

Town of North Topsail Beach

Joann M. McDermott, 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, February 21, 2023, at 10:30 A.M.
North Topsail Beach Town Hall
2008 Loggerhead Court, North Topsail Beach, NC 28460
MINUTES**

The Beach, Inlet, Sound Advisory Committee held its regular meeting on February 21, 2023.
A quorum of the committee was present.

Committee members in attendance:

Deborah Coltrane – Phase I
John Gardner – Phase 4
Larry Strother – Phase 5
Teri Ward – At Large
Mike Benson – Chair
Rick Grant – Alderman
Chris Gibson – TI Coastal Services, Inc.

Members absent:

Tim Foster – Onslow County Commissioner
Steve Scheibner – At Large

Staff present:

Alice Derian – Town Manager
Nancy Avery – Interim Town Clerk

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 10:30 am stating that Member Scheibner will not be attending today. He welcomed Chris Gibson with TI Coastal Service, Inc.

2008 Loggerhead Court
North Topsail Beach, NC 28460

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Approval of Agenda

Motion – Member Strother motioned to approve the agenda; Member Gardner seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the January 24th minutes

Motion – Member Ward motioned to approve the January 24, 2023; minutes as presented; Member Grant seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

None

Current Status of Shoreline Protection Projects

Manager Derian reported:

- **Phase 5 project:** ST Wooten continues work with the Phase 5 truck haul project. At EOD on February 16th they have placed approximately 135,972 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 boarder to around 3686 Island Drive. The beach access at 2nd Avenue was opened this month to help facilitate the project with more trucks coming on-line at the end of the month with another contractor.
- **Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund Grant:** The contract has been fully executed with the state. We have received the permit. I have prepared and submitted a one-year contract extension to the state in advance since we know our project will start next November. I am currently waiting on that acceptance.
- **County BA#4 Dune Project:** I worked with Onslow County to remove the lattice work in preparation for the contractor to start work. I received final documentation needed from ATM for final cost estimate with proposed scope of work deemed acceptable by the state. I presented this to the County Manager on Friday. I was told by the state to hold on moving forward with the project because of gravel and sand that was scraped into the dune by the County post Ian. I provided the plan along with the additional costs to the County Manager.
- **ICW Crossing – Channel to Jacksonville Disposal Area:** The USACE project officially wrapped up last week. I received notice late Thursday afternoon that they started to pump black material that was no longer beach compatible sand, so they had to stop. They made it to Building #6 at the Reef.

Discussion

Alderman Grant asked if we have been given any idea of how much sand was placed there? Manager Derian said they have not given us that data.

Engineer Gibson said we are doing surveys for the contractor Cottrell on the beach and the hydrographic survey was done yesterday and we should have the topographic done today. The numbers for how much sand was placed on the beach for the ICW Crossing should be available next week. We will submit them through Cottrell to the Corps of Engineers. We extended the survey to the St. Regis area. The 45,000 cubic yards you are talking about putting there will dovetail with what the Corps did and extend further down the beach. They did a fairly wide

beach, maybe a 100-foot flat with a slope in front of the Reefs. Then we will move south to the Corps placement area. The Corps has filled its template and I do not see an issue with completing what was originally planned.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson said that would allow the permit to be extended from the current permitted area from Hurricane Dorian and the state money to be extended further towards the St. Regis.

Engineer Gibson said that is what they expect to happen. The situation where we had the Dorian money and all the sand placement intended for the Reefs, the Corps filled that template but did not fill all of its template that extended all the way to the St. Regis. It is sort of a flip flop situation. We do not see an issue with this.

Member Coltrane said there is a six-foot drop between the stairs and the sandbags and we cannot access the beach from building five. She hopes the haul project will fill that in.

Mr. Gibson replied it is state law that once you have uncovered sandbags, you cannot directly bury them. It would make sense to us to fill that drop off in, but sandbags are buried deeply and as they start to appear they cannot fill in that area because the state wants the sandbags visible. Cottrell is using a larger dredge that puts out a higher volume. One thing we need to work on is once the sandbags are covered naturally, is to try to keep them covered.

Member Coltrane said the sandbags are not covered and have never been covered.

Chair Benson said you have to stay 10 feet back from sandbag line when they place the sand. What Member Coltrane is asking about is the landing for the crossover to the beach.

Mr. Gibson stated when the sandbags were put in originally, they were below grade. Once they uncover themselves, you cannot directly cover them. You can put sand in front of them and let mother nature cover them. The state wants them visible.

Chair Benson said two years ago, the contractor that did the same project with the same volume of sand did not make it to building 1 at the Reef. This year the contractor has made it to three-fourths of the buildings at the Reef.

Alderman Grant stated that sand will migrate over the next six months and will likely fill it in. By law, we cannot cover up the sandbags. We are limited by state law and by the fact it is not our project. This goes to education.

Mr. Gibson said we need to keep in mind as we move forward that if the sandbags are covered, we can keep them covered and not let them get uncovered.

