

Town of North Topsail Beach

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

Alice Derian, ICMA-CM
Town Manager

Aldermen:
Richard Grant
Don Harte
Connie Pletl
Bob Swantek

Danyale Lundy
Town Clerk



Nature's Tranquil Beauty

Beach, Inlet, Sound Advisory Committee Minutes Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 10:30 A.M. North Topsail Beach Town Hall 2008 Loggerhead Court, North Topsail Beach, NC 28460

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Benson; Aldermen Grant, Town Manager Derian, Deborah Coltrane (Phase One), Michael Pawelko (Phase Three), John Gardner (Phase Four), Larry Strother (Phase Five), and Coastal Engineer Gibson.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson called the meeting to order welcoming everyone to the first Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee meeting and disclosed that the Board of Alderman felt like it was important to have some continuity in terms of plans addressing the beach, sea-level rise, the sound, erosion of the inlet, etc. Mr. Benson explained by having this committee, it will allow North Topsail Beach to start building institutional memory.

Mr. Benson disclosed that beach expert, Coastal Engineer Chris Gibson, has worked closely with North Topsail Beach's neighbors at the opposite end of the island who have gone through this process for over 11 years and are currently in the process of building a secondary dune system.

Mr. Benson introduced himself as a retired professor from NC State University who moved to North Topsail Beach and was first appointed to the Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission. From there he became involved in beach activities, attending the NCBIWA meetings, attending CRC meetings, and becoming involved in shoreline issues. Mr. Benson revealed he first became elected to the Board of Aldermen in 2017 and has championed the board for the formation of the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee which will act as a resource for the Board of Aldermen and help them make decisions on shoreline matters.

Alderman Grant indicated he bought a property in North Topsail Beach in 2000 and built a house around 2018. Alderman Grant stated his wife and he started attending the Alderman meetings, he then became elected to the Planning Board, and from there was appointed to the Board of Aldermen. Mr. Grant explained Mr. Benson and himself have worked on setting up a capital budget and stated he feels that North Topsail Beach has enough money as a town to do a lot of various things if planned for accordingly, the town can accomplish much with everyone's help. Alderman Grant stressed the role of the committee is not only to look at what is going to happen next week but also to look and plan for what will happen five years from now.

Deborah Coltrane introduced herself disclosing she retired to North Topsail Beach from Pittsburgh in 2014 and owns two properties on the north end of the island. Mrs. Coltrane is a nurse by profession, holds an MBA and an MSN, and currently teaches online in both MBA and nursing programs. Mrs. Coltrane disclosed she has also served on international boards, as well as corporate and local courts with expertise in leadership and management. Mrs. Coltrane voiced her concern regarding the latest beach haul project and seeing how much sand has dispersed from the area in which it was placed. Mrs. Coltrane is hopeful this committee will be able to exhibit forward-thinking and utilize their expertise to accomplish something permanently.

Michael Pawelko introduced himself disclosing he retired to North Topsail Beach about a year and a half ago after his career, primarily in project engineering and industrial environment, working for companies based both here in the US and Europe. Mr. Pawelko stated he has had the opportunity to travel extensively and visited a lot of beaches around the world trying to understand the dynamics of what goes on. Mr. Pawelko is interested in trying to participate in this program to try and nominate solutions that will be long-term. Mr. Pawelko stated he desires to come up with solutions that will be resilient, sustainable, and utilize decisions based upon the most accurate data that's available to understand what the future holds for our town and island.

John Gardner introduced himself disclosing he had been coming to North Topsail Beach since the mid-90s and looks forward to learning and working with the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee.

Larry Strother stated he has lived in Portofino full time since 2016 and has owned vacation houses on the island for about 20 years. Mr. Strother was in the building/real estate/land development mortgage title business in the federal North Carolina market for 48 years and desires to participate and give back to the community. Mr. Shrother hopes to be of some help to the committee.

