

MINUTES
OAK ISLAND TOWN COUNCIL
Special Meeting—Joint Meeting with Beach & Inlet Committee
July 14, 2016—4:00 P.M.
OAK ISLAND TOWN HALL

Present: Mayor Cin Brochure, Mayor Pro Tempore Jim Medlin, Councilors Sheila M. Bell, Charlie K. Blalock, Loman Scott and Jeff Winecoff, Interim co-Manager/Town Clerk Lisa P. Stites, CMC, and Administrative Support Specialist Debbie Lasek.

Mayor Cin Brochure called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.

Discussion of the Committee Charge: Mr. Stokes said that the charge was provided to the Committee by former Town Manager Tim Holloman, and their direction was provided by the Town Manager at that time. He said he believes the removal of the Town Manager is what led to the disconnect between the Committee and the Council. They are an oriented group of people and agree with the charge of the Committee. Councilor Winecoff said he had read the committee charge, and felt like the disconnect prevented the two boards from working together. He said this needs to happen now, to determine the mission in order to work up a plan and move forward. Councilor Blalock concurred; there are big issues coming up and they need to work together, utilizing the skills and talents that the Town has to offer. Mr. Stancil then asked if they had explored who the previous Councils and Committees were and what they were doing. This committee was put together in 2015, there were no secret meetings and Minutes were published, and he wondered if the Council was meeting with all other Committees. Mayor Brochure said this meeting was on the recommendation of the Beach and Inlet Committee, but Mr. Stancil said the agenda seems to be a simply a question and answer session. Councilor Winecoff said the directive of the former Town Manager was not clear; this work should have been on a beach plan, not just a beach tax. He said there are residents who cannot afford this hardship and should not be taxed off this island. The directive of a beach plan was pushed aside; back in September, he sent an email to the Town Manager about this approach. Mr. Stancil said he does not believe this didn't start until March; Mayor Brochure confirmed that this Council was involved prior to March. They met with beach funding consultant Peter Ravella, who only mentioned "tax" at the first meeting, and the Council thought there would be more options forthcoming. Mr. Stokes agreed, and said he thought there would be more exploration of other ways to raise the necessary funds. He said he suspects that Mr. Ravella worked for the Town Manager; Mayor Brochure agreed that he worked for a directive, in her opinion. Councilor Winecoff said he flat out told him he wouldn't vote for a tax. Mr. Stokes said he attended two of the public input beach nourishment meetings, and was surprised that the only emphasis was on a tax with no other exploration. Mr. Stancil then asked if the Council hired Mr. Ravella. Ms. Painter then said this Committee felt the timing of the report led to the disagreement with former Beach & Inlet Committee Chairman Mr. Foster. The majority of the Committee thought it was too aggressive to present this right before the budget. There were discussions about using Municipal Service Districts and the need for an entire year to implement; the recommendation was to hire the consultant but to spread out the process to allow the townspeople to become accustomed to the idea. This did not happen. Two former Town Managers were involved, plus a consultant who was paid about \$100,000 to recommend a plan, which included a tax increase. This Committee believes that, even if they did implement paid parking, it would not produce the money needed. Ms. Painter also wanted to clarify that the Beach & Inlet Committee (BIC) needs to know, from the Council, whether the Town is going forward in the direction of a beach nourishment plan on a grand scale and that the Council show a commitment to this project.

Role of the Committee: Ms. Painter said if they are not headed towards a grand scale beach nourishment plan, there is no need for this Committee. Mayor Brochure said if tax is the only funding idea, then the Council will probably tell them their task is complete. Ms. Painter said this is not the only idea; Mr.

Ravella suggested putting more accommodations tax towards nourishment and this was suggested by the previous Council. However, that still will not be enough.

Councilor Winecoff said the whole goal was to get funding for a project three years out. Ms. Painter said it will take 2-3 years and \$2-3 million to get the permits. If the Town waits for three more years—Mr. Hatten said they have \$2.3 million in the Town's account—they will still only have about \$3 million in the bank. The point they are trying to make is that the Council has to realize they need to save more than that, and waiting until it is absolutely necessary will result in not having enough time, and the burden on the taxpayers will be enormous.

Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said he has read through the beach funding plan several times, and the overview of the new revenue possibilities lists seven options. They cannot look at the past, but instead should concentrate on putting a plan in place. They must do something; when the editor of the local newspaper says not doing anything is not an option, then the Town must do something. The people of the Town list pursuing funding options for effective beach nourishment at the top of their list in the Comprehensive Plan. Paid parking is a step in the right direction, but is only a drop in the bucket. The Council will get beat up for any tax increase, but that is better than waiting for a storm. It is time to move forward and say “this is the direction the Town needs to go.” They need to start today to put a plan together, and show the Town that they are going to do the right thing to fix this problem.

Mayor Brochure said the committee charge is more than finding funding; they will need someone to help oversee the monitoring program. Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin agreed. Ms. Painter said the beach nourishment plan is the biggest thing confronting the Town, and is the legacy of the Council. The sewer project is still hanging over their heads, but the future is the beach. The Comprehensive Plan Ad hoc Committee said the Beach is the funding engine of the Town. The BIC members need to know the commitment; she needs to know from the Town Council if they are headed towards a large-scale beach nourishment plan.

BIC Chairman Lake then thanked the Mayor for inviting them. The charge, as it exists, is pretty standard fare for Committees; it's a bit wordy and clumsy but overall is what one would expect. They do not feel there is a problem with the charge. In conjunction with the needs of Council, they may need to be more communicative. They have the opportunity to engage with people in the Coastal Science community, and he would visualize in addition to the charge, they need to communicate with Council at least monthly what they are doing and finding out. Mr. Stokes said that that they have a lot they can give in terms of support with large scale beach nourishment planning. Town employees failed to interact with them in the past, and he feels that it is, again, a matter of communication. Talking to Holden Beach about sand when they are looking for sand sources, for example; they need to have lines of communication to the Town staff, instead of before when everything went through Mr. Holloman. Ms. Stites has a great deal of history and is a great asset, which will be important to the planning process. They are all willing to help; they were disgruntled with the lack of response toward saving for the project. Communication is what was missing. Mr. Stancil then said the engineering report shows three nourishment options; he said he sees the role of the Committee as assisting the Council in achieving one of these options. They wished to get into some type of annualized plan to begin paying for the project. He does not have a clear role until he knows what kind of money he will be working with. Mr. Stancil said he can speak personally of the affront of being completely rejected by the Council; however, he agrees with Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin that this is the time to move forward. The Council needs to determine what, if any, size project they want to pursue for an engineered beach. The purpose of this Committee is to give guidance toward the options the Town can pursue. That is, in his mind, the role of the Committee, to assist the Council in understanding the options. Every beach nourishment program in the state has included some ad valorem tax increase. They felt it was wise that the Town use the MSD option; they wanted to assist the Town in moving in this direction. However, he said there is no way to provide a beach nourishment unless there is a tax increase.

The point is that they need to choose a plan, and the Committee is here to provide guidance. They need to choose a plan sooner than later, and their role is incumbent upon a plan by Council.

Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said this was a good starting point. It's too late for a tax increase for this year, and the only option is tax districts. The Council will determine which plan to pursue, and then meet with them again. Mr. Lake asked what they need from the Committee; Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said he could not think of anything at this time. Mr. Stancil offered their services to decipher the three plan options. Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said this was not needed at this point; he has been trying to get the Council to move forward for the last five years. They will determine the Plan, and then get back to the Committee.

Mayor Brochure said Ms. Painter had asked a question regarding commitment to a large scale nourishment project; Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin answered yes, it is imperative that we move toward a major beach nourishment program for Oak Island. Councilor Bell said she would like to pursue getting permits immediately; Ms. Painter said that in order to pursue permits, they need to decide which plan they are going to implement. Mr. Lake said they have been sitting dead in the water since February with a multi-million dollar engineering firm, waiting for the Town to tell them how to proceed. He added that they received fairly definitive estimates of three alternatives around the first of February, and they have been waiting on the Town since then. Ms. Painter added, in the Ravella report, his conclusion was to go for the least costly plan as he didn't see any way the Town could raise enough money. They also need to know if MSD can be established after the budget process. Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said they can be done any time in the budget year.