Manager Derian continued reporting:

- Phase 1 Project: The Board of Alderman at their February meeting, approved to move forward with the FEMA project that will add 15,000 cubic yards of sand along Phase 1 along with an additional 30,000 cubic yards of sand. We cannot start this project until USACE completes the dredge project. We have a very limited time to execute this project and I have been working in advance on logistics with our engineer and management at the Reef to

obtain approval for the contractor to access. I received communication from the Reef on Monday that their board of directors would like the contractor to use the southern option for truck access to the beach. This plan is being reviewed by the contractor this week and I am waiting on an estimated mobilization date. The environmental window for Phase 1 closes on April 1st. We have to provide the latest beach survey data and project fill layout to the Division of Coastal Mgt who enforce CAMA regulations prior to the work beginning as well. We cannot request an extension until the project starts and then we are set to immediately request an extension.

Chair Benson said the Corps changed its regulations on NOIs and it now has to be through the south Atlantic District.

Chair Benson asked Manager Derian to share information about the beach clean initiative meeting she attended last week.

Manager Derian said the three town managers are trying to identify one date for an island wide beach cleanup. Surf City is checking with a committee that handles clean ups for a date and Topsail Island has a date. She will then be able to pinpoint a date. Several other initiatives are in the works with realtors relaying information, costs on magnets and signage, and we are waiting on information on that.

Chair Benson asked if she needs any support from this committee.

Manager Derian said no, that will be something we can talk about. It is my understanding that the Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Committee would handle the cost, not the Towns, but that was not clarified.

Member Coltrane stated we had proposed to the Board for beach cleanup for this committee. Was that approved by the Board?

Chair Benson said he presented it to Board as part of the goals but there was no discussion.

Committee organization

Chair Benson asked for a motion to bring this item back from being tabled from the last meeting back to discussion.

Motion – Member Coltrane motioned to bring back the tabled item of election of chair and vice chair; seconded by Member Ward; motion passed unanimously.

Discussion

Member Coltrane said the vice chair position does not exist in the current charter. Was that added?

Alderman Grant stated no other committee has a charter or vice chair. He and Chairman Benson worked on a proposal that was given to the Board Of Aldermen last November and we have not received a response, so for this purpose we can just look at appointing a chair person.

Chair Benson said the committee had agreed at the last meeting that Member Strother would be the chair, even though it was not voted on.

Motion – Member Gardner motioned to elect Member Strother as chair of the committee; seconded by Alderman Grant; motion passed unanimously.

Discussion

Member Coltrane asked the effective date.

Chair Benson answered it has to go to the Board of Aldermen (BOA) for approval, so after the March BOA meeting.

Member Strother stated he had no agenda or thought process when he joined the committee that he would be chair. He understands there needs to be a change back to a citizen committee. He does not have the knowledge Chair Benson and Alderman Grant have, but he will be calling on them for information. He can run a meeting and keep it under control. He also stated he has no agenda for Phase 5 and is interested in what happens for all of North Topsail Beach. If we do a good job as a committee, all phases will benefit.

Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission (TISPC) at-large recommendation (tabled)

Motion – Member Ward motioned to bring this tabled item back on the agenda; seconded by Chair-elect Strother; motion passed unanimously.

Chair Benson said the TISPC charter says each town will have three representatives; an elected official, the chair from the beach committee and an at-large citizen member. In the past, we have not had a beach committee, so the BOA chose to have two elected officials and one at-large member. There is now a vacancy and we need to make a recommendation to the BOA that since we now have a chair of the beach committee, we should recommend the chair to serve.

Motion – Member Coltrane motioned to recommend to the BOA appointment of Chair-elect Strother (as chair of BISAC) to serve on the TISPC; seconded by Member Gardner; motion passed unanimously.

Overview 30 year Engineered Beach and Inlet Management Plan

Chris Gibson with TI Coastal Services, stated:

- First beach plan we did was for Mason's Inlet, a 4.5 mile stretch of beach with a migratory inlet.
- We then did a plan for Topsail Beach using basic knowledge we had for Mason's Inlet and built a thirty-year plan. This was a forty-page report started in 2011 through 2041.
- Federal Management Authority (FEMA) says you cannot be opportunistic. You cannot do a one-off and expect to be reimbursed for that later on. You really need to have a beach maintenance plan. You do need to get into a maintenance program.
- The plan looked at sand resources, future projects, erosion rates and how you would manage it, and source(s) of sand and cost. Topsail Beach is about 4-5% of the budget eleven years later and under. From a Town cost, we are 90% under because we have been able to find other funding sources.
- There needs to be synergy between the board, committee and the vendor preparing the plan.
- The committee becomes valuable by kicking around all types of ideas and having open discussion, whereas BOA has to be more careful.