Chris Gibson introduced himself as a local engineer with TI Coastal services out of Wilmington and having spent his whole life in the Wilmington area. Mr. Gibson revealed he put himself through school, running a grouper and king mackerel boat; clamming and oystering in the sound. Mr. Gibson revealed he obtained his interest in coastal engineering because his first mate's dad was the Chief of Navigation for the Corps of Engineers in the Wilmington district which led to conversations over dinner about why the Corp was digging a certain way, etc. In those conversations, Mr. Gibson learned it would involve a study that would take half a lifetime to conduct and cost more money to determine it should be done differently than to continue doing it the same old way. Mr. Gibson was essentially told it could not be afforded to be done differently or become more efficient which led to him dedicating his career to finding a better way. Within Mr. Gibson's career, he has worked in Baltimore for several years, Tampa for six years, and worked Jupiter Island which is the second wealthiest community in the US. Juniper Island had a lot of money, and the ability to do a private beach project with governmental resources.

Mr. Gibson disclosed when that project began in 1999 the entire front of the island was the sea wall, and now the sea wall is about 40 feet back with the dunes being in front of that, and now there is a beach in front of the dunes. Juniper Island has a turtle nesting population of an average of 900 per linear mile and the work was statistically representative such as knowing how the slope on the beach; as well as the dune affected turtle nesting. This enabled the community to use that knowledge and bring that into the design so that the project could not

only be fiscally conscientious but environmentally conscientious as well. Mr. Gibson stated he has also been working on the Mason Inlet Project in which the inlet was moved and Mr. Gibson has been managing Figure Eight Island ever since. In total Coastal Engineer Gibson has over 20 years of experience locally. Mr. Gibson indicated he began with Topsail Beach in 2009. Mr. Gibson urged the committee to understand shoreline protection and beach renourishment is a long-term, over the horizon program and not a project or a fix. There is no permanent fix. Mr. Gibson informed the board sand will be placed and the sand will move to different areas than where it was originally placed but keep in mind that the sand doesn't disappear out of the system. That is simply how the system works. Mr. Gibson expressed his excitement to work with the committee and help progress toward what is best for North Topsail Beach's future.

Town Manager Derian introduced herself to the committee revealing she is honored to sit with the committee and happy that North Topsail Beach is committed to planning for the future. Mrs. Derian disclosed she is originally from Southwestern Pennsylvania where she served as the Town Manager for 11 years, served the town of Hilton Head Island in various capacities such as beach services, and became Town Manager to North Topsail Beach in mid-October. Mrs. Derian divulged her familiarity with coastal issues and her willingness to support the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee in any way she can.

Mr. Benson discussed the committee's charter stating both the committee and the Board of Aldermen will have input into developing the charter which is proposed to be approved within the next 90 days. Mr. Benson disclosed the committee will have three-year terms; however, since all committee members were appointed at once in the beginning, staggered terms will need to be established. Mr. Benson revealed the charter doesn't have a statement prohibiting serving more than one term, however, this committee needs to come up with a set of terms for the Inaugural Committee. Mr. Benson informed the members that the committee can recommend whether or not someone stays on the committee or in the event a member decides it is time to depart, someone else would then be appointed to take over that vacant spot. Mr. Benson stated all member's terms started in 2022 and the members would be drawing straws to determine who would initially serve a two-year term versus a three-year term. Drawing of the straws revealed the following initial terms:

Two-year terms: Alderman Grant and John Gardner (Phase Four).

Three-year terms: Mayor Pro Tem Benson, Deborah Coltrane (Phase One), Michael Pawelko (Phase Three), and Larry Strother (Phase Five).

Mayor Pro Tem Benson disclosed the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee will meet every fourth Tuesday of the month at 10:30 am at North Topsail Beach Town Hall.

Alderman Grant suggested making the meetings accessible via zoom in the event any members can not physically attend the meeting.

