

Town of North Topsail Beach

Joann M. McDermon, Mayor
Mike Benson, Mayor Pro Tem

Aldermen:
Richard Grant
Connie Pletl
Alfred Fontana
Tom Leonard



Alice Derian, ICMA-CM
Town Manager

Nancy Avery
Interim Town Clerk

Nature's Tranquil Beauty

Beach, Inlet, Sound Advisory Committee Minutes Tuesday, January 24, 2023, at 9:00 A.M. North Topsail Beach Town Hall 2008 Loggerhead Court, North Topsail Beach, NC 28460

The Beach, Inlet, Sound Advisory Committee held its regular meeting on January 24, 2023. A quorum of the committee was present.

Committee members in attendance:

Deborah Coltrane – Phase I
Steve Scheibner – At Large
John Gardner – Phase 4
Larry Strother – Phase 5
Teri Ward – At Large
Mike Benson – Chair
Tom Leonard – Alderman in lieu of Rick Grant

Members absent:

Rick Grant – Alderman
Tim Foster – Onslow County Commissioner

Staff present:

Alice Derian – Town Manager
Nancy Avery – Interim Town Clerk

Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 9 am.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Benson stated some of the attendees have to attend a Four Town meeting later this morning, so the intent is to finish the meeting by 11 am. He welcomed newly appointed At Large member Teri Ward who lives in Phase 4. He informed the committee that Alderman Tom Leonard was substituting for Alderman Grant at today's meeting and that Tim Foster, Onslow County Commissioner, and Chris Gibson, coastal engineer advisor also cannot attend today's meeting.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Chair Benson stated it is necessary to table item 7 ‘Charter revision status’ and remove item 10 ‘Shoreline Protection’ as Mr. Gibson cannot attend today’s meeting.

Discussion:

Is it better to discuss item 8b ‘Other Goals’ when Alderman Grant is present? (Leonard)

Chair Benson replied he thinks it is okay to discuss it now.

Motion – Member Strother motioned to approve the agenda as altered removing items 7 and 10 as referenced above; seconded by Member Gardner; motion approved unanimously.

3. Approval of the December 6th minutes

Motion – Member Strother motioned to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2022, meeting as presented; seconded by Member Coltrane; motion approved unanimously.

4. Public comments

None

5. Current status of Shoreline Protection Projects

Manager Derian provided the following update:

- **Phase 5 project:** ST Wooten continues work with the Phase 5 truck haul project. At end of day on January 19th they have placed approximately 95,838 cubic yards of sand. The project will continue to April 30, 2023. Any remaining work will be completed in November and December of 2023. The project in total consists of hauling and placing approximately 636,000 cubic yards of sand along 18,500 feet of shoreline from the Surf City border to around 3686 Island Drive.
- **Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund Grant:** The contract has been fully executed with the state. The permit that was filed is still pending. We expect a response in early February. I have prepared and submitted a one-year contract extension to the state in advance since we know our project will start next November.
- **County BA#4 Dune Project:** I worked with Onslow County to remove the lattice work in preparation for the contractor to start work. The contractor has failed to return a signed change order acknowledging the work with a schedule. I have asked the town attorney for his blessing to proceed with another contractor.
- **ICW Crossing – Channel to Jacksonville Disposal Area:** Mobilization and dredging started as planned by USACE. I have requested a formal update of the project but have not received one. While sitting through the Long-Term Memorandum of Agreement Implementation quarterly meeting last week with Department Environmental Quality and US Army Corps of Engineers, they mentioned that they are anticipating the project will be wrapping up around February 9th.
- **Environmental Impact Study (EIS):** The Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem and I met with US Army Corps and engineers twice to review the EIS schedule and to keep tracking progress. Our engineer has completed the review of the additional modeling which has been provided to US Army Corps that suggests terminal groin with Inlet Management remains as the preferred alternative. The goal set at our last meeting was for me to be able to announce at the February Board of Aldermen meeting that Mickey Suggs from US Army Corps released the Notice of Intent.

