

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
February 15, 2021 Special Meeting

In attendance: Mayor John Davis, Mayor Pro Tem Frank Tursi, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Harry PJ Pugliese, Commissioner Larry Philpott, and Commissioner Laurent Meilleur (joined at 5:45pm). It was noted that the Board had returned to remote meetings through the ZOOM platform as allowed by NCGS 166A-19. Governor Cooper had declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020 and it remained in effect.

Call to Order/Opening Prayer

The special meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm. Mayor Davis gave the invocation and noted that the meeting was called to discuss the following topics:

Goals/Priorities
Grant Strategies
Planning Board Work Timeline
Visitor's Center Plan

Goals/Priorities

In June 2020, a "roll-over" list of Goals and Objectives from FY 2019-2020 was reviewed along with additional goals established since Manager Seaberg's arrival in September 2019.

- **Sidewalk Construction** (in partnership with the NC Department of Transportation) – The Town had allocated \$116K towards the sidewalk projects and NCDOT had indicated a project start date in the Spring of 2021. Commissioner Philpott inquired what the shortfall would be if the allocated funds did not cover the areas designated? Manager Seaberg reviewed the three priority areas with the 3rd (along Hammocks Beach Road) being the most expensive with a wetland crossing requiring a permit process, which was likely to be more than allocated. It might be possible to work with NCDOT for tradeoffs – delineate other areas for wetlands. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi would also feel more comfortable with a statement from NCDOT on the ownership of sidewalks.
- **Update the Town's Emergency Management Plan** – After receiving engineered assessments on the PSB and Town Hall – neither of which were assessed to withstand a Category 3 hurricane, the Town contracted with the Wooten Company to prepare cost estimates for upgrades at the PSB to bring the structure to a category that would withstand 150 mph winds and estimates to acquire property to construct a new facility that could house

public safety and possibly other staff. In the interim, the Town had signed an MOU with Swansboro United Methodist Church to utilize a portion of their facility should the Town expect a storm greater than a Category 1. Part of that MOU was that the Town would provide a trailer able generator during any such event. Regular updates on the EOC progress were being given by the Manager monthly and/or as progress changed.

- **Proposed Boats Slips with Future Dockwalk** – Local restaurant owner, Randy Swanson had suggested additional boats slips as an addition to the future dockwalk (along the south side of NC24 bridge) already approved. The Army Corp of Engineers had extended use of the waterway by 85'. Mayor Davis indicated that the County Board of Commissioners would be interested in the suggested boat slips project. Manager Seaberg believed the suggested project could be a second phase to the current CAMA Access Grant. The current phase was fully funded. The project was not a high priority for Commissioner Turner because it was not something that could be accomplished before summer. She also inquired on the cost for second phase. Commissioner Pugliese felt the Town should press forward if it could be accomplished along with phase I and easements were already obtained. Commissioner Meilleur agreed with Commissioner Turner, it needed more review. Manager Seaberg offered that grant awards were a 75/25 split. Phase II would have to be funded in the new fiscal year. A pre-application could be submitted in April 2021. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi looked at the phases differently; he supported waterfront improvements but noted what the Town built it must also maintain and/or or rebuild if destroyed. Commissioner Philpott agreed but was also supportive to move forward.

The consensus was this item was a lower priority project.

- **Parks Master Plan** – the current plan was dated 2008. Updating the plan was important in the Town's quest for grant assistance. The estimated cost for a complete overhaul of the plan - \$50K. Board member believed the price tag too high and gave direction for Staff to seek RFQ's/Proposals with a focus on updates that would satisfy grant agency requirements in January 2021.
- **Ward Shore** – project slated for completion by March. Additional funds may be needed for Water Street retro-fit, which includes a 1" asphalt overlay. Powell Bill funds could be used. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi suggested research on different types of pavers that may alleviate flooding, wash out.
- **Watershed Restoration Plan** – Mayor Pro Tem Tursi again urged staff to apply for 319 funding. A partnership with the Carolina Wetlands Association was in place which was a goal from the plan. Many of the goals would require outside expertise and funding. Manager Seaberg would reach out to NC Coastal Federation to discuss possible 319 funding for stormwater mapping

and Water Street retrofit. Commissioner Philpott also noted that the Economic Strategic Development Plan had similar goals/strategies.

