expressed interest in serving and asked Alderman Pletl if she would have a problem with it. Alderman Pletl said she had no problem.

Consensus: Alderman Fontana is liaison with Alderman Pletl as alternate

e. Check signatories

Discussion highlights:

- Signing checks is a real eye opener for where the money goes. Everyone should do it at some time. (Leonard)
- He is currently signing and volunteered to continue. (Grant)
- This needs to be added as a duty and there needs to be three signatories. (Benson)

Consensus: Aldermen Fontana, Grant and Leonard are signatories

6. Other

Mayor Pro Tem Benson said the following three groups need to be added as a liaison duty:

a. Coastal Resource Commission (CRC) quarterly meetings. This is a meeting he has been attending and is an important opportunity to network with DCM officials. It is a physical meeting which rotates around to different locations.

b. Division of Water Resources (DWR) long term Shallow Draft Memorandum Agreement. This is a quarterly meeting he also has attended.

c. Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Study (EIS). He and the Mayor and the Manager have been having monthly calls with the representative to keep them on track with the EIS. This will be ongoing.

Discussion highlights:

- We talked about a master calendar to include all these meetings and he thinks it is a good idea so that Board members can participate if available. (Grant)
- What about involving the BISAC committee in the CRC and the DWR meetings? (Leonard)
- They are open meetings and anyone may attend. (McDermon)
- We need to better define the goals of BISAC first. (Grant)
- Who is the back up for all the beach committees that Mayor Pro Tem Benson serves on. Will it be Alderman Fontana? (Grant)

Break

Mayor McDermon called for a five-minute break at 9:58 am.

Mayor McDermon resumed the session at 10:03 am.

6. Other (continued)

a. CRC

Consensus: Mayor Pro Tem Benson is liaison

b. DWR

Consensus: Mayor Pro Tem Benson is liaison

c. EIS

Consensus: Mayor McDermon and Mayor Pro Tem Benson are liaisons

Mayor McDermon stated it would help to have BOA calendars populated with the dates of these meetings. Manager Derian said Ricky (IT) created the calendars and BOA members can add their meeting dates to it.

Alderman Pletl asked if we should have alternates for some of the liaisons.

Mayor McDermon replied that is a great idea for those with only one member.

Consensus:

- Chamber – Mayor McDermon is backup
- Onslow County Board of Commissioners - Alderman Pletl is backup
- JUMPO – Alderman Pletl is backup

Goals for 2023

Mayor McDermon asked for input from Board members on upcoming goals over a twelve-month timeline.

Discussion highlights:

- Budgetary goals: 1) Decide what to do with new fire fund; 2) Address inflation; 3) Need YTD status and 4) Budget for members attendance at meetings (Grant)
- Administratively, we need to give BISAC specific goals (Grant)
- We need to figure a strategy with our lobbyist on removal from CBRA. (Leonard)
- Keep our quest to eliminate Map Unit L06 and other issues in front of Congressional units. (Benson).
- Update on Parks and Recreation committee status at the January meeting; continue to look for grant opportunities and update overall beach plan and strategy. (McDermon)
- Keep an eye on the five-year plan and tax rate so we do not have to raise taxes every year. Look at giving goals to other committees. (Pletl)
- Removal of invasive ‘vitex’ from dunes. This is island wide not just in town. An education process is needed and how much we will fund. (Fontana)
- She has spoken with the two other towns about vitex and it has been discussed at the Shoreline Protection meeting. This is already on the radar. It does not help if only one town does it because the wind blows the seeds from one town to the next, so it is important for it to be an island wide project and education process to change the mindset. (Derian)
- Follow through with resilience coastal community program and the engineering grant we received to designate the areas in town where storm water is an issue. We need to follow up on ways to get grant funding to at least pick one or two projects in that report and move ahead with them. (Benson)

Manager Derian said that schedule has been evolving very rapidly. Surf City has been giving updates at the Shoreline Protection meetings. She did provide the Board a list of those projects. A lot of them are on DOT roads and one would require approval of a resolution to take a street over. The quickest one to move forward with, depending on the engineer’s timeline, is Richard Peters Park to take care of flooding in that area by building bio swells. That might be the initial and quickest project. We do not know yet how many projects we can submit per town or if there will be one joint project. There is a lot of uncertainty about the process.

- Goals should not just be chasing grants but understanding how much money we have and how much matching money will be needed. We also left out the need to get the Manager’s goals. We need a planning session to determine short and long-term goals (Grant)
- Maybe the Manager should give the Board her goals and the Board would feed from that? (Pletl)

- It is both, it helps to get the Board goals first. (Derian)
- Is there a plan for a Board retreat and if so, when, and how does all of this mesh into that? Or, if we are going to do this at regular meetings, do we need a planning meeting? If there is a Board retreat, it needs to happen prior to drafting the budget. (Leonard)

Mayor McDermon stated this is what she is hearing from the Board as goals:

- The CIP, Parks and Recreation, BISAC, Legislative and CBRA committees are to bring goals for the next year to the BOA at the January meeting
- Monitor the budget and keep an eye on the future
- Continue to look for grant opportunities
- There is a need for a beach engineer and beach plan update
- Work to remove vitex from the dunes, island wide

Consensus: Agenda items for January 3rd meeting:

Mayor McDermon said two items need to be added to the January meeting:

- Draft goals from today’s work session for review
- Schedule a work session or retreat in mid to late January or February

Concert

Mayor McDermon said she has list of names of folks that will help. She will get with Alderman Pletl to work out details and bring it back to the Board.

Manager Derian asked if there was feedback on the poster. Mayor McDermon and Alderman Pletl both said they liked it.

Fish and Wildlife CBRA Five-year memo

Consensus - send memo as presented once final numbers are received.

Adjournment

Motion – Alderman Leonard motioned to adjourn at 10:40 am; Alderman Pletl seconded; motion was approved unanimously (5-0)

Joann McDermon, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Nancy Avery, Interim Town Clerk