Councilor Scott asked if it was reasonable to suggest the Town's small population could handle the \$67 million plan; the consensus of the Committee was not. However, the \$30 million is possible with help. Mr. Lake said he believes there is state and county money available, with additional money put in by the Town. All across the coast, they are aware that they will need to put money into the beaches. Councilor Scott added that, if they came up with ways to pay off the fire stations and Town hall, this would free up \$10 million per year. Councilor Winecoff added that this was one way to get money. He said he has always been for beach nourishment, but the only objective is to do it the right way. The preliminary draft report was received in May, and he never considers a draft as the final report. They were also advised by the former Town Manager and the consultant not to attend any public input meetings. If they are going to tax somebody, he said he does not favor an across-the-board tax. There is no doubt in his mind that we will do the nourishment.

Mr. Lake asked if they could begin to put together what they have with ongoing capital input into the beach plan, and look at the capabilities they have in funding and other revenue sources. Mayor Brochure said that a meeting to discuss this is scheduled for August 4th, and it is incumbent on this Board to do so. They have asked for facts to be presented, what the Town has access to, where extra funding is available, etc.; this Council has not ignored it. Councilor Blalock said, as he hears it, they all agree that they need to do something. He does not want to lose what the beach is, and he thinks the communications here are fantastic but that he needs to be able to communicate it to the people they work for. They all want the beach; they need to be able to communicate this and pay for it. Councilor Scott said their work is not unappreciated, but it seems like many people responded with hurt feelings when the Council didn't do what they wanted. The Council must respond to this politically, also, and Councilor Blalock said they must sell it to the people they work for. Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin agreed, and said this is an island-wide issue. Ms. Painter said she likes what she hears; she is hopeful that they will get the plan that Council wants to proceed with and they will continue the discussion. Mayor Brochure said they need to funnel more questions to Councilor Bell as she attends the BIC meetings, and that the Council would like more meetings with the Committee. Mr. Stancil said there is a meeting coming up at the end of the month before the next Council meeting, and they will hopefully be able to make a recommendation to them; he agrees with Ms. Painter about not going with the least expensive plan. Ms. Painter added that she would

like to see a more formal agreement with Holden Beach and Caswell Beach about sand sharing; she believes it will be more logical for Town officials to participate in discussions. She previously mentioned the Wilmington Harbor dredging and the need to get involved with that project. Also, the General Assembly will wind up the short session soon, but they will need to be in touch once the long session starts to campaign for significant funds from the State towards beach nourishment. Mr. Lake agreed and since they have appointed a leader, this should be backed up by funding and prioritization of strategies for projects. They are looking forward to that culminating into serious assistance; Mayor Brochure agreed. She said they are further along now than when the Ravella plan started. Many people may not be aware of lobbying groups up and down the whole coast; they are strong and are growing every day. Mr. Lake said there seems to be a great deal of pressure being put on the General Assembly about the beach; Mayor Brochure agreed, and added that our representatives understand and fight for us. However, they need to advocate with western areas that have people with properties on the coast. Mr. Stancil added that it is hard to get folks in western North Carolina to help with our problems at the coast, and stressed the importance of putting the Town's own money via taxes into this project. They need to understand that they need to "put some skin in the game" in order to keep our beach. He said there is no plan out there that will work without some type of tax increase; they felt like this was the failure of Mr. Ravella's report in sharing the concern of this reality. Funding for those towns with viable programs may be greater. Mayor Brochure added that they understand the tax, but the Council will leave no stone unturned in looking for additional sources. Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin said this project needs to be a long-term solution, and that they need to be looking 25 years down the road. Mr. Lake added that since he move here four years ago, he has seen the amount of dry beach sand at his beach access erode from 60 feet to 25 feet.

Mayor Pro Tempore Medlin made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Blalock seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Cin Brochure, Mayor

ATTESTED: _____
Lisa P. Stites, CMC
Town Clerk

Clerk's Statement: Minutes are in compliance with the open meetings laws. The purpose of minutes per the open meetings laws is to provide a record of the actions taken by a Council or a Board and evidence that the actions were taken according to proper procedures. All actions of the Council are recorded in the official minutes. Not all portions of Town of Oak Island meetings are recorded verbatim in the official minutes, with general discussion items, reports, presentations, and public comments being paraphrased or summarized in many instances. Public comments in writing should be submitted to the clerk via hard copy, electronic mail, or other means so as to ensure an exact verbatim account. The Town of Oak Island provides full coverage of meetings on Government Channel 8 so that the Citizens and the Public may view and listen to the meetings in their entirety.