- **Downtown Traffic Plan** – This item was scheduled for discussion February 22. The draft plan had been re-adjusted to include those recommendation the Board gave some months ago. One-way traffic movement for Front Street, portions of Church Street and Main Street Extension, and no intersection light changes at Main Street Extension/NC24. If the Board agreed with the plan on February 22 – implementation on painting parking spaces, crosswalks, and education could begin. Commissioner Meilleur heard rumblings of a crosswalk over NC24 and wondered how that got brought up. Mayor Davis shared that the downtown merchants had suggested it. **The suggested crosswalk was a low priority, but the Downtown Traffic Movement was a high priority.**
- **Wetland Discussion** – due to remote meetings, the Carolina Wetlands Association discussion with the Planning Board had been cancelled in February and re-scheduled for March 2. **Planning Board Work Timeline** –. The Board urged staff to keep the Planning Board on track with its timeline. **Wetlands discussion/understanding was a high priority item** and the Town needed to take advantage of the Carolina Wetlands Association’s knowledge.
- **Emergency Call Box at Park** – the call box had been a Parks Board request for a couple years but had been cut from the budget each year. It was a low-cost item at \$5K. Director Stanley shared that there was still interest to purchase the call box. **Medium to low priority** item because most people carried a cell phone, but in an emergency, Board members did see the advantage.
- **Planner Tech** – Manager Seaberg recommended funding the position as a high priority in moving forward on planning-related items. A proposed salary range was \$36-52K salary range. It was also noted that Planner Jennifer Ansell was expecting and would need backup while on maternity leave. Board members supported.
- **Signage Items** – The Board had agreed to defer discussion on controversial items until it returned to in person meetings.
- **NC24 Beautification** – incentivize business owners to improve appearance along NC24. Mayor Davis shared he had created an incentive document and would provide it to the Board. The Golden Leaf Foundation may fund such projects. Not being aware of the proposed document, **Board members needed to receive and review the document before making comments and considered the matter a low priority until reviewed.**
- **Strategic Plan Objectives** – Commissioner Philpott read through the plan

objectives and believed the Town was making progress but may need to revive discussion. He offered that JOED Executive Director Mark Sutherland speak with the Board to revive and discuss strategy.

- **Fire/Police** – Manager Seaberg was not aware of any Police Department needs in conversation with Chief Jackson today. For the Fire Department, the Board funded the position not awarded through the SAFER Grant last month, as well as funding for CIP equipment. Additional staff request would be forthcoming with the FY 21/22 Budget.
- **Public Works** – Director Jim Stipe still needed a fulltime Maintenance Tech. needed. CIP vehicle and equipment were funding last month.
- **Finance** – software was funded in FY 20/21, however COVID19 had put a damper on the ability to view the operations of programs at other jurisdictions. Demos were underway remotely.

Grant Strategies

On February 8, 2021, Manager Seaberg provided an overview of current town grants and shared grant agencies and types of projects those agencies fund. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi suggested 319 funding opportunities to include stormwater mapping and Water Street improvements to prevent seawater influx. Manager Seaberg would like to apply for PARTF funding to move Pineland Park, which was technically a street-end - not a park, to the parcels on Holly Lane that the Town recently acquired through hazard mitigation. PARTF grants were a 50/50 match.

Staffing/Software/PARTF Funding were high priorities. Other staff needs for consideration were a future Dockmaster and Recreation Program Coordinator. Commissioner Turner asked that a departmental organization chart could be sent to the Board.

Mayor Davis polled the Board whether they would be willing to consider a tax increase to fund some of the items mentioned. Commissioner Turner said no. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi would consider if proper justifications were given. Commissioner Pugliese agreed but noted it would be difficult to increase taxes with all that had taken place this past year. Commissioner Philpott and Meilleur agreed with the statements made by Mayor Pro Tem Tursi and Commissioner Pugliese noting that the Manager should prioritize staff needs. Mayor Davis would not vote for a tax increase with times as they were.

Mayor Pro Tem Tursi shared that the Church Street Dock would never show its full potential until a Dockmaster was in place. Someone with very specialized skills was needed to assist when a million-dollar boat was docking. Rental fees should be set to

cover the position. **Management would prioritize staffing, send the organization chart, and schedule Mark Sutherland to attend a future meeting.**

Planning Board Work Timeline

Below was the Action Plan for the Planning Board for this Calendar Year (Approved February 3, 2020). Further discussions would take place at the March 2, 2021 meeting.

