

Board of Aldermen Budget Work Session
Wednesday, March 13, 2024
MINUTES

The Town of North Topsail Beach Board of Aldermen held a budget work session on March 13, 2024. A quorum of the board was present. The Town Attorney was not in attendance.

Board members present: Mayor Joann McDermon, Mayor Pro Tem Benson
Aldermen: Rick Grant, Connie Pletl, Tom Leonard, Laura Olszewski

Board members absent: None

Staff present: Town Manager Alice Derian, IT Director Ricky Schwisow, Police Chief William Younginer, Fire Chief Chad Soward, Finance Officer Jessica Helms and Caitlin Elliott, interim Town Clerk Nancy Avery

Call to Order

Mayor McDermon called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Approval of agenda

Motion – Alderman Olszewski motioned to adopt the agenda; seconded by Alderman Leonard; unanimously approved.

Presentation

Flock Automatic License Plate Readers

Representative Hector stated that Flock is a public safety technology company founded in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2017. Our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his neighbors were seeing a real uptick in crime such as home and car break ins in his neighborhood. Like many of you, they had video camera footage, or ring camera surveillance and went to law enforcement in the hope that these crimes would get solved. Unfortunately, the feedback that they received from their local law enforcement was that they needed a license plate in order to find the people behind these events. Our CEO started doing an extensive amount of research and found out that license plate readers had been around since the 1970s and were still extremely expensive, tens of thousands of dollars per camera, and that mostly cities were the ones purchasing them. He also found that many of the legacy providers were sharing data with third party companies. That is when Flock Automatic License Plate readers came into existence. Our cameras are \$3,000 per year, but that includes all of the maintenance and upkeep as well as the access to the software. The technology itself provides your Police Department with an image of the back of the vehicle, vehicle characteristics and the license plate. It does not provide facial recognition or traffic enforcement. Your Police Department will receive real time alerts through National Crime Information Center (NCIC) or Amber Alert about stolen vehicles as well as missing persons. It is important to talk a lot about what this is not. There is no personal identifiable information. It does not have any Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records or third-party databases. We solely provide your law enforcement with leads on vehicles that are known to be wanted, or that

Hector said as the cameras are placed to look at the rear of vehicles, every image is basically tagged to a direction. A police department may have several cameras on one road and would be able to estimate the location of the vehicles.

A. Continue discussion on replacement of cameras in Police Department

Police Chief Younginer said we had a success story here. Day before yesterday, there was an attempted murder in Sneads Ferry. Onslow County Sheriff's Office put that out yesterday. We could have put that data into this system and watched it happen if it came through here. The vehicle went to Chadwick Acres where they have a Flock camera. Chadwick Acres let the Sheriff's Department access their data and the Sheriff was able to get the vehicle and a suspect from the data. That data was shared, and we all looked for the vehicle and found it in Holly Ridge. HOAs are purchasing Flock cameras too.

Mayor McDermon - One of my concerns is the 30-day retention, because we all know somebody is not going to go for their final trial within 30 days. Are you able to download and keep that data?

Chief Younginer said yes, we can download it to our body cam software and send it to the District Attorney's (DA) office that way.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson – Do you do traffic counts in the summer season to know how many vehicles we have coming with vacation visitors and so forth. My concern is that we have people coming from other states, such as Maryland, Ohio or Pennsylvania and we do not want to put out the message that we are going to check your license plate. If a driver's license has expired in say Maryland, are you guys going to check that?

Chief Younginer said the ones that we done have been through the Department of Transportation (DOT). The new radar camera that I asked for will do a count and speed and we can use some of that data to tell you what is happening in certain neighborhoods. I guess maybe 30,000 vehicles in the summer season. Flock cameras do not provide any DMV data, only stolen vehicles We can put in a vehicle like last year when we had a red truck stealing wood. We did it with the camera we had, but it took us weeks.

Mayor McDermon - I do not think we are broadcasting that fact, because we have cameras now. It is really just if the Board decides to agree with the change in the provider or not.

