

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, January 24, 2019, 2:00 PM

Topsail Beach

Commission Members:

Steve Smith, Chairman
Mike Benson, Vice Chairman
David Ward
Richard Peters
Hiram Williams
Jerry Patton
Ed Broadhurst

Also Present:

Bryan Chadwick, Town Manager, North Topsail Beach
Michael Rose, Town Manager, Topsail Beach
Stephanie Hobbs, Assistant Manager, Surf City

1. Call to Order & Greetings

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

3. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Smith added the 2019 Calendar to the agenda as item 9c.

Mr. Ward made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Peters and passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Benson made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2018 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams and passed unanimously.

5. Consultant/Lobbyist/Partners – Information & Contact Review/Update

Research Institute Status Report

Squeak Smith, Chairman of the Research Institute (RI), introduced his associates Charles Anderson, Debbie Dodson and Allen Walker. Mr. Smith spoke to the Commission Members about the \$5 million grant they received from the Division of Water Resources. The purpose of the grant is to work with coastal local governments to explore opportunities for the development and implementation of projects that can extend the useful life of beach nourishment projects. Mr. Smith stated that after Hurricane Florence the legislation was changed so that the grant money was to be spent solely on Topsail Island. RI reached out to the three Towns asking them to submit project ideas on how the money could be spent. Mr. Smith stated that the list of projects they received from the three towns totaled an estimated \$40 million, well in excess of the \$5 million they have to spend. He said RI decided they did not want to be the ones making the selection of which projects would be accomplished. They felt the decision should be made by the individual communities, so they would like to create a Task Force made up of individuals from the three Towns to review and rank the projects. Mr. Smith said in addition to the three individuals representing each Town, a representative from RI and Todd Miller (with the Coastal Federation) will serve on the task force as well. He added that although he or his Associate, Mr. Anderson will serve as Chair, they will not be a voting member.

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Mr. Smith spoke about how the projects will be ranked by factors such as how fast the project can get on the ground and does it have permits or design plans already in place. Mr. Smith concluded by requesting each Town to submit a person they recommend be their Representative on the Task Force.

Poyner Spruill Attorneys – Mike McIntyre

Mr. Broadhurst spoke about the letter multiple Congressmen sent to Greg Sheehan, the Acting Director with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Broadhurst said the letter was very precise with specific questions asked, but the response was very generic without much explanation to their decision. Chairman Smith stated that the letter was requesting sand in CBRA zones be used in beach management projects and basically the response from US Fish and Wildlife was no. Mr. Broadhurst said their decision is based on a 1994 opinion that makes no sense in today's world. Chairman Smith said Mr. McIntyre has spoken with Senators Tillis and Burr and also Congressman Rouser about this issue and how it doesn't make a lot of sense. Chairman Smith said Mr. McIntyre will continue to push the issue.

Chairman Smith stated that Mr. McIntyre is asking if there will be representation in Washington DC at the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) conference in March. Chairman Smith reminded the Commission Members that this is also an excellent opportunity to meet with Members of Congress. Mr. Benson stated that three people will be there representing North Topsail Beach. Topsail Beach and Surf City had not made the determination yet but will make the decision soon and inform Mr. McIntyre.

Chairman Smith stated that Congress did approve certain changes to the CBRA map. He said not everything was changed but the changes had a positive impact on 60-80 homes. So, we will continue to work. Mr. Benson said he will put a link to the interactive CBRA zone map on the TISPC website.

Connie Wilson Consulting

Chairman Smith summarized Connie Wilson's report. He talked about broadening the scope of who to include when discussing forming a Coastal Coalition. He noted that there may be other Legislators that represent the mountain region but own property at the coast and therefore would be interested in being a part of the Coalition. Mr. Ward suggested a letter be sent to the list of property owners on the island whose full-time residence is in other Towns and States.

United States Army Corp of Engineering (USACE) Update– Pam Castens

Chairman Smith stated that Ms. Castens sends her regrets for not be able to attend but she got tied up on something else. He added that there is not much to report with the USACE being they are waiting on funding to do anything. Chairman Smith spoke about how the Surf City/North Topsail Beach nourishment project was part of the package the USACE recommended for funding, but by the time the package came back from the office of Budget and Management, it had been removed. Chairman Smith said when the USACE make a recommendation to do something and it gets dropped, we need to figure out how to get it back on.