- 1) ~~Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance Update~~ Adopted June 8, 2020; Effective June 19, 2020
- 2) RA Residential Agricultural Zoning District (rezoning or text amendment)
- 3) Wetlands Ongoing; Engaged the Carolina Wetlands Association for guidance
- 4) Text amendment related to Conservation Zoning District to reflect the recommended CAMA Plan changes to strengthen coastal resiliency.
- 5) ~~Text amendment related to requirements for connection for development to nearby amenities~~ Adopted June 22, 2020
- 6) Text amendment related to the overall appearance of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development
- 7) Text amendment related to tying square foot to the use of higher quality materials, additional stormwater control measures
- 8) Consider map amendments (zoning maps) that reflect the Future Land Use categories after the regulatory changes are made (if needed)
- 9) UDO amendments related to NCGS 160D implementation Ongoing; Edits completed and submitted to Town Attorney for review in November. Hope to have before PB in April.

Again, the Board urged staff to keep the Planning Board on track with its timeline.

Visitor's Center Plan

For clarification, Manager Seaberg indicates that a County TDA Grant request would be for construction, not operations (i.e., replacing decking, correct moisture issue). The Swansboro TDA awarded up to \$30K for renovations inside to include the addition of another ADA restroom, ADA shower(s), and a coined laundry facility. Other items of interest that may be included if funds allowed:

- Keypad access for transit boaters after hours
- Common area cameras
- Auto shut-off for water/showers

In response to questions submitted by Commissioner Philpott for discussion, the following was given:

1. A business or operational plan/concept that reflects how the facility will be staffed and operated. What is the estimated operating cost? Who will be publishing tourist pamphlets and generating other marketing materials?

The operational plan was that existing staff would continue to staff the Visitor's Center 7 days/week 10am – 5pm (hours can be adjusted based on seasonal traffic) throughout FY 20/21. Staff was committed to continue into FY 21/22.

WIFI had been added to the building and most of the staff had remote access. The Town was already paying the power and water bill so there were no additional costs there. The only additional cost was the WIFI, phone connection and additional cleaning supplies to assure the restrooms were cleaned daily.

Tourist pamphlets were provided by the vendors and contact was made with them when their supplies were running low. The Chamber of Commerce was still publishing the Visitor's Guide and providing copies. The Swansboro TDA would continue to do the marketing for Swansboro too.

2. Have staff discussion and approach other tourist related entities about partnering with the town to help run or finance operations. Examples: Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants Association, Swansboro and/or Onslow County TDA, Private Contractors, etc.

Staff had not approached other entities about running the VC because we thought the Board was ok with our proposal that staff/run the VC.

3. With a priority on making the best use of the limited space, request an architectural consultant to provide a scaled floor plan that shows how desired operational amenities can work within the space.

Amenities to consider:

- ADA Restrooms (2) – scaled drawing provided/reviewed 2/15
- ADA Shower – scaled drawing provided/reviewed 2/15
- Space for Washer/Dryer – scaled drawing provided/reviewed 2/15
- Well-Appointed Visitor Welcome Area for an Attendant (Will there be Souvenir sales, etc.?) – We can budget/order Swansboro logoed items and display them for sale inside the VC office.
- Reserve Space for a Future Dock Master Office – can be accomplished inside the VC Office

- Front Foyer for Visitor Circulation and Tourist Marketing Materials – marketing material space will still be provided
- Kitchenette – to be moved inside VC Office area
- Storage Spaces – storage cabinets to be moved inside VC Office
- Front Door ADA Ramp Accessibility – not possible unless we eliminate the 2 parking spaces in the front of the building.

4. If a special event headquarters is desired, consider purchasing a climate controlled mobile unit that can be used year around and at various locations by Recreation, Public Safety, etc.

If current staff continues to staff the VC, the office space could also be used during festivals/events as a central headquarters. Parks/Rec Director Anna Stanley was working on financial details for a proposal on a Dockmaster in FY 21/22 or later year.

Mayor Pro Tem Tursi supported staff operating the VC, consideration of a Dockmaster, after-hours access, but noting when showers were added they needed to be cleaned thoroughly and often. He noted that Beaufort was a short sail away – the Town was probably losing money without these amenities. Commissioner Pugliese supported and agreed the Church Street Dock needed an attendant.

Commissioner Philpott was interested in the what the full potential of the docks would be and whether the handicap ramp could be moved to the front of the building, would the office be improved for greeting visitors and perhaps selling Swansboro logoed items for sale.

Other inquiries/responses were:

- Operationally, the VC would fall under Parks/Recreation.
- Regarding the ADA compliance, Manager Seaberg explained that the foyer must also be ADA compliant and there was space added for the washer/dryer. The existing sink and storage cabinets would be moved to the office area. The design was still conceptual and could be modified if only one ADA shower was desired.
- The existing office space was critical for storage and operation.