Alderman Leonard - It is different. Our cameras are different than what is out there now. There is plenty of data out there and plenty of information on the web and articles and municipalities are now thinking twice and removing their Flock cameras. I am not going to vote on a budget that has Flock cameras in it.

Mayor McDermon to Town Manager Derian – Have you had a chance to talk with Attorney Edes at all, does he have an opinion?

- Funding placeholders for the Board of Aldermen for the allocations such as for the Ocean City Jazz Festival
- An increase in revenue based on the projected county levy that we have since received since the last budget meeting

Since the last meeting, we have included a proposed 4% increase in salaries across all departments. This is comprised of a 4% cost of living adjustment.

We have not received the increase for insurance costs from our provider yet who is Cigna. And we typically do not receive this information until the end of our budget process. We have included a 5% increase for this insurance. Historically, we have seen a 2 to 3% increase.

The employees benefit package includes health insurance for employees and includes the short-term disability coverage which was approved last year, and we kept the HRA at \$1,500 per employee with continued availability to use for dependents.

In an effort to ensure that we are operating effectively along with ensuring that we continue to be competitive within our identified market, which is local government, I intend on engaging a consultant to complete a town wide compensation study. The study will set staff compensation along with looking into the structure of our compensation. Historically, the town has looked at compensation using a salary range or grade structure for budgeting individual positions. One thing we may consider is transitioning away from longevity-based systems in favor of a pay for performance system. The goal is to attract and retain quality employees by rewarding productivity in lieu of the traditional base pay increase and design a useful appraisal system. It is not just a basic compensation study but will look at everything as a package.

The difference in this draft budget from the one we went over in February is an increase of \$189,322 in revenues based on the projected Onslow County tax levy, and an increase of \$429,228 in expenditures. There is \$278,625.34 surplus in the General Fund.

The first item is the Governing Board with a 25.87% increase. This primarily reflects the change in the increase request for legal fees that the Board has been discussing.

In Administration, the increase is for contracted services, including the compensation study that we just talked about. The full time Code Enforcement position was moved into administration.

There is a bit of a decrease on the planning side. It reflects the increase for new computers, and we will have more information on that as we proceed today.

Public Buildings include the costs for Town Hall erosion and up-fitting office space. We talked about that at the last meeting. Town Hall is being assessed for some erosion that has been identified. We have accounted for a potential \$100,000 in necessary repairs and creation of additional office spaces in Town Hall. Some of the offices are very large and can be made into two offices.

F. Decision on whether to continue mosquito spraying as a service

After a discussion on the optics, use of materials, whether it should be done on private streets, chemicals used, name of the line item and so forth, the Board reached a consensus on funding.

Consensus – keep the line item for mosquito spraying and fund \$3,000

G. Estimated costs for three existing pedestrian crosswalks

Public Works Superintendent Cablay stated \$75,000 is in the proposed fiscal year 24-25 budget to improve three existing crosswalks at:

- 790 New River Inlet Road – Villa Capriana
- 465 New River Inlet Road – Richard Peters Park/ County beach access # 4
- 4021 Island Drive - Roger’s Bay/beach access # 31

He proposed three options for consideration by the Board as:

A. Cost \$15,000 each for labor and materials

- Two solar powered flashing LED pedestrian signs placed at the crosswalk location – one in each direction.
- Two pedestrian manually actuated push button pedestals – one on each side of crosswalk.
- Two reflectorized thermo-plastic “Ped Xing” stencils – one for each direction

B. Cost \$20,000 each for labor and materials

- One solar powered overhead streetlight placed on either side of crosswalk.
- Two advanced pedestrian crossing signs one for each direction placed 150 feet ahead of LED signs.
- Two solar powered flashing LED pedestrian signs placed at the crosswalk location – one in each direction.
- Two pedestrian manually actuated push button pedestals – one on each side of crosswalk.
- Two reflectorized thermo-plastic “Ped Xing” stencils – one for each direction

C. Cost \$2,000 each

- As is with enhanced stenciling. DOT will freshen it up.