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Chairman Smith said the side cast dredge is under trials after being out of commission for the last two years due to maintenance. He said he hopes to see it running up to the New River Inlet if they stick to the schedule. Mr. Broadhurst said he thought he read in Mr. McIntyre's report that there was start-up money available. Chairman Smith said money may be available, but when the package came back, there were no new starts for beach projects. He added that Congress indicated that there must be at least one new start with the USACE, but right now there are no new beach nourishment projects on the list. Mr. Benson said he understands there is another Disaster Relief bill that will be passed once the Government re-opens and one idea is that FEMA may allow the USACE to do new start construction through the Disaster Recovery fund. Chairman Smith said there are a lot of things going on behind the scenes, so we just need to stay aware.

North Carolina Beach, Inlet & Waterway Association (NCBIWA) Review – Kathleen Riley

Chairman Smith stated that the NCBIWA has defined their roles a little more firmly and will be more aggressive when approaching Legislators. Because of this, they will more than likely have to register as a Lobbyist. He added that Kathleen Riley has relocated to the Raleigh area.

Mr. Benson stated that he heard from Ms. Riley right before the meeting and she said they are working to establish a database with the State that would identify properties along the Intercoastal Waterway that could potentially be used to hold spoil material from private dredge projects. He added that the Coastal Caucus is coming together nicely and that Ms. Riley has done a good job spearheading that.

6. NC Coastal Resources Commission (CRAC & CRC) Update

Chairman Smith said the Commission covered everything that happened at the last CRC meeting. The next meeting will be Feb 27-28 in Morehead City. Chairman Smith said he knows one of the items on the agenda at that meeting will be the Inlet Hazard Areas and we need to follow that real close.

7. Old Business

Dune Recovery Education

Chairman Smith informed the Commission and the public about the Dune Repair Workshop that will be held on March 9th in Surf City. Mr. Ward suggested a dune vegetation supplier be at the workshop so people can buy plants.

State of Hurricane Recovery

Chairman Smith said he asked Mr. Ward to try to give his best estimate on what the rental season will look like since the storm. Mr. Ward said the data he is providing is based on information from Ward Realty only. He said they are seeing a 17.6% increase in reservations on the island so far for the summer season. Mr. Ward said not to count on the numbers too much because it's really too early to tell. He added that he will have a better picture about the middle of March. Chairman Smith said the availability of rentals will be less this year because some owners won't have all the hurricane damage repaired by the time the rental season starts. Mr. Ward agreed and said they are aware of about a dozen of their rentals that won't be ready.

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Accomplishments for 2018

Chairman Smith said this is the time of the year we like to report on what goals we wanted to achieve and what goals we actually accomplished. Mr. Benson read through the list one by one identifying the progress on each item.

Define State and Federal Legislative Goals for 2019

Chairman Smith provided the Commission Members with a list of State, Federal and NCBIWA 2019 goals. Mr. Benson read the list and the members had discussion on each item removing the goals they didn't see as a priority for 2019.

Mr. Ward made a motion to adopt the revised list of goals for 2019. Seconded by Mr. Williams, the motion carried.

8. Towns' Local Project

a. North Topsail Beach

Manager, Bryan Chadwick said they have been busy with FEMA site inspections. He noted that the FEMA inspectors are very aware of where the CBRA Zones are and so he is not sure what will happen in those areas as far as reimbursement. He also noted that some of the inspectors who are non-essential are not showing up because of the Government shutdown.

Mr. Chadwick said they lost about 2.48 million cubic yards of sand from the beach from Hurricane Florence, so their priority now is to repair the dune structure. He stated that they started a dune restoration project Monday, pushing sand to repair the dune line. He said they are starting at the north end and moving south to the Surf City Town line pushing about 1000 linear feet a day.

Mr. Chadwick spoke highly about their FEMA Grants Manager. He said she is very responsive, meets with them on a weekly basis and talks with the Finance Officer on a daily basis trying to get things clarified. He said he has been very satisfied.

