

SWANSBORO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RETREAT

Hampton Inn, 215 Old Hammock Rd, Swansboro, NC 28584

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 – 8:30 am-4:00 pm

Retreat notes prepared by Facilitator Lydian Altman

INVENTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE LAST YEAR	
3	Hiring of new manager (Paula); support of the Board of Commissioners; Paula's plans and accomplishments; transparency of the process
	One-way streets downtown to improve safety and traffic flow
	This Board brings varied backgrounds, many talents, and respect for others
	Adaptability of the Town during Covid re: meetings public events, staff performance, support to the elected body, and transparency of these changes to the public
	Demonstration by Board that they value and the staff (thru hires and resource allocation)
	Actions taken to adopt and support policies that position the Town for resiliency regarding climate change. We can showcase our work to other similarly positioned Towns
	Successful obtained grants to further our work
	State legislators know the Town and our needs
	Newly elected commissioners feel welcomed and embraced by the group; ready to contribute
	Parks, Sidewalks, and Public Safety improvements

SETTING CONTEXT: <i>What are the big changes getting ready to happen that will impact your community (external) and your organization (internal)?</i>		
Area	Change	Implication
POLITICAL	President	
	Pandemic	
	DOT, FEMA, CAMA	Rules
	Historic Area	Regulations
	If we ever went to partisan municipal elections	Not currently under exploration. Could lose contributions of individuals
	Board turnover	Improved group dynamics; learning curve [opportunity to learn and network at NCLM]; refocusing on priorities
	Improved relationship with business community	More responsive government

ENVIRONMENTAL	Coastal community: Stormwater, shoreline, eco system, infrastructure, community education	All takes limited resources (dollars and staff). Challenges are bigger than we are.
	Hurricanes, Severe weather	Costs, planning, recovery
	Sea level rise	Ongoing work means we're better prepared for more frequent storms and higher tides/flooding
SOCIAL	More involvement of advisory boards; Inclusive community; Focus on entire town to participate and engage; Educate residents	Time and effort for staff and Board Additional training needed
	Population growth and resident expectations of different populations	More responsive government (plus above)
	Diversity	Adapting to new/different ideas
	Traffic Out of direct control (thoroughfare, bases, major cities)	Congestion management Impacting sense of place, relationships
	Informed residents	Challenge decisions
TECHNOLOGY	Need upgrades on everything- software and hardware	\$\$ Better prepared and connected
	Attract and retain qualified employees	\$\$
	Future broadband and Wi-Fi availability	Resident Connectivity
	Televised Meetings	Higher expectations
LEGAL	Revaluation by County will increase personal [property taxes	Not affordable; will there be another market drop (like 2008)?
	3 legal cases	Liability; \$\$
	ADA	Ongoing challenge for public facilities: legal challenges, \$\$, planning/staffing
	Risk management	Continuous review and preventive measures
ECONOMIC	Rise in housing valuation	Ability to Increase tax base is restricted when growth is outside jurisdictional boundaries with an ability to annex or offer water and sewer incentives
	Economic Development Strategic plan	No unity on how to implement or what priorities are
	If/when hotel comes,	

	If/when tenants come to Industrial Park or adjacent property,	do we have plans and staff to accommodate?
	I-74 extension	
	Commercial recruitment & Incentives	What could impact be to tax base?
	Offshore Wind	Potential manufacturing opportunities b/c of MHC port

What are our short-term goals and actions for the next 12-18 months?

A. Historic District Preservation:

1. Committee's clarity of purpose and function:
 - Education of resident and Board of Commissioners (BOC) about historic district
 - Authority lies within overlay district
 - Maintain district as integral to the Town's success
 - Develop a long-term plan of action for the district
 - Request budget from BOC to fund strategies
 - Potentially review and award grants
 - Make recommendations to BOC for how money is spent for repairs within the district.
 - Develop guidelines for distributing any grants directly to homeowners.
- Town's Authority
 - Enforcement of ordinances [related to District] by Town Staff
 - Can't earmark funds for repairs
 - Can use general funds to educate about rules and responsibilities within historic district

ACTIONS:

- ❖ Town will explore whether Tourism Development Authority could allocate funds towards Historic Preservation. Also, what are the options regarding fundraising? IS there any other research needed to inform discussion below.
- ❖ Architectural survey to determine additional homes to be included in historic district.
- ❖ Set up joint meeting between BOC and John Wood, Historic expert with State, to gather first-hand information about the Seven Things Historic District could do"

B. Sidewalks:

Priority 1 (NC24 connections) complete.

Priority 2 (two sections along Old Hammock Rd.) Section 1 is ready for installation. Section 2 – some easement work pending and additional funding needed.

