

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop Minutes
Tuesday, April 23, 2019 @ 9:00 AM
Council Chambers
1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard
Carolina Beach, NC 28428

ASSEMBLY

The Town of Carolina Beach Town Council Workshop was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2019 at 9:00 AM at Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Mayor Joe Benson, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Bridges, Council Member LeAnn Pierce, and Council Member JoDan Garza

ABSENT: Council Member Steve Shuttleworth

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin, Finance Director Debbie Hall, Town Clerk Kim Ward, and Town Manager Lucky Narain

1. MAYOR BENSON CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 9:00 AM

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Budget Presentation from the Fire Department

Chief Alan Griffin presented the budget overview for the fire department.

He highlighted the following changes in the budget from FY 18/19:

There has been a \$29,059 increase in personnel and benefits due to a proposed 2% COLA and 2% Merit.

Maintenance and Operations has decreased by \$6,700.

Capital Outlay has increased by \$25,000 due to the request to replace 2 HVAC units and upgrade the workout room equipment.

Staff is requesting to apply for the FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) for 3 full-time firefighter positions. The grant will be awarded or denied in October, 2019.

Chief explained the unfunded capital need to replace a fire engine in the next fiscal year. He requested that the engine committee move forward with specs and create a RFP that will go to bid in October, 2019. Staff will present the findings at the November Council meeting.

Chief Griffin moved into the Ocean Rescue budget presentation.

Ocean Rescue personnel increased \$13,604.

The maintenance and operations line decreased \$3,200.

Capital outlay decreased \$40,000. They are budgeting to replace two 4-wheelers.

Chief mentioned that he did not add the cost to run the lifeguard program through October. There will not be guards sitting stands after Labor Day. They will evaluate the rip current situation and the weather after Labor Day and consider having a few roaming guards if needed.

Council Member Pierce asked what other beach towns do as far as the time frame for keeping guards on the beach.

Chief Griffin replied that Pleasure Island runs Memorial Day through Labor Day. Wrightsville Beach staffs their stands from April to the end of October.

Council Member Pierce asked if Ocean Rescue has trouble with staffing after students go back to college.

Chief Griffin responded that they do. The student take a couple of weeks off before going back to school mid August. UNCW and CFCC students will work the weekends. On weekdays there may only be 10-12 guards.

Council Member Pierce suggested advertising the location of stands that be manned during the late season.

Council Member Garza asked how much the ROT reimbursed the lifeguard budget.

Sheila Nicholson said that the lifeguard program is 100% reimbursed by ROT funds.

Council Member Garza asked about doing a lease program for the 4-wheelers.

Chief Griffin said that he is interested in looking into it but he doesn't think the company would be interested given the wear and tear that is put on them.

Chief mentioned that staff is working with engineers and an architect to develop a site plan and conceptional drawings for the bathrooms/sub-station on Hamlet Avenue.

Council Member Pierce inquired about when the lease for the substation at the boardwalk expires.

Sheila Nicholson responded that the lease ends on 2/28/2020 and the cost is \$14,500 per year.

Council Member Pierce stated that she does not want to lease property. She would rather the Town own the property. She referenced the property the Town had leased at the Federal Point Shopping Center and if that property had sold while the Town was occupying that space, it would have put the Town in a bind. She recommended not getting into that situation again.

Chief Griffin said that the Hamlet access is the perfect location for a sub-station.

Council Member Pierce asked staff to make this a priority and bring back numbers sooner than later. She emphasized that she does want to renew the lease.

Chief Griffin recommended building the last two new lifeguard stands the same as the current design. If you build them much bigger, Ops will not be able to move the stands off the beach.

Council Member Garza inquired about allowing the community to paint the lifeguard stands. He mentioned there was a huge interest on Facebook from the residents to do this.

Chief Griffin mentioned that he works for the Manager and the Manager works for Council and he will do what he is asked but it is not the desire of staff to paint them different colors. He wants patrons to be able to clearly see the number on the stand for identification purposes. It is a safety issue to keep them uniform.

Council Member Garza and Pierce said they understand the safety aspect of that and will look at other options for the community to get involved.