Mr. Chadwick stated that the repairs to the Town Hall will probably take a year to complete. In the mean time, they continue to work from their temporary location in Sneads Ferry.

b. Surf City

Mr. Ward said the Town Council held a special meeting last Friday. After a lot of input from the residents and Chris Gibson, of TI Coastal, the Board voted to spend \$5 million to haul in sand as an immediate response to repair the dunes damaged by Hurricane Florence. Mr. Ward added that the Town also continues to pursue a Local Beach Nourishment Project which would expand the width of the beach. Mr. Ward said unfortunately, due to the amount of sand lost during Hurricane Florence, after the completion of the Local Project, the beach will just be restored to pre-hurricane conditions.

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c. Topsail Beach

Town Manager, Michael Rose stated that the Town will open bids tomorrow for a dredge project. The dredge material will not only open the navigation channels, but the spoil will be used on the beach to repair the dunes to their pre-hurricane condition. He expects the project to begin mid-February and take 4-6 weeks to complete. Mr. Rose said the Town is still working on the necessary permitting for the Local Storm Damage Reduction (SDR) project which will add a second dune and expand the beach strand. Unfortunately, the permitting process is on hold due to the Government shutdown.

Mr. Rose stated that the Town will be hiring an engineering firm to do a Space/Facility needs study. Although this study was already needed, after Hurricane Florence it was evident that a true Emergency Operations Center (EOC) needs to be a part of our facility needs. He added that all three Towns were faced with inadequate EOC's and would like to get together with the other Two Managers to explore options to work together. Mr. Rose added that at the end of the day we are all one Island battling the same issues.

Mr. Rose said the Towns Beach, Inlet and Sound (BIS) Committee is exploring the idea of adopting regulations for private crossovers that would protect the dune system. Basically, looking at what CAMA allows and expanding on it. He spoke about how CAMA regulations allow crossovers to touch the top of the dunes but Topsail Beach would like to be more restrictive by requiring 2' between the top of the dune and the crossover.

9. New Business

a. CRC Meeting

Chairman Smith said that the next CRC Meeting will be February 27-28 in Morehead City. He stated that this will be an important meeting and encouraged each Town to have representation there.

b. State & Federal Funds Challenges

Chairman Smith said the State has been able to help Southeastern NC to recover from the storm because they had funds in reserves, and they are expecting a surplus of funds this year. Chairman Smith said although he doesn't want to deplete the coffers, we need to encourage them on how they can help our communities in the right way. He spoke about several opportunities coming up to meet with Representatives.

Chairman Smith informed the Commission about information discussed at an earlier meeting he attended in Pender County about how State Legislators could help us deal with issues we had during the storm. He said one of biggest issues was transportation, particularly how to keep the main highways (I-40, Hwy 421, I-95 and Hwy 17) from flooding. Other topics discussed was housing, shelter accommodations, private business assistance, retrofitting schools to be prepared for Category 4 storms and how to deal with mental health issues that

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occur after these storms.

c. Adopt the 2019 Calendar

Mr. Broadhurst made a motion to adopt the 2019 calendar as proposed. Seconded by Mr. Williams, the motion passed unanimously.

10. Open Forum

Mr. Peters commented that Mr. Smith from RI, had indicated that the State had \$100 million not allocated and that they would be trying to seek some of that. Chairman Smith said he has talked with State Senators and they understand there is a need for help in this area to recover from the storm and feel additional funds will be allocated for that, but he can't say how much as it is all very political.

Mr. Williams said he doesn't understand why the Office of Management and Budget stopped everything the USACE was doing for Beach Restoration. Chairman Smith said it wasn't just Beach Nourishment projects that were pulled, there were other projects eliminated that were not Beach Nourishment related. He said no one knows why the North Topsail/ Surf City project was pulled, but he feels that with the return the project has, the Corps will try to put it back in to play. But that all comes down to how much money they get.

11. Next Meeting –North Topsail Beach Town Hall, 2 PM, Friday, March 1, 2019

12. Adjournment

Mr. Ward made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Peters and passed unanimously.

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:01 p.m.