Coastal Engineer Gibson gave an overview of the history of the beach nourishment project on Topsail Island. The Corp first started evaluating the beach renourishment project on Topsail Island in 1986 which was called the West Onslow Beach and New River Inlet Project. Mr. Gibson disclosed that the project design analysis went on for six years and at that time, the only area that met the benefit-cost ratio for renourishment was 1800 feet in Topsail Beach. Per Mr. Gibson, Topsail Beach did not sign the appropriation agreement with EPA because it was too expensive in 1993. Within a couple of years of that Hurricanes Fred, Floyd, Bertha, Bonnie, and

Dennis came through causing a whiteout. Mr. Gibson explained a whiteout is when you have enough sand blowing over the island that it reduces visibility and you are unable to see any vegetation or road. In 2005 Topsail Beach started their original BIS Committee which was then called the Shoreline Preservation Committee. Mr. Gibson revealed around that time the Corps of Engineers also started studying beach renourishment in the three towns. The Corp Project for Topsail Beach started very slow because the previously designated site was in a COBRA zone. Mr. Gibson divulged our area is a very sand starved area and the offshore sand is a very thin veneer. The offshore sand is very low-quality meaning that it is small grain size which doesn't like to stay very well. This type of sand is an expense that is connected with harvesting sand from offshore in our local area. Mr. Gibson revealed Topsail Beach has now completed four projects over five years regarding beach nourishment. When the first project was developed Topsail Beach laid out what was called the "keep in place project" in which 30 yards of sand was placed on the beach due to not having enough beach to support a dune. Immediately after Topsail Beach was hit by Hurricane Irene.

Hurricane Irene resulted in seven and a half million dollars of FEMA money received to replace sand that had been pushed offshore. This created the platform needed and enabled Topsail to utilize the FEMA money to widen the top beaches. While working through the process of getting other approvals; Hurricane Matthew hit which resulted in money received that was utilized to close up the dunes. Mr. Gibson stated \$18 million was received after Hurricane Florence and used to build the beach wide enough to hold a dune. This resulted in having 175 feet of beach, plus the new dune. Following Florence came Hurricane Dorian. Mr. Gibson explained although the storms displaced sand they also pulled and pushed the sand to where we couldn't which filled in the template. By doing the project in layers a profile was created for Topsail Beach that looks exactly like it did before the hurricanes came in 1996. Mr. Gibson stated that the layering process has worked at Topsail Beach, Juniper, and Figure Eight Island and it looks completely natural. The idea is to take these natural processes combined with the financial processes and work the beach bit by bit which will push the island profile back out.

Alderman Grant stated the phase five project will place 636,000 cubic yards of sand onto the beach in phase five. Mr. Grant disclosed it is his understanding phase five beach was converted into an engineered beach which allows for more sand replenishment paid for by FEMA. Mr. Grant inquired of Mr. Gibson if that was true because phase five is considered a Category G Engineered Beach which he understands FEMA treats differently.

Coastal Engineer Gibson explained there to two types of FEMA sponsored, FEMA reimbursed beach renourishments. FEMA only sponsors renourishment and does not sponsor new work to be done. Mr. Gibson advised that the phase five area was the only area that was out of the COBRA zone except for a small section up towards the north.

Mr. Gibson disclosed there are certain triggers for FEMA funding and those are completely different for category G and category B. The first trigger is a total value loss within your county and an assignment of emergency status as a county. Category B is when a town hasn't completed a project and a dune is located in front of a home that provides flood protection. If the dune gets hit and knocked out you no longer have a dune in front of you higher than the run-up elevation of water (meaning the water can run over the dune). In this situation, a classification of Category B is assigned. In a category B classification FEMA will only pay to place five cubic yards of sand per linear foot. FEMA will not replace any of the beach in Category B only the dune. Mr. Gibson clarified in a Category G beach a summer monitoring survey is conducted,

and if you have a storm, you will go out after the storm and calculate the amount of sand up to the depth of closure. Any sand that has moved out of that footprint qualifies to be replaced and paid for by FEMA in a category G. Mr. Gibson also clarified that a COBRA designation affects FEMA funding and would not typically receive FEMA money in a COBRA zone.

Mr. Benson gave an update on the status of Shoreline Protection for North Topsail Beach stating the phase five, category G project is set to begin within a few days. The category B project was paused in December but will be resumed as soon as the state funding money is released. Mr. Benson explained the New River Inlet Management Master Plan is in the hands of the Army Corps of Engineers which will be a slow-moving, long process. The Army Corps of Engineers is looking at all the alternatives proposed in the engineer's report.