Council Member Pierce asked about having the street names on the stands.

Chief Griffin explained how the numbers correlate with the streets and the street names will be on the land side of the stands. He also explained how police and fire are looking into changing the Freeman Park markers to letters to avoid confusion with stand numbers.

Chief Griffin asked Council if they object to building the last two stands the same as the other 18?

Council did not object.

Chief Griffin summarized that Fire had a total budget increase of \$47,359 mainly because of COLA and merit and Ocean Rescue had a total budget decrease of \$29,596.

He then reviewed the line items that were handed out.

Council Member Pierce said that she wanted to see the line item detail. She did not care about seeing the lump sums. She asked if the Merit and COLA were included in the proposed budget and asked why the numbers are lower.

Chief Griffin explained that the volunteer staffing numbers are lower. The three new proposed grant positions are in the grant line item not in the salary line.

Mayor Benson said that he wants to dive into the line items on his own time and not during meeting time.

Council Member Pierce mentioned that citizens expect Council to look into the details of where tax dollars are being spent.

Council Member Garza asked Chief Griffin what he would cut from his budget if the 2% tax increase

was not approved.

Chief Griffin replied that the only thing that increased in his budget was capital. He added that he can't continue to decrease the operational budget as the Town continues to grow.

MPT Bridges said that the Town has been good about not raising taxes and that it is not reasonable to continue that especially with public safety. Most citizens have said they would rather raise taxes than continue to raise fees.

Mayor Benson made the following concluding comments:

He likes the Hamlet Avenue property idea.

Residents may be interested in assisting lifeguards in identifying rip currents and marine life.

Volunteer firefighters have decreased statewide so there is a defensible push to hire more staff.

Room Occupancy Tax dollars are impossible to predict.

The Emergency Operations Plan Open House was great a great success last week.

He likes seeing the overall personnel, M&O, and Capital budget snapshot.

He understands that the Manager's priority is personnel and benefits for staff recruitment and retention.

Council Member Garza said that he would like to see renderings of the Hamlet Avenue building by the end of the fiscal year.

b. Budget Presentation from the Parks and Rec Department

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Jelinski presented the budget for the Parks and Recreation Department.

He mentioned that there is a blank canvas at the Rec Center if citizens want to be creative and paint there versus the lifeguard stands. Coastal Christian High School has a mural that they have designed.

There is a continued increase in Recreation Center memberships and program participation. Revenue is up 10.4% from FY 17/18. Overall there is a 33.59% increase in the total budget.

There are currently 1,800 members, 64 of which are Town employees.

Mr. Jelinski reviewed the immediate funding requests that include:

Ball fields need work - sod/grass

Lighting

Fencing

Bathrooms - there are only two functional toilets at Mike Chappell Park

Playground equipment

Youth volleyball - free clinics for local youth

Short Term Needs:

Lake Park Master Plan

Architectural drawings for park bathroom, concessions, meeting space, and storage
Future land acquisition
Storage for beach wheelchairs
Sand volleyball courts \$61,500

Looking Into the Future - Unfunded Capital Needs:

Joint community center, senior center, aquatics facility
Flagship beach front community park with band shell
Lease agreement with MOTSU to extend Mike Chappell Park for play space, ball fields, etc.

Summary:

The overall budget has a 33.59% increase or \$279,247.

Council Member Pierce asked Mr. Jelinski what capital items he would remove if he had to cut his budget.

Mr. Jelinski replied that the Lake Park playground is priority number 1 for staff and the P&R Advisory Committee.

MPT Bridges mentioned that the LED lights would save energy and would pay off in the long run.

Mr. Jelinski agreed that they save a considerable amount of energy and could be a 3-5 year return on investment. Not only could it be a cost savings but it is a safety issue.

Council Member Garza mentioned that they have not increased their budget in the last four years. He stated that the residents want these items and he is 100% in favor of every single request.

Council Member Pierce said that she wants to re-do the whole block on Cape Fear and doesn't want to spend \$61,000 on the sand volleyball court now if it is going to be reworked later.

Council Member Garza said that everything for the volleyball court can be moved.

