



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 28, 2021, 2:00 PM

Commission Members Present

Steve Smith, Chairman
Mike Benson, Vice Chairman
Teresa Batts
Ed Broadhurst
Larry Combs
Tom Leonard
Jade Litcher
Connie Pletl
Mark Price
Hiram Williams

Associates Present

Kerri Allen, N.C. Coastal Federation
Kyle Breuer, Town Manager, Surf City
Christina Burke, Asst Town Manager, Topsail Beach
Pamela Castens, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Adam Caldwell, Office of Senator Thom Tillis
Dave Gilbride, Town Manager, North Topsail Beach
John Gunter, Commissioner, Topsail Beach
Stephanie Hobbs, Town Clerk, Surf City
Chance Lambeth, Office of Rep. David Rouzer
Pat Mulligan, TI resident
Kathleen Riley, NCBIWA
Mike Rose, Town Manager, Topsail Beach
William Snyder, BIS Committee, Topsail Beach
Dwight Torres, Councilman, Surf City
Connie Wilson, TISPC State Advocate
India Mackinson, Recording Clerk

I. Call to Order & Greetings

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm. He introduced and welcomed William Snyder as a member of the Topsail Beach BIS Committee.

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Broadhurst made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Williams seconded the motion, and it was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes for October 22, 2020

Vice Chairman Benson made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Broadhurst seconded the motion, and it was carried.

V. Nomination and Selection of Chair & Vice Chair for 2021

Mr. Broadhurst nominated Steve Smith for Chairman. Alderman Leonard seconded the motion. Mr. Williams moved to close the nominations, and Steve Smith was unanimously elected Chairman. Mr. Broadhurst nominated Mike Benson for Vice Chairman, which Alderman Leonard seconded. Mr. Williams moved to close the nominations, and Mike Benson was unanimously elected Vice Chairman.

VI. Consultant & Partners Reviews

A. Ward and Smith Attorneys – See report

Vice Chairman Benson said there is a lot of coastal resiliency federal legislation in the pipeline, so there will be more funding opportunities in the coming year. He recommended the Commission should stay on top of that to take advantage of the coming opportunities. Chairman Smith said he already talked about it with Mr. McIntyre and Ms. Wilson.

B. Connie Wilson Consulting – See report

Chairman Smith said he spoke with Ms. Wilson that morning, who may be on the call later.

C. North Carolina Coastal Federation –

Ms. Allen reported that work is underway to start removing abandoned and derelict vessels in the region with \$2 million in funding provided after Hurricane Florence. Marine Patrol has stickered vessels to be removed. N.C. Wildlife also has interactive maps of where the vessels are. Ms. Allen said to let her know if you know of a derelict vessel that needs to be removed. Also, the first planning meeting for the Stump Sound Watershed Restoration Management Plan is this week, which will identify stakeholders and local government partners. She expects they will be reaching out to the Commission and municipalities soon.

Vice Chairman Benson asked if the shrimp boat in the New River Inlet is on the list of derelict vessels to be removed. Ms. Allen said she would check.

D. North Carolina Beach, Inlet and Waterway Association –

Ms. Riley said at the board meeting on Thursday, they discussed the spring meeting with a tentative date of the last week of April at the Beaufort Hotel in Carteret County. The hotel has A/V ability to support another hybrid conference. Ms. Riley said going forward, all conferences will be hybrid to expand its audience and continuing education credits. She also reported that the legislative committee voted on its legislative agenda, which includes a recurring source of funding for the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund. Ms. Riley said that Pat McElraft suggested finding the funding through parks and recreation. She also talked to the League of Municipalities to secure the funding through an infrastructure lens. She is confident that it can be funded year by year as long as we push it, but it would be better to secure recurring funding. Ms. Riley also reported that on the ASBPA governmental affairs group, Pete Seidel will take over lobbying efforts until they hire a new executive director.

E. United States Army Corp of Engineering (USACE) –

Ms. Castens said she expects the PPA document for the federal project to be executed in a couple of weeks. The real estate waiver is still pending. The environmental assessment draft is completed, which stipulates year-round dredging and sand placement. It is halfway through internal review with external review expected in 4 weeks. The first contract will be in Surf City with the first construction award scheduled for early fall. Ms. Castens also reported there was recently an external stakeholder webinar for SACS. All digital data is now available to the public, which she encourages all to look into and send her feedback on. Vice Chairman Benson asked if there are any members of the Commission that volunteered for SACS. Ms. Castens replied that they have 1,400 stakeholders, so she couldn't say off the top of her head. Vice Chairman Benson remarked that he saw in the press that the recent Corps budget doesn't include Carolina Beach and Kure Beach nourishment funding. He asked if the Corps was changing nourishment cycles. Ms. Castens replied that cycles are tailored to each project. Carolina Beach is in special situation with its 50-year project now expired.

VII. Old Business

A. 2020 Results – Need to approve and post

Chairman Smith remarked that Vice Chairman Benson and Mr. Combs did a great job pulling the accomplishments together. Vice Chairman Benson and Mr. Combs said they had not received any feedback. Mr. Broadhurst made a motion to approve the 2020 accomplishments list. Alderman Leonard seconded the motion, and it was carried.