The item was a high priority with Management providing more detailed operational costs, budget proposal for Dockmaster and submitting a funding request to the County TDA for construction. The consensus was to continue with staff operating the VC.

Board Comments

Commissioner Turner asked that a closed session be added to the February 22 meeting to discuss evaluations for the Manager and Assistant Manager. Commissioner Meilleur asked that the **401K Contribution** be added to the February 22 meeting as well – this was a **medium priority item**.

Commissioner Philpott asked that the finalized list of Advocacy Goals by the Board be distributed to the Board.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Philpott, seconded by Commissioner Meilleur, the meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Special Meeting February 15, 2021



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1. Please turn cell phones to “off” or “vibrate”.
2. Under the ZOOM Meeting Platform, individuals wishing to make comments should “raise their hand” 🙋 from their computer. At the appropriate time, Major Davis will acknowledge those with comments.

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Discussion

Goals/Priorities

3

Discussion

Grant Strategies

4

Discussion

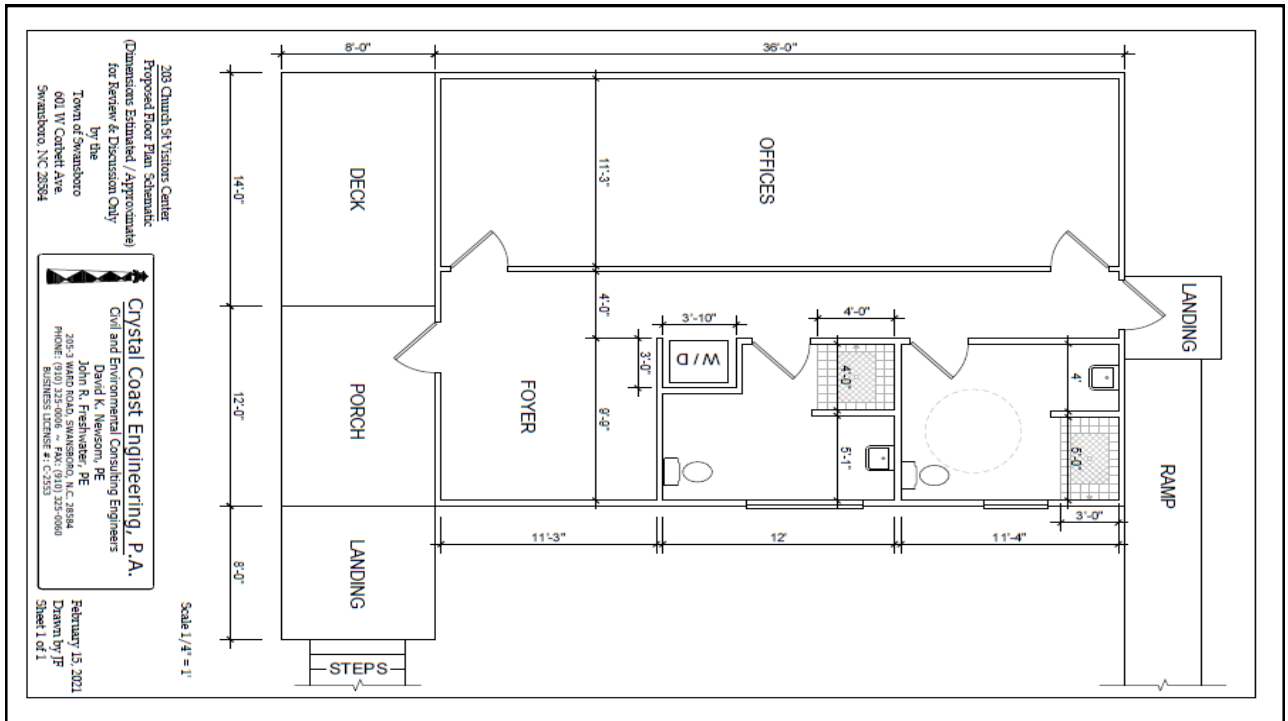
Planning Board Work Timeline

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Discussion

Visitor's Center Plan

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BOARD COMMENTS

Mayor John Davis
Mayor Pro Tem Frank Tursi
Commissioner Pat Turner
Commissioner Harry "PJ" Pugliese
Commissioner Larry Philpott
Commissioner Laurent Meilleur

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