Council Member Pierce asked about a budget for Ryder Lewis Park.

Mr. Jelinski said that there are funds in this current budget year for the bridge. There is a landscape company in there now cleaning it up. He suggested getting the Friends of Fort Fisher group involved in the maintenance of the park.

Council Member Garza asked if they were going to do benches and fish tiles at Ryder Lewis Park.

Mr. Jelinski said that they are going to explore that once the bridge goes in.

Council Member Pierce suggested giving all things Boardwalk to Parks and Rec. Items such as coves, fish tiles, and the band stand.

Mr. Jelinski mentioned that they recently took over the fish tile program. Margaret is all on board

with routing the fish, they are just trying to be creative on putting them in a place where they will last.

Council Member Garza suggested moving the \$150,000 for Lake Park to next budget year since there is not a definite plan for the lake yet.

MPT Bridges mentioned that Eric's goal was to raise funds and he has done that and feels that these purchases will increase income. He added that staff can decide which projects get cut if needed.

Mr. Narain stated that the strategy for this budget was to present the overview and decide where to cut. The focus on this budget is health, safety and welfare. A proposed 2% tax increase was to address the health, safety and welfare.

Council Member Pierce stated that a lot of Eric's items can be grant and ROT funded.

Mayor Benson made the following observations in regard to the Parks and Rec budget:

The requests identify public health and safety.

There are not enough bathrooms at Mike Chappell Park.

There is a need to rejuvenate the ball fields.

He would like to address extending the land use with MOTSU during the joint land use study.

The M&O is approximately a 1% tax increase.

c. Budget Presentation from the Planning Department

Jeremy Hardison presented the budget for the Planning Department. He thanked Council, Mr. Narain, and Mr. Parvin for trusting him with the opportunity to serve as Planning Director.

He reviewed the permit activity for the past four years.

He gave an overview of the budget which had a 4.4% increase for a total of \$36,998.

They have reorganized the department to include communications. That will encompass social media, website management, and outreach/press releases.

They are requesting a fellowship intern at \$15,000.

He reviewed Citiworks, the new interactive permitting and mapping software.

Council Member Pierce asked if there was a full time GIS person that enters this data and if the intern do this.

Mr. Hardison replied that the intern could assist with Citiworks.

He mentioned that a new website design is being explored and they should hear more on that soon as well as a more innovative Facebook page.

Council Member Garza asked that every season police and fire post educational videos and tie them into the Town's Facebook page.

The Capital budget is increasing by \$38,000 due to the request to replace two vehicles.

They have also added \$15,000 in M&O to cover the cost of a fellowship intern.

Council Member Pierce asked why there was overtime in the planning budget and who works overtime in planning.

Mr. Hardison replied that the code enforcement officer and the building inspector may occasionally have to come in on the weekend.

Council Member Pierce suggested having the code enforcement officer and the building inspector adjust their hours to include after normal business hours and weekends. She mentioned that staff is not out on weekends writing violations. She added that Council has requested this for years.

Council Member Garza reminded Council that Mark Meyer said that people are on call on the weekends to respond to complaints.

Council Member Pierce did not feel that was sufficient.

Council Member Pierce asked why the travel and training budget is higher than the current fiscal year.

Mr. Hardison said that the building inspector is required to attend certain certification courses and some of them would be reimbursed.

Council Member Pierce asked why there was a uniform line item and which employees are issued uniforms.

Mr. Hardison replied that the building inspector and code enforcement officer wear uniforms.

Council Member Pierce asked why the contract services line doubled.

Mr. Hardison said that was the Land Use Plan contract. There are also some miscellaneous items that are not identified that come up throughout the year.

Council Member Pierce said she understands that you don't always use all of your budget money and requested to see the final numbers at the end of this current fiscal year.

Mr. Narain said that staff will come to Council and ask for specific things so there is not an over inflated budget number.

Mr. Narain explained that the training budgets have increased in every budget because he supports providing training for staff.

MPT Bridges mentioned that he also would like to compare what was budgeted for this current fiscal year and what is actually spent.

Council Member Pierce asked if Ed Parvin's salary is listed in planning's budget.