- It is important to look at where we are now instead of where we were when the Town's existing plan started.
- He recommends BOA select a vendor to prepare a draft plan for the committee and for BOA to review.
- The purpose of the CBRA legislation of 1982 was to not use federal expenditures to develop environmental lands.
- No new work can be done in CBRA with federal funds. This means the Army Corps cannot do any work. It does not mean the Town cannot do work. You cannot get flood insurance through National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), but that is not FEMA.
- There are exceptions to the rule. This is really important. If you call it a turtle habitat restoration rather than beach maintenance, you can get 75/25 coverage.
- If you build the beach like it was before, you can get federal funds assistance
- Federal grants will get you state money also. Once you get past the initial construction phase, most funds can come from outside sources.
- Since we did the Topsail Beach initial project, they have not lost a single set of steps. We built the beach up enough that another layer of dunes has developed. The slope is very walkable so the Town is not going to allow folks to extend steps out. This means a storm will not take out steps.
- FEMA money is available in a non CBRA area. The goal would be to put together a workable plan to be pro-active and opportunistic. It is best to have a plan with alternatives so you can adapt to whatever beach conditions or finances are available.
- You do not want to be reactive, but proactive.

Discussion

Member Coltrane said the BOA gave this committee the goal to review the plan. What is your expectation to come out of this committee? Is it to put together an entire draft or critique the current plan.

Member Grant said we do not have the expertise so we need a beach engineer to educate us and bring a draft plan. The committee should have something structured to start with. The engineer would put together an outline and the committee would use the engineer as a resource.

Manager Derian asked Mr. Gibson if this is something that can be completed before the end of the fiscal year on June 30th? Funds are budgeted in this fiscal year.

Mr. Gibson said they would be hard pressed to complete it by July 1st. They might could have an initial potential draft. We could maybe incorporate things together and eliminate phases so you have less restrictions with where funds can be spent. That could be reviewed then maybe in six months we could have something to present to agencies for permitting. Blanket permitting should be done rather than by phases.

Chair Benson said this sounds like it will be a process and not be complete until a year from now. We can take some time and spend some money in this year's budget as part of the process.

Member Ward asked if the sandbags at the Reefs start the thirty-year plan with a deficit. Will the plan be compartmentalized because of the different sections of the beach and the different conditions and if so, for how long?

Mr. Gibson said yes, we would start with a deficit position. Twenty-five years ago, there would have been dunes. Now without the sandbags, the dunes would be behind the buildings. To get

back to a sustainable situation is too costly for a town this size. At first the plan will be compartmentalized until we get the whole beach built up to where it needs to be. If we are successful, the beach will be in a condition to be rebuilt. When they started in Topsail Beach forty percent of homes were not rebuildable. It has to be done incrementally as the town can afford it. It will take about ten years. That is what it took at Figure Eight and Topsail Beach.

Member Grant asked if we have a head start with the current work on the beach, particularly with Phase Four. The Town has twelve miles of beach and less density.

Additional discussion highlights:

- Education for committee members needs to be available to review a beach plan.
- Need to put Town in a position to be prepared to take advantage of funding opportunities as they come available.
- Topsail Beach has a committee that does education events for citizens.
- Pick 'owners' weekends' to hold education events when actual owners are in town.
- Need to be in financial position to be able to take advantage of opportunities.

Mr. Gibson stated once the groin is built, it will make Phase I extremely manageable. There will be enough sand to take care of chronic erosion in Phase I. Inlet management and keeping the channel open will take care of Phases Two and Three. Phases Four and Five are further from the inlet so sourcing will become more difficult. He thinks ten years is reasonable to rebuild the beach to make it easy to maintain.

Chair Benson said we need to move forward at the Town level to begin working on the Thirty-year beach plan.

Member Grant said he would add it to the agenda.

NC Shallow Draft Fund & CBRA Sand Borrowing

Same as above

Chris Gibson

Public Comments – None

Questions from audience member

1. In front of the Reefs, does sand from the Corp and sand brought in classify that area as an engineered beach?
2. Regarding 45,000 cubic yards, I thought they would start at building I and go south, but it sounds like they are now starting further south and going further south. Is that right?
Have they determined where they are going with the sand?

Mr. Gibson responded that what the Town is doing as far as placement is an engineered beach. What the Corps has done is disposable and it does not qualify as an engineered beach. The original plan was post hurricane Dorian and originally permitted in front of the Reefs. There was no thought process that the Corps would place sand down near the Reefs. The Corps' disposable project has filled that area in. The best thing way to extend the life of what the Corps placed is to extend the beach.

Chair Benson said the 45,000 cubic yards behind the Reefs when all the projects are done may be enough sand to extend beyond the St. Regis. You will have sand you were promised behind the Reefs.

Next Meeting

Chair Benson announced the next meeting is Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 10:30 am.

Adjournment

Motion – Member Grant motioned to adjourn at 12:22 pm; seconded by Member Ward; motion passed unanimously.

Mike Benson, Chair

ATTEST: _____
Nancy Avery, Interim Town Clerk