Alderman Grant explained the Town of North Topsail Beach has different funds that are available for various things. Fund 30 is the beach fund and Mr. Grant distributed some examples pulled from the audit report on the town's website. Mr. Grant disclosed North Topsail Beach's Fund 30; as well as the town revenues, have been pretty flat over the last eight 8-10 years.

Mr. Grant disclosed when looking at the example that says "activities 2020-2019" the operating grants and contributions "8 million" and "4 million" tend to skew what the real revenues are due to FEMA reimbursements going in and out. Mr. Grant clarified that the North Topsail Beach Fund 30 gets between three and five million a year maximum, and is the fund that parking revenue goes into. Mr. Grant revealed that North Topsail Beach has chosen not to raise taxes until this past year which was approved to help fund the new firehouse. Mr. Grant mentioned the majority of the property tax bill goes to Onslow County, not to North Topsail Beach. The Onslow County tax rate is over 70 cents and North Topsail Beach is a little over 40. Mr. Grant urged the need to understand the revenues available in the beach fund for the committee to be able to plan and be effective.

Deborah Coltrane suggested placing the development of the vision and mission statement for the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee on hold until the committee schedules a strategic planning workshop. Mrs. Coltrane suggested the mission statement be "the mission of the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee is to advise the board and town staff on matters that involve shoreline protection." Mrs. Coltrane disclosed from a vision standpoint the committee will need to focus on what the goal is of this committee going forward. Mrs. Coltrane also expressed the need for the committee's vision to be very concise. Mrs. Coltrane urged the Town of North Topsail Beach to develop a strategic plan and roadmap for moving forward which would help the committee to then be able to develop their own goals and objectives that align with the town's strategic plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson acknowledged the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee will work on the charter, mission, and vision statements. Mr. Benson disclosed the purpose of the committee is to develop a 30-year CAMA Beach Management Plan. Mr. Benson disclosed each community in North Carolina is under this requirement by the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), the Division of Coastal Management, to have a 30-year Beach Management Plan. Mr. Benson charged the committee members with attending the Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission meetings which are on the fourth Thursday of every month at 2:00 pm. Mr. Benson encouraged everyone to review the background information on the Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission website online at tispc.org.

Michael Pawelko stated that looking at things from a senior management perspective, senior management usually comes up with a list of goals and objectives sent out annually, and a subsequent action plan. Mr. Pawelko revealed that normally then the subgroups use this information to develop their individual goals, objectives, and action plan. Mr. Pawelko stated for the committee to develop an action plan, having a good definition of what the goals and objectives are for the town, as well as the financial limitations, is necessary for the committee to develop a master plan.

Alderman Grant agreed but disclosed one of the things that can be done as a committee is to become educated while waiting, and expressed the committee's ability to be very influential in terms of the strategic plan and the mission of North Topsail Beach's future.

Larry Strother stated the purpose of the committee was to establish an advisory committee by the Board of Aldermen to perform specific goals. Mr. Strother voiced the committee is not in a position today nor over the next several months to know everything that will be able to be accomplished by the committee, but he feels a discussion with Topsail Island and others doing similar things is a good starting point. Mr. Strother feels the board developed this committee to take on the responsibility of providing the Board of Aldermen with good information so that they can make determinations and decisions based on that information.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson stated that it isn't expected for the committee to come together for one day and figure everything out. Mr. Benson's vision for the committee is to meet regularly and take baby steps to educate themselves with information. Mr. Benson would like Mr. Gibson to give the committee an overview of shoreline protection and then the committee can work toward being able to provide some solid recommendations.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson asked if there were any public comments or questions.

Mr. Bill O'Donald disclosed his impressiveness with what he had learned in the meeting, and his pleasure in the formation of the Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee.

Coastal Engineer Gibson requested permission from the committee over the next month to get with Town Manager Derian and get updated with information on what the town of North Topsail Beach has already completed. Mr. Gibson stated he plans to put together a presentation for next month's meeting regarding what North Topsail Beach has done; as well as possibilities for North Topsail Beach going forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson directed the committee to visit the town's website shoreline protection page and read the section on shoreline protection by phase to educate themselves.

Meeting adjourned.