Discussion highlights:

- Received a call from someone in Phase 1 concerned that no sand was pumped yesterday and asking if the project was over. Winds and tides were high yesterday. He will let the person know they are repositioning (Leonard)
- They are pumping further south and had to stop and reposition. Social media blows up with questions if they are stopping (Scheibner)
- The goal was to announce at the Board of Aldermen meeting that the Notice of Intent was issued, but there has not been a response from the Army Corps yet. We have been promised things in the past that they did not hold their end of the deal on. The purpose of the constant meeting with them is to hold their feet to the fire and timelines. Modeling has been done and reviewed by ATM as they said they would do and that has been submitted to the Army Corps. The modeling information suggests the terminal groin with inlet management remains the preferred option. (Derian)
- That means preferred only but not official. Is there any idea on how much longer? (Scheibner)
- Ocean Isle Beach spent ten years working on the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) before construction could begin. We are behind schedule. It is going to be awhile (Benson)
- Add to that Hurricane Florence and Covid. These things are beyond the control of anyone that sits at this table. Those were the reasons provided to the Town as to why we are stuck in neutral. (Leonard)

Member Coltrane asked Alderman Leonard to send committee members the presentation made by the Town of Ocean Isle Beach.

- The Town's initiative in calling them every month has helped get this going again. (Benson)
- Is there anything we can do to help with that project? (Scheibner)
- The Army Corps is a federal bureaucracy that moves in a very slow way. Before the EIS comes out, the Army Corps must publish a Notice of Intent (NOI). They then have two years to come up with a decision on the EIS. (Benson)
- Until the NOI is published, the Army Corps does not have any deadlines to worry about. The clock starts ticking once it is issued. (Leonard)
- We asked for a revised timeline since it has been revised so much. The timeline they gave us was fourteen months. Another part of bureaucracy. We have to stay in close communication with Mickey Suggs at the Army Corps. (Benson)
- There is nothing this committee can do to change anything, is that what you are saying? (Strother)
- That is correct. We do not expect to know what our options are for several years. (Benson)
- Back history is good for members of the committee to know and to help address public questions. (Leonard)
- We need to follow Ocean Isle Beach terminal groin as it is the newest. (Benson)

6. Committee organization

6a. Elect chair and vice-chair

Chair Benson stated that when he proposed the committee, he indicated he would be the chair for the first year to get it organized. He had more or less written the charter to get it started. Once past the initial year, it should be a citizen led committee just like the other committee in the town. We need to look within the committee for someone willing to take over the leadership. It should be a citizen led committee rather than a Board led committee. He reached out to Member Strother to see if he is willing to lead this year.

Members discussed the following:

- Possibility of Chair Benson acting as a mentor for a member for six months or so before making that member the chairperson to increase the person's knowledge.
- Whether the committee had really been active for a full year.
- Whether it would be better for Chair Benson to be the vice chair with a member as chair.
- Whether there is a vice chair position as neither the minutes nor the charter references the position;
- Whether it really would make a difference if a citizen member were the chairperson now with Member Benson still on the committee to advise;
- Whether the decision should be made with Alderman Grant not at the meeting.
- Whether the vice chair position decision should be made by the committee and recommended to the Board of Aldermen (BOA) or whether the BOA should decide.
- Whether the committee should make the decision and send to the BOA anyway as they are an advisory group only and the BOA makes the decision

Motion - Member Gardner motioned that if Member Strother will accept the Chair position we vote on it with Member Benson remaining for six months as mentor; seconded by Member Scheibner.

Alderman Leonard stated he wanted the record to reflect that he thinks this item should be tabled to the next committee meeting for Alderman Grant to be present.
Member Gardner withdrew his motion.

Motion - Member Scheibner motioned to table this item to the February meeting; seconded by Member Ward; motion passed unanimously.

6b. Approve meeting schedule.

Chair Benson proposed a change in the meeting date and time to the third Tuesday of the month at 10:30 am. He presented a proposed meeting schedule for 2023.

Discussion highlights:
None

Motion – Member Scheibner motioned to adopt the new meeting schedule as presented; seconded by Member Gardner; motion passed unanimously.

7. Charter revision status

Chair Benson stated that even though we are not discussing this today, we will not bring the same version back for discussion, so delete this one from your files.

8. Goals for 2023

8a. Review the current beach plan and with the input of the beach engineer identify the issues the town needs to address.

