



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 3, 2021, 2:00 PM

Commission Members Present

Steve Smith, Chairman
Mike Benson, Vice Chairman
Teresa Batts
Ed Broadhurst
Larry Combs
Tom Leonard
Jade Litcher
Chad McEwen
Connie Pletl
Mark Price
David Ward

Associates Present

Kerri Allen, N.C. Coastal Federation
Lexi Arthur, TISPC State Advocate
Christina Burke, Asst Town Manager, Topsail Beach
Pamela Castens, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Dave Gilbride, Town Manager, North Topsail Beach
Stephanie Hobbs, Town Clerk, Surf City
Richard Peters, Alderman, North Topsail Beach
Kathleen Riley, NCBIWA
Mike Rose, Town Manager, Topsail Beach
Connie Wilson, TISPC State Advocate
Tim Zizack, Commissioner, Topsail Beach
India Mackinson, Recording Clerk

I. Call to Order & Greetings

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of Agenda

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

IV. Approval of Minutes for October 22, 2020

Mr. Litcher made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilwoman Batts seconded the motion, and it was carried.

V. Consultant & Partners Reviews

- A. **Ward and Smith Attorneys** – See report
- B. **Connie Wilson Consulting** –

Ms. Wilson said that the pollsters had predicted a chance of flipping parties in the state house and senate. There is now 69 Republican members in the House with a one Republican net loss in the Senate. Neither chamber is veto proof. She reported there is a good possibility there will not be a ratified budget, instead relying on appropriations bills. Otherwise, continuation bills will stay the same. Ms. Wilson stated a split remains between the governor's office and the General Assembly on Medicaid expansion. Governor Cooper won't sign a budget until Medicaid expansion is agreed upon. Overall, strategy for the TISPC remains steady. Ms. Wilson noted the \$3-3.5 billion state shortfall, so the legislature is looking for programs to cut or eliminate. The legislature has been very conservative and not tapped as much into reserves as it could have. The shortfall will ultimately depend on how open the governor keeps the economy. As long as there is a decent level of economic activity, the shortfall won't get worse.

On Jan. 13th, the GA's long session starts, which goes until mid-July. Ms. Wilson said any bills can be filed during this time. Bills that have to do with the budget must be filed by May. Ms. Wilson advised that the sooner the TISPC gets working on any items the island needs, the better off those items may be. She acknowledged the interest in an occupancy tax bill, which includes an increase for each town, along with a local option sales tax bill to put to a referendum in each town. Both those issues would require a bill. Mr. Gilbride said that Onslow County does not give 3% of the occupancy tax back to the town as they do in Pender County, so North Topsail Beach would request a 3% increase. Ms. Wilson confirmed that in NTB, the occupancy tax would be 9% total with a 7% sales tax. She asked if in Surf City and Topsail Beach they were looking for a 1% increase. Mr. Rose said they had not had that discussion with the Board, so only the staff level has agreed upon pursuing a 1% occupancy tax increase. Councilwoman Batts said discussions with the Surf City Council is still taking place. Ms. Wilson said that typically a representative would sponsor an occupancy tax bill for their own district, but it may be easier to do one bill for all the towns in both chambers. Mr. Ward asked about flexibility for effective dates to which Ms.

Wilson replied that the effective date can be whenever the Commission decides. Mr. Rose remarked that due to the pandemic, there has been an increase in rentals and day trippers, so the towns need the money for public safety and public works as well, not just for the beach. Ms. Wilson said the bill will have to state what the money will be used for. Alderman Leonard inquired if asking for a 3% increase would open a negotiation or be immediately shot down. Ms. Wilson said that asking for a 1% increase would be an easier number to work with. Mr. Ward asked if the 1% increase would be split with the county. Ms. Wilson replied that it would only go to city purposes as outlined in the bill. She asked for a timeline from the towns within the next couple of weeks and to schedule a meeting with legislators soon. Vice Chairman Benson, Councilwoman Batts, and Mr. Litcher said they would reach out to contacts in realty to start a conversation on the issue.

Ms. Wilson said she will do more research on the bidding issue for dredging companies. Mr. Combs said that Chris Gibson's desire is to eliminate the three-bid requirement for ocean-certified dredges. Vice Chairman Benson said there are only five dredge companies in the United States, highlighting the problem.

Chairman Smith said that all three towns will put together their final thoughts this month. He said he also spoke with Ms. Wilson about the Shallow Draft Inlet Fund and educating new legislators on beach issues.