The Board discussed the options and type of road at each location, whether flashing lights will really make people stop, whether each of three locations needs the same improvement, whether DOT replaces what the Town does when resurfacing the road, whether more improvement is needed where there is a curve in the road with poorer visibility.

Consensus – Reduce the budgeted amount from \$75,000 to \$40,000:

- Use Option B at 790 New River Inlet Road – Villa Capriana (\$20,000)
- Use Option C at 465 New River Inlet Road – Richard Peters Park/ County beach access # 4 (\$2,000)
- Use Option C at 4021 Island Drive - Roger’s Bay/beach access # 31 (\$2,000)

After discussing pros and cons of leasing versus purchasing, the Board reached **Consensus** – Move forward with purchasing new computers as in the proposed budget

IT Director Schwisow said to your previous questions about cameras. The proposal is for eight cameras at Town Hall; some in the boardroom, one in the lobby, two on the side doors on each side of the building and then covering the parking lot.

Alderman Pletl asked what other cameras we have in town. Do we have any coming into town?

IT Director Schwisow said we have cameras at the Fire Department and Public Works building. We have proposed ones for the town park and the ones coming into town are just for law enforcement and are not tied into the others.

J. Uniform policy

Manager Derian said another item that came up last week was a question on uniform policies. Each Department Head will speak on the current policy on how we purchase or replace uniforms.

Fire Chief Soward said our policy for replacing is dependent on the call. If it is a medical call and they are contaminated with bodily fluids or they are working on a truck and they tear their uniforms, they get instant replacement. Our boot policy is to allow \$100 a year. We supply Tee shirts, long sleeve shirts, job shirts, pants, and turnout gear and firefighting gear. We issue two sets of turnout gear. There are companies now that can decontaminate gear, so we are not having to eat the cost of a new set of gear.

Police Chief Younginer stated we give each officer three long sleeve shirts, four short sleeve shirts, five sets of pants, one coat, one pair of boots, and a raincoat. We also have outer vests, gizmo holders, hats, and patches. If a uniform is contaminated during an EMS call, we replace it.

Public Works Superintendent Cablay said our policy is OSHA compliant. Annually they get steel toed boots. We do our own laundry. We give them six shirts, long sleeve and short sleeve, and three different styles of pants for the seasons. We supply caps and hard hats.

Mayor Pro Tem Benson said he thinks the Board should have uniforms. A long sleeve and short sleeve shirt with our new logo on it for when we go to Board meetings and when we represent the Town.

Finance Officer Elliott said we allocated money for this fiscal year for that.

K. Police weapons

Alderman Olszewski asked Chief Younginer to explain the weapon replacement policy and what you are doing with that in your request. What were you asking for with sights? How often are officers going to the range to practice? Do we have anybody that is National Rifle Association (NRA-RO) certified? How many times have our officers in the last year had to pull weapons? Do

Chief Younginer said the trucks are about \$48,000. They do not make the Chargers anymore. The trucks are working out better for us. We sold the last Chargers for about \$7,000 each.

Alderman Grant said the budget shows \$62,000.

Chief Younginer said the truck net is \$48,000 and then it costs about \$12,000 to upfit it for what we need.

Alderman Olszewski asked how long we have had in place a five-year replacement policy. I do not understand why as a lot of cars are getting 150,000 miles.

Chief Younginer said it was in place when he started in 2018. It is a lot rougher on a police car. There is a lot of idle time and when they start getting 100,000 miles they require a lot of maintenance.

Alderman Leonard asked how many cars we have today.

Chief Younginer said he does not have that number but thinks they have about 21 total vehicles with 13 of those police cars, two Rangers for beach use, two side by sides and some older Crown Vics used for training travel.

Break – Mayor McDermon called for a 15-minute break at 10:51 am.
Mayor McDermon resumed the meeting at 11:07 am.

Alderman Olszewski asked what is the radius that a Police Officer can take home a police car? Do we have GPS trackers on our cars to know where they are? Are our cars allowed to be used for personal use?

Chief Younginer replied 30 miles. We do not have GPS but there is dispatch software that tracks the car.