Mr. Parvin said that it is now in the executive budget.

Mayor Benson provided the following comments regarding the planning budget:

Remember his brand "Slow Down, your Already Here", but site the source.

He asked if the Town received the \$55,000 that was lost in permit fees as a result of Hurricane Florence.

Mrs. Hall said that the Town has not yet received that.

He asked to pursue the FEMA pre-distaster mitigation grant. Senator Peterson read it and liked it.

3. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

a. Council Member Garza:

He asked staff to know what your budget is and work within those lines.

He agrees with Council Member Pierce and is concerned that they didn't have the budget numbers prior to this meeting.

He still does not know the revenue projections.

He feels that the budget was presented backwards like it was last year and Council had asked that it not be presented that way this year. (Council Member Pierce agreed).

He stated that he understands budget transfers are not voted on but he wants to know the total amount because there were large transfer requests last meeting. He also understands that there is fluff but wants to see it spelled out.

He said that he is a huge proponent of purchasing open space and staff needs to move toward that. Now is the time to purchase land and it needs to be communicated to the residents.

MPT Bridges:

The Island Greenway looks excellent. He received a recommendation to put the cross-street names on the Greenway so visitors will have a landmark to identify.

There is a damaged area in the fencing on the Greenway. The Town needs to maintain the fence and possibly put padlocks where needed.

Council Member Garza suggested painting the street name on the trail if new signs are not an option.

Council Member Pierce:

She agrees with what JoDan said about the budget presentation. She has a hard time with fluff. She wants direct numbers that are easily explained to the public. She does not want all the extra bells and whistles.

She mentioned that she has received 2 complaints regarding the boardwalk. The planters are becoming cigarette containers and the benches and swings are in bad shape. She suggested removing the planters.

Brian Stanberry said that they will be maintained.

MPT Bridges mentioned that he had a lot of experience in government budgeting and that he understood why budget transfers exist when emergencies occur. It is a conscious decision by staff and Council should allow them to make those decisions.

Council Member Pierce replied that she understood but it's her nature to ask.

Mr. Narain mentioned that he is aware that Council Member Shuttleworth is opposed to purchasing more vehicles for staff. When department heads ask for vehicles, he has to assess the need knowing Council wants to increase the general fund. He may suggest a golf cart over a new vehicle. Those are some of the strategies to minimize budget fluff or contingencies.

Mayor Benson made the following comments:

One of his five items that he requested was to have a tighter projection of revenues.

The Harbor Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 15th.

Thanks for pointing out the desire to increase taxes. He is in favor because some of the defensible items are going to require that. As a result of that, he is going to hold another Town Hall in a couple of weeks. He wants to lay out his suggestion of a 3% tax increase mainly because of the police pay study. That alone is about 1%. Parks and Recreation's requests are another 1%.

He asked how it would affect a \$300k/\$400k home.

Council Member Garza asked the Mayor to be very cautious talking tax increases in a Town Hall meeting.

Council Member Pierce added that a tax increase would have to be voted on and it may not happen. Council may only be open to a land purchase tax increase.

Mayor Benson mentioned that he will address an option for the lake dredge funding.

He thanked those that volunteered for the Seafood Blues and Jazz Festival.

Mr. Narain said that he would get today's budget presentations to Council this afternoon. He will also send out next week's presentations to Council by close of business Friday.

He mentioned that the Town is operating on a 0 based budget, starting with nothing and increasing as needed. The priorities are health, safety and welfare. A sub-component of welfare is providing a workforce with competitive salaries.

Council Member Garza asked what message content the fire department digital message board can display. It would be a good resource for education but he recalls the Fire Chief saying it can only display certain content due to the grant requirements.

Council Member Pierce asked staff to continue to look at a digital sign for Town Hall to get away from using banners.

Council Member Garza asked when the lights for Spartanburg Avenue would be in for the Greenway.

Mr. Stanberry said they are here and should be installed around the 14th.

Mr. Narain informed Council that he is looking into painting the front of the Town Hall building. It will be a shade of blue to match the Town logo.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Adopted at a regular meeting on May 14, 2019.

Recorded by Kimberlee Ward, Town Clerk