C. [North Carolina Coastal Federation](#) –

Ms. Allen reported that they are continuing the marine debris and living shoreline work. She also announced a new project to create a watershed restoration plan for Stump Sound with funding from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. The plan will document land use and sea level rise to develop hydrographs to establish goals for runoff prevention. The project could also include detailed implementation plans, which would set the towns up for funding opportunities.

D. [North Carolina Beach, Inlet and Waterway Association](#) –

Ms. Riley reported positive feedback from the conference, especially the remote part. She said they will do hybrids for meetings in the future as well. The spring meeting will probably be in Carteret County with a remote option. They are also planning a legislative breakfast and have put together a legislative affairs

committee. The committee will meet remotely in December to discuss legislative items for the upcoming session. Chairman Smith said that one item is dredging spoil. Ms. Riley said it is important to get funding for that data.

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

Ms. Castens said they are updating the acquisition strategy, which will go into the NEPA document. The Project Partnership Agreement package is essentially complete with just one final piece related to financing left. The real estate waiver package is also being worked on. Both packages will go up to the division by Christmas.

VI. Old Business

A. NCBIWA’s Conference Review

Chairman Smith remarked that it was a great conference with a lot of valuable information. Vice Chairman Benson commended Ms. Riley for a great virtual option. Mr. Combs also said he got a lot out of the virtual option and could actually see presentations better than in person. Ms. Riley said she would like to make it more interactive for those attending virtually. Chairman Smith noted that the presentations are online at the NCBIWA website.

B. CRC Meeting Review

Chairman Smith reported that the CRC is moving back to using only the static line rule instead of two methods for defining setbacks. The CRC also went through all the Inlet Hazard Area public comments with CRAC, which felt that none of the comments warranted any changes in the recommendations. The CRC will vote on the IHA boundaries at a future meeting. The new setbacks would be felt in Topsail Beach and North Topsail Beach the most. Chairman Smith said they also mentioned the new resiliency grants for municipalities.

C. 2020 Accomplishments – Mike & Larry

Mr. Combs said the 2020 accomplishments are finalized and welcomed feedback from the Commission. Chairman Smith asked for feedback to be sent in by the next meeting. Vice Chairman Benson said as far as accomplishments, Surf City was able to take advantage of the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund. He

also said that Chairman Smith has done a commendable job with the Commission this past year. Chairman Smith thanked all those who helped him.

D. 2021 Goals – Mike & Larry

Chairman Smith said he has talked to Mike McIntyre and Connie Wilson on 2021 goals. Vice Chairman Benson and Mr. Combs will be working with the three towns to put a list together.

VII. Town's Local Projects/Direction –

A. North Topsail Beach – Dave Gilbride

Mr. Gilbride reported that the inlet dredging project is about to start with sand pumping beginning in the next 10 days or so. The Florence dune restoration project is also on hold while FEMA conducts a historical and environmental review, which means the project may not be able to be complete during the environmental window.

B. Surf City – Kyle Breuer

Councilwoman Batts reported that Mr. Breuer reached out to North Topsail Beach and Topsail Beach about the DCM resilience grant. She said there is a good chance the island can submit for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 grant cycle.

C. Topsail Beach – Mike Rose

Mr. Rose reported that the storm damage reduction plan is underway with sand pumping commencing on Tuesday. They will work south from Drum Avenue for 2-3 weeks and then go north from Drum Avenue. The project is expected to last four months. The living shoreline project is also continuing, which had been slowed down due to an oyster shell shortage but is expected to be back on track with the new year. LDSI has also completed a storm water evaluation and is putting together recommendations.

VIII. New Items

A. Resilience Grants

See item VII B. above



Topsail Island

Shoreline Protection Commission



B. 2021 Calendar

Chairman Smith said he sent out the calendar for the upcoming year with tentative dates for CRC meetings and the NCBIWA and ASBPA conferences.

C. Election of Chair & Vice-Chair

Chairman Smith said there will be an election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman in January.

IX. Meetings & Conferences

None other than the next Commission meeting on January 28th.

X. Public/Commission Comments

Chairman Smith said they will have to follow through on insurance rates. Mr. Broadhurst asked if they had been put into effect. Chairman Smith said there is an increase from the last round, and there may be an additional increase this year as well.

XI. Next Meeting – January 28, 2021 - WebEx

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Broadhurst made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and it was carried.