Priority 3 – not funded and no surveying/design work done

- There was support for all 3 priorities and allocating \$100,000 award towards completing Priority #2.

ACTIONS:

- ❖ Get report from DOT for Town's costs on remaining work to be done on Priority #2, Phase 2. Once this is known, consider allocating \$200k in ARP monies towards Priority #2, Phase 2.
- ❖ Establish current cost of completing Priority #3 (if previous estimate was 150-200k).
- ❖ Consider adopting previous policy of setting aside \$100,000 per year in CIP to fund sidewalk priorities.
- ❖ Update the Sidewalk Plan to Include:
 - a. Extend Main Street Extension to connect neighborhoods to downtown to encourage more walking.
 - b. Add a crosswalk. Check with DOT if they do this.
 - c. If church is built, require sidewalks by developer of Harbor Church property.
 - d. Fill in any blank spots along the route.

C. Employee Pay:

Questions & Feedback:

- Don't offer below starting minimum during probationary period.
- Monitor need to align starting pay with the \$15/hour adopted by Federal Government since local market is influenced by that decision.
- Do we need to reassess job titles and descriptions? Are employees doing what's currently written? Is the Scope of Work accurate?
- Too much difference between Recreation Coordinator and top Department positions. Utilize Parks and Recreation resources at NCSU.
- Some felt Fire and Police Chiefs need more compensation for their level of responsibilities.
- Bring back options at budget time:
 - 2% raise
 - 2%+ (address minimum wage movement)
 - 2%+ (address position concerns)

D. Emergency Operations Center:

\$6 million grant is to Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

- What are total needs, e.g., EOC and public safety, now and into the future (20 years)?
- Who can help determine needs?
- Can one facility serve all needs?
- Are there options for shared space for EOC and Public Safety building?
- How can the Wooten Report concept inform the decision going forward?

ACTIONS:

- ❖ Establish a committee of 8-10 to determine needs, establish elements of a Request for Proposal, and make recommendations to the BOC for moving forward.

- Members could include: Any RFP would be open for public input, too.
 1. Town Manager
 2. Fire Chief
 3. Police Chief
 4. BOC Rep
 5. Planning Board Rep
 6. Community Member with relevant expertiseⁱ and/or interest
 7. Community Member with relevant expertise and/or interest
 8. Community Member with relevant expertise and/or interest
- Committee responsibilities could include:
 - Site visits to other areas to view joint/single operations
 - Seeking expertise for joint operations
 - Evaluating the Wooten plan for elements to include in the RFP
 - Develop projected timeline of activities

E. Economic Development Strategic Plan and Committee:

Summary of report:

- Independent group but affiliated (undefined) with Jacksonville/Onslow Economic Development Commissions [501(C)3 org].
- Regional focus to promote and recruit appropriate industrial development.
- No current bylaws or required number of members, although there is a draft of how members are appointed.
- No existing BOC endorsement of the group (this seems in dispute)
- Funding includes contributions by private businesses.
- Potential areas of cooperation: industrial park, feasibility study, consistency with Land Use Plan

ACTIONS:

- ❖ Request Steering Committee to follow through with “White Paper” document

Creating an Effective Governing Team: How will we get this work done?

Operating Principles: As a governing team, we want to hear people say that we:

- ❖ Demonstrate transparency by making decisions in public meetings and being consistent in how we approach our work.
- ❖ Leverage our strengths and expertise.
- ❖ Accomplish things and get stuff done.
- ❖ Take good care with the public’s money.
- ❖ Listen to each other and value others’ comments.
- ❖ Reach out to staff proactively for research so we are prepared, and our decisions are well-informed.
- ❖ Treat people equitably so all voices have equal weight.

- ❖ Make policy based on what's best for the Town, without personal credit or agenda.

To uphold our Operating Principles, we will take the following ACTIONS:

- ❖ Revisit our Code of Ethics annually, or as needed.
- ❖ Improve meeting efficiency by
 - Closely following our agenda and avoiding tangents. "Call for the Question" when needed.
 - Take actions on the items identified in our agenda
 - Call ahead with questions so that staff can prepare you before the meetings
 - Enforce the adopted 3-minute time limit for public comment and consider setting informal time limits on the amount of discussion by BOC, too
- Refer resident complaints and communications to the Town Manager. This is the appropriate role for the Manager to play as she is responsible for overseeing departments, evaluating performance, and ensuring consistency of service across the organization.

Evaluation of the Day	
What worked well?	What would you do differently?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, location • Open and frank talk • Less formal, more personal • Get to know one another • Better understanding of our challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for more informal time together

Raised but not discussed:

- What are the expectations of BOC members as liaisons to various advisory boards?
What information is expected to be shared between the two boards?
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