B. 2021 Goals – Need to approve

Chairman Smith said that Vice Chairman Benson and Mr. Combs pulled the goals together from the other towns. Mr. Broadhurst made a motion to approve the 2021 goals list. Alderman Leonard seconded the motion, and it was carried.

C. Island wide request for ability to have an additional 1% occupancy tax – monies would be used for beach projects. Would have a sunset clause

Chairman Smith said the money from the increased occupancy tax rate would be used for beach and outdoor access accommodations and have a sunset clause of 50 years. He said Ms. Wilson has had conversations with legislators about it. Chairman Smith said we will need to send people up there at a later time. Alderman Leonard said he met with Rep. Phil Sheppard with the mayor and town manager and got his support. He also had a meeting with Tim Moore in Jacksonville and presented on the issue. Alderman Leonard thinks they have his support as well. Ms. Wilson said that NTB has been analyzing the financing options for the federal project, which has helped her put together a compelling handout showing how high the taxes in Phase 5 will be and why this 1% increase is so critical. She also talked to Sen. Lazzara, who said it should be tied to the length of this federal project. She said a bill has to get to the House by March 3rd, so we need to get working on this. Mr. Breuer offered his support to Ms. Wilson.

D. Resilience Grant Application – Town Managers

Mr. Breuer said he submitted a grant application for Phases 1 and 2 of the NC Resilient Coastal Communities Program. He said this was a great opportunity for all and wants the Commission to be the arm that brings all three communities together to work on these projects. Chairman Smith said the Commission should be included, because it is the only 3-town organization on the island. Vice Chairman Benson said he thinks it is great that everyone is working together on resiliency and addressing island-wide issues like road flooding.

E. Approval of 2021 Calendar

There were no objections to approving the 2021 calendar.

VIII. Town's Local Projects/Direction –

A. North Topsail Beach – Dave Gilbride

Mr. Gilbride reported the Corps project at the inlet is underway and will be there for two months. The Hurricane Florence project is on hold while waiting for a historical and environmental review of the project. NTB is also trying to implement paid parking. Alderman Leonard said they are also working with Rep. Murphy, with a call scheduled next Thursday to get the CBRA bills reintroduced.

B. Surf City – Kyle Breuer

Mr. Breuer said they are moving forward on the federal project. WK Dickson is working on a soil evaluation on S Shore Dr. flooding, and DOT has been working with utilities and public works to scope out drainage. Their recommendations will be to reconstruct those areas, so he is hoping to see solutions soon.

C. Topsail Beach – Mike Rose

Mr. Rose reported that the beach project is going well at about 50% done and 500,000 cy of sand already placed. The booster pump is in, so it'll be shifting to northern town limits shortly. TI Coastal did a quarterly survey on the channel, which shows deep water right now. The living shoreline project with the NC Coastal Federation presented its status to the BIS committee. One access at Rocky Mount Ave is scheduled for construction in early February. The Haywood site has planned for a vertical sill while other sites are still being investigated. Mr. Rose said the Coastal Federation has done a great job with all the different contractors and educating those contractors. Mr. Rose also thanked them for the marine debris clean up.

IX. New Items

A. Homeowners Insurance Rate Increase Proposal -25% proposed

Chairman Smith said there was a public hearing during holidays and suggested that if you want to object, you should get a letter into the insurance secretary quickly.

B. National Flood Standards Reinstated for Federal Funded Projects

Chairman Smith said that under an executive order, any federal project must consider climate change and sea level rise. This will impact administrative decisions like use of sand out of a CBRA zone. That is under review, which is why we need a legislative change for this particular item.

C. Contact information for Mike McIntyre

Chairman Smith said Mr. McIntyre has a mobile number available, so if you need it, just let him know.

D. Meetings with State Representatives

Chairman Smith said that NCBIWA is working on a legislative breakfast in Raleigh, but he thinks we should sit down as a group locally with our state representatives soon. Alderman Leonard said NTB's representatives are on board with it all, so he thinks they could help reach the other town's legislators. Chairman Smith said they also need help with the certified dredges quoting process and other issues, not just occupancy taxes.

X. Meetings & Conferences

A. CRC – Feb 17 & 18 – Expect Inlet Hazard Regulations to be approved

Chairman Smith said he expected the new IHA boundaries will be requested to be approved. For those with any issues, sit down with Doug Medlin. The biggest impact will be in NTB. Vice Chairman Benson said NTB sent a letter to the CRC with 180 signatures on the issue. Chairman Smith said we'll find time to sit down with Mayor Medlin.

XI. Public/Commission Comments

Ms. Riley said she got email that the CRC meeting will be only one day. Vice Chairman Benson gave an update on Richard Peters, who was on the Commission for many years and diagnosed with brain tumor in 2019. He said this past Friday, Alderman Peters had a seizure and was doing okay in hospital, but he will need hospice care when he comes home. He asked all to keep him and his wife, Rose, in their prayers. Alderman Leonard said that Alderman Peters has served admirably for many years, first elected to the NTB Board of Alderman in 2005. Chairman Smith said the governor is extending COVID-19 restrictions, so the next meeting will be on WebEx.

XII. Next Meeting – February 25, 2021 - WebEx

XIII. Adjournment

Mr. Combs made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alderman Leonard seconded the motion, and it was carried.