

MINUTES
OAK ISLAND TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING – JOINT MEETING WITH
THE TOWN OF CASWELL BEACH
APRIL 5, 2018 – 5:30 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS - OAK ISLAND TOWN HALL

Present for the Town of Oak Island: Mayor Cin Brochure, Mayor Pro Tempore Loman Scott, Council members John W. Bach, Sheila M. Bell, Charlie K. Blalock, Town Manager David Kelly and Assistant Manager/Town Clerk Lisa P. Stites. Councilor Jeff Winecoff was out of town and was not able to attend.

Present for the Town of Caswell Beach: Mayor Deborah Ahlers, and Commissioners Marti Hardy, Kathy Lubsen, Dan O’Neill, George Kassler.

Mayor Brochure called the Oak Island Town Council meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Ahlers called the Town of Caswell Beach Commissioners meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Brochure explained the meeting format.

Chad Kimes, Deputy Division Engineer introduced himself and Kevin Bowen and Karen Collette, also here with the NC Department of Transportation. Mr. Kimes gave a presentation on the upcoming repairs and temporary closure of the G.V. Barbee Bridge. The presentation is attached and is hereby made a part of the Minutes. He said the key word to take away is “preservation.” The bridge is considered a “high value bridge.” Mr. Kimes said that once funding was allocated, the Division had to act quickly to utilize it to make the needed repairs; \$6 to \$7 million for repairs versus an estimated \$80 to completely replace it. Once this work is complete, it will extend the life of the bridge 25-50 years. One of the main questions that has been asked is ‘what is the hurry?’ Mr. Kimes said there is not any immediate danger to the structure. The project has been accelerated because of the planned widening of N.C. 211 in 2019, which will include construction of new interchanges at Long Beach Road and Midway Road.

Mr. Bowen spoke about the specifications of the bridge, saying the average daily traffic is 12,000 vehicles and the current condition is “fair.” The bridge was built in 1972. The 28 approach spans on the island side of the bridge need to be replaced. Extensive concrete repairs are also needed. There are things that need to be addressed now before they become more of a problem. There will also be new bridge deck overlay (driving surface). Mr. Bowen also reviewed pictures of the current conditions of the bridge. Mr. Bowen said the railing would also be replaced/upgraded. The only part that will be truly closed is past the last driveway; the barricades to close the road will be at the bridge and some of the roadway approaching it. No access to residences or businesses will be blocked. There will be signs along the detour route indicating the bridge closure.

Plans are to be completed tomorrow, and the contract will hopefully be awarded in May. The contractor could begin mobilization during the summer. The actual closure will hopefully be only for 6 months, from mid-October until mid-April 2019. The bridge closure will come after the U.S. Mackerel Tournament and it will open before the 2019 Easter holiday. There will be an incentive built into the contract to encourage early completion. It is a very accelerated schedule. NCDOT will also repave Oak Island Drive after the bridge reopens.

During the tourist season months, there may be nighttime closures only as work begins. In the off season, there may be off-peak lane closures.

Karen Sphar, Executive Vice-president of the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, spoke about the Chamber's plans. Ms. Sphar thanked DOT for the infrastructure improvements and the information provided tonight. This closure does have the potential to impact businesses in several areas. Ms. Sphar reviewed the items the Chamber and partner agencies are working on to help businesses during this time, such as creating a logo, preparing a worksheet for business owners to use when revising their business plans and scheduling a marketing seminar. She encouraged residents to "go local" and continue to support our businesses.

Mike Defeo, Oak Island Small Business representative, said that this was something that needed to be taken seriously. He said a group of businesses got together last week to discuss what they can do, and what assistance they can expect from the towns. He said the business owners will need to come up with a plan for how to get to their customers.

Mayor Brochure said that the area mayors also recently met, and mutual aid plans for providing emergency services will be in place.

Richard Knight, 116 SE 8th St: Mr. Knight asked if it would be legal to close the Waterway and make a roadway across. He said that he is concerned about someone from the Yaupon area needing to get to the hospital and not making it. He said that if that were to happen, he thinks someone would be held liable.

Mayor Ahlers said that closing the Waterway was out of the Towns' purview. Kevin Mulholland with Brunswick County EMS said that the County has an ambulance on the east end of the island; they will keep that there as much as they are able. He explained where additional ambulance and paramedics are located and how they are shifted to adjust for coverage.

Rae Keane, 21 August Drive: Ms. Keane asked about the project involving Long Beach Road. Mr. Kimes spoke about the planned interchange for the Long Beach Road/N.C. 211 (which will start the fall of 2019 and be finished in 2020).

Ed Drzewiecki, 128 NW 19th St.: Mr. Drzewiecki asked about the increased traffic flow on the new bridge road from people coming onto the island. Mr. Bowen said that they had already discussed signal coordination on the detour route.

Les Tubb, Superintendent of Brunswick County Schools: Mr. Tubb thanked NCDOT for being concerned about the safety of our children, residents and visitors. He said that they run about 7 busses, and run busses on Saturdays. He said it will cost the school system approximately \$116,000 to double the busses to cover the routes (maybe less if the closure is only for 6 months). He said that they are trying to impact the pickup and drop off schedule as little as possible, though it was likely those times will be affected slightly. Mayor Pro Tempore Scott suggested using Yacht Drive for the busses instead of Oak Island Drive; Mr. Tubb said that they would look at every possibility and work with the Towns.

Gerald Edwards, 108 NE 47th St.: Mr. Edwards asked if once construction begins, could additional issues be discovered that would affect the planned work. Mr. Bowen said that was always a possibility, though they had done a very thorough inspection.

