

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners and Planning Board
September 21, 2019 Joint Meeting

2020

In attendance: Mayor John Davis, Mayor Pro Tem Frank Tursi, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Harry "PJ" Pugliese, Commissioner Larry Philpott, Commissioner Laurent Meilleur, Planning Chair Scott Chadwick, Ed McHale, Brad Buckley, Jeff Conaway, David Mohr, and Michael Favata. It was noted that Mayor Pro Tem Tursi, Commissioner Meilleur, and Commissioner Harry "PJ" Pugliese participated remotely as allowed by NCGS 166A-19. Governor Cooper had declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020. Planning Board Vice Chair Christina Ramsey arrived at 6:00pm.

Call to Order

The special joint meeting of the Board of Commissioners and Planning Board was called to order by both Mayor Davis and Chairman Chadwick at 5:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to receive a presentation (*herein attached power point*) from the Carolina Wetlands Association.

Mayor Davis added that the Board's goals for this meeting were 1) to be educated on how to protect our wetlands, waterways, and neighborhoods both present and future; 2) to provide guidance to the Planning Board for future ordinance amendment review and recommendations related to wetland protection and utilization of the Town's Watershed Restoration Plan; and 3) how the Staff could identify restoration projects, implementation of plan policies, identify areas that need attention.

Carolina Wetlands Association (CWA) members, David Shouse and Norton Webster were present with Rick Savage and Chad Guthrie participating remotely. Following the presentation, association members shared that funding was coming through various agencies to assist in protection projects and Swansboro was well equipped with three major plans in place and was encouraged to apply for those funds. CWA was available to help as needed.

Mayor Davis asked if there were legal options for regulations above/beyond the federal/state levels; was there land to be purchased to assist in stormwater runoff, and incentive ideas for developers to do more.

Land could be purchased and used for conservation, usually project specific, and best used when a community had a specific issue/task to accomplish. Project specific examples were purchases for farm/table uses, creating viewable site such as the Blue Ridge Parkway. Incentives for developers could be encouraged – one was density transfer, defined as *“a method of retaining areas of significance on a property by compacting density, usually near already existing areas of urbanization, allowing for maintenance of open spaces, historic or sensitive areas, etc.”* CWA would love to assist in helping the Town identify more incentives. Property buyouts/mitigations were also common, especially those that continually flood.

A brief recess was taken at 6:30pm/reconvening at 6:35pm.

CWA steered the Town from regulations above/beyond the state/federal levels, noting that it probably would not be successful legally.

Chairman Chadwick noted that some of the Town’s plans did not have enough “teeth” so to speak. He gave an example of a recent project constructed in Swansboro; the wetland was mitigated at \$120,000. Those funds were then spent in Carteret County. Was there any movement to change where the mitigated funds would/could be spent? CWA shared that there was no movement to change that fact.

Christina Ramsey shared that the Nature Conservancy worked with the Town in developing its plans and no area in Swansboro was identified as being so sensitive that it should be purchased to eliminate it from being developed; only that the Town should protect what wetlands it had.

Commissioner Philpott stated that the Town had developers who had built adjacent to unregulated wetlands and major issues were a result during heavy rainfalls. What the Town was looking for was a way to mitigate the issues and/or regulations to hold the developer responsible and/or how to limit the development. CWA indicated that they would speak with state agencies on these issues.

Commissioner Meilleur asked if there were examples of other towns whose stormwater mitigation was successful. Was there assistance to the Town to help with upgrades to the stormwater system. New development runoff, once it hit the Town’s stormwater system was overwhelming. CWA would like to take the questions received today, do some research and come back with as many answers as possible.

So not to dive into a separate issue of stormwater, Mayor Pro Tem Tursi redirected the conversation back to the goals for this meeting. He stated that the Land Use Plan had elements that needed to be codified. The Board of Commissioners needed to give the Planning Board policy directives from the Land Use Plan so they can effectively provide recommendation on future development, especially when wetlands were involved.

Commissioner Meilleur felt he understood the difference in the types of wetlands. He supported the implementation of density transfer and asked if there were greenways that might be identified as sensitive areas.

Mayor Davis asked Mayor Pro Tursi if he had guidance to share. Again, Mayor Pro Tem Tursi felt incentives to include density transfer should also be considered. All of which, the Planning Board could work toward such recommendations. If a directive was needed tonight, he believed it would be to ask the Planning Board to develop such incentives and recommend codifying Land Use policy.

Mayor Davis asked CWA if they wanted to assist in such development and if so, what would the cost be? CWA would assist and bring in additional resources to help the Town at some limited costs.

Any further questions should be sent to the Paula Webb, compiled and sent back out to all attending on Friday, September 25.

Adjournment

On a motion by Member Ramsey, seconded by Member Conaway the meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, Commissioner Philpott the meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.