Chair Benson said the BOA had a planning session during its last monthly meeting when committee goals were discussed. The committee was given one goal from BOA. That goal is to “review the current beach plan and with the help of the town’s engineer identify the issues that need to be addressed.” There is reference material in your agenda packets. The beach plan is dated 2017 and a lot has changed since it was approved by the BOA. He said he spoke with the engineer Mr. Gibson last night. He will help with the technical aspects of items that have changed. There are a lot of technical details in the plan. This will be a major goal for this year.

In addition, the Division of Coastal Management (DCM) wants each community to have a thirty-year Beach and Inlet Management Plan (BIMP). By default, our 2017 plan would be it, but it is not an engineered plan since it was developed by the BOA and it was never submitted to DCM. At some point this year, we need to begin working on this plan. Our discussions of the current plan will help guide us in developing the DCM BIMP plan. The advantage of the thirty year plan that is submitted to DCM, is that a permit will be issued for future projects rather than having to apply for permits for each project. Most of the work will be done by a coastal engineer. The committee needs to figure out the general scope and how we are going to afford it. The plan can be amended as things change due to storms and other emergency situations.

8b. Other Goals

Member Coltrane shared her suggested goals:

1. Identify and recommend initiatives to increase North Topsail Beach citizens knowledge of the Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Committee (TISPC) Beach Clean program.
2. Collaborate with Parks and Recreation Committee to do beach clean presentation and further beach clean activities to help support TISPC initiatives.
3. Further increase committee members knowledge of the shoreline through education by the TI coastal engineer and attendance at NC shoreline committees and education programs
4. Identify monetary opportunities in NC for shoreline protection grants.

Members discussed including a beach clean program as part of the turtle presentations; grant availability and the fact that there is usually a cost share that has to be considered; the fact that the town joined the National Flood Coalition; how to take advantage of and have projects ready for funding from sources outside of the Shallow Draft Inlet and Aquatic Weed Fund and the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund for coastal resilience; ways to put out more information about nourishment projects to keep people informed and cut back on wrong information that floats around; and consideration of reviewing FAQs section of the website for additions.

Chair Benson said another goal might be educating the Onslow County Commissioner on the need to pass an ordinance banning unencapsulated polystyrene in dock floats and floating walkways as has been done by the three Topsail Island towns to help protect County waterways and wetlands from this long-term environmental pollutant.

Chair Benson stated that unless there are objections to the goals discussed, we will carry all of them forward.

9. Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Committee (TISPC) at large recommendation

The TISPC charter deals with membership and states there will be three representatives from each town: one elected official, the chair of the beach committee and one at large member. As there was no chair of a beach committee since there was no committee, we have had two elected officials and one at large member. Fred Fontana was an at large member but has now been appointed to the BOA. Chair Benson thinks the new chair of the committee should be the member instead of another alderman. He recommended this to BOA once the chairman issue of the committee is resolved. This will be tabled.

10. Public comments

None

Member item:

Member Scheibner asked if in an official capacity, we could reach out to whoever is in charge of where the sand is going in Phase 1 currently and ask them if, on their way out as they are leaving, they can extend the sand all the way around to the end. The reason being is his house sits in a river. His friends know he is on this committee and said can you go ask them about that. The way it is being done, basically from River Road south it creates a low point at the end. Water does what it does, it comes back around. It has created a river that goes all the way out to the last house on the end and almost all the way to Topsail Reef. That's the backwash. The equivalent would be if we took the \$10 million dollars for Phase Four but we stopped ten houses short of Phase Five and all that water would go back behind.

Can we ask the question if on their way out, can they bring the rest of the beach up to that same level. Then he can go back to his friends and say he brought it up and he does not know the official answer but keep your crossed that they might bring more sand.

Chair Benson stated he assumed when they leave, they will grade that area.

Manager Derian stated we can ask the question but need to be aware that we have no say so in the direction they proceed.

Item 11. Next meeting

Chair Benson announced the next meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 21 at 10:30 am

Item 12 Adjournment

Motion – Member Coltrane made the motion to adjourn at 10:57 am; seconded by Member Ward; motion was approved unanimously.



Mike Benson, Chair

ATTEST: _____
Nancy Avery, Interim Town Clerk