Tom Siemers, CEO of Doshier Memorial Hospital: Mr. Siemers said that the hospital staff was looking at where they provide services. He also asked how the ambulance service routes would be affected. Mr. Mullholland said that as far as response times, it shouldn't affect that as there is paramedic level coverage on the island, Long Beach Road and Southport. As far as transport, it will depend on the call.

Lori Simpson, Caswell Beach: Ms. Simpson said she was concerned about medical transport. Mr. Mullholland said if they needed to, they could call in a helicopter. He said they only used the helicopter 16 times last year. He also said the ambulances have lights and sirens and are used to getting through traffic getting into Wilmington or Myrtle Beach.

Warren Vasser, Minnesota Dr.: Mr. Vasser said that he heard their fire station would be split between the mainland and island. Oak Island Assistant Fire Chief Steve Conway said that some things will change. Right now, about 90 percent of the department's call are on the island. They will not be abandoning the station, however. They will man it part-time and are working with the County and Southport Fire Department. Southport Fire Department will respond to South Harbour Village calls. Oak Island's Fire Marshal will begin reporting to the South Harbour station next week for a variety of reasons. Asst. Chief Conway said Southport has a satellite facility on Long Beach Road.

Helen Cashwell, 3407 E. Yacht Drive: Ms. Cashwell asked about the traffic coming out of St. James. Mr. Kimes said that NCDOT would continue to evaluate all of the intersections during this project.

Matt Parvin with Oak Island Accommodations: Mr. Parvin asked if there would be signs on U.S. 17 to redirect some traffic before heading down to Oak Island. Mr. Bowen said that they could look at the routing farther out than they have already.

DiAne Benzie, owner of Coastal Cottage Shop on Long Beach Road: Ms. Benzie asked that signs saying "Local Traffic Only" be placed as close to the actual closures as possible, that would be appreciated. She also asked for signs saying that businesses were open. Mr. Bowen said the concern would be to avoid all 12,000 cars coming down to the closure but not have a viable place to turn around. He said they would look at all they could do to help. Ms. Benzie suggested the Towns pay for a billboard saying the businesses were open. Karen Collette spoke about geofencing, and said it might be possible to have NCDOT ads explaining how to get around in the area.

Roberta Guendelsberger, Glen Cove Drive: Ms. Guendelsberger asked if there would also be a penalty clause in the contract for not finishing on time. Mr. Bowen said that their contracts do include penalties or a liquidated damages amount.

Mike Webster, 819 Elizabeth Drive: Mr. Webster asked about staging. Mr. Bowen said that they could try to predict what contractors will do and sometimes that works. He also said that he thinks the only way to get this done in 6 months is to start in the middle and to bring materials in from both directions. He said there is room on the island side for staging. He said he thinks the beams will be delivered as they are set.

Bob Lloyd, 4257 Anderson Drive: Mr. Lloyd said that homeowners' insurance rates were based on distance to a fire station and that insurance rates could go up. Asst. Chief Conway said that insurance ratings are set after fire department inspections. Oak Island's rating is currently a 5 and a rating inspection is not likely to happen in the next few months. He said that he also felt like the Department of Insurance would take this project into consideration.

Mike Pratt, 308 NE 58th Street: Mr. Pratt asked about resurfacing Oak Island Drive; would lanes be closed only at night? Mr. Bowen said that there is some deeper patch work that needed to be done, which would be done before the bridge closure. The resurfacing would not happen until after the bridge reopened. With 3 lanes in many areas, they could keep two lanes open while repaving.

Mr. Siemens (Doshier Hospital CEO) said that it is difficult to ride a bike on the bridge because the ridges are so high. Mr. Bowen spoke about the repairs that will be done and how it would make it better.

Mr. Pratt asked why the high span was not in need of replacing. Mr. Bowen said it was a different design, though it still needed some work.

Mayor Ahlers asked if all of the bridge work would be done in the 6-month span and they wouldn't come back in 2 years to do more. Mr. Bowen said they were still trying to identify the entire contract time. There may be some things done underneath, etc. that could be done outside the 6-month closure period. There will of course be additional repairs in the future, but he can't say when that will be.

Mike Defeo asked about the communications efforts from NCDOT. Ms. Collette said that she would likely monitor local Facebook groups to help answer questions. There will also likely be a project website. Ms. Sphar said that the Chamber would be doing a webinar on geofencing soon.

Ted Bodenschatz, 201 Ocean Dr.: Mr. Bodenschatz asked NCDOT why a barge wouldn't be used to remove debris and deliver materials. He also asked if the Chamber resources would be available to all small businesses. Ms. Sphar said the Chamber was a membership organization, so most of the resources would be available for members, but some services that would be available to all would be advertised.

Ms. Keane asked NCDOT if there was money available to help the businesses advertise.

Mr. Kimes spoke about the Surf City project, and said they work with the Town to get information disseminated. He offered to work with the Towns for this project as well.

Councilor Blalock said that he would do everything he could to promote the local businesses. He said we're all in this together and we would make it. Mayor Brochure agreed. Councilor Bach said he wanted to commend the NCDOT and all of our first responders for their initial planning. He said that work still needed to be done on a comprehensive emergency response plan and a marketing plan.

Chance Lambeth, with Rep. David Rouzer's office, said he had come to learn more about the project and that he was encouraged by what he heard. He also reminded everyone that the Congressman has an office in Bolivia.

Councilor Bell made a motion to adjourn the Oak Island Town Council meeting at 6:54 p.m. Mayor Pro Tempore Scott seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Hardy made a motion to adjourn the Caswell Beach Commissioners meeting at 6:54 p.m. Commissioner O'Neill seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Cin Brochure, Mayor

Attested: _____
Lisa P. Stites, CMC
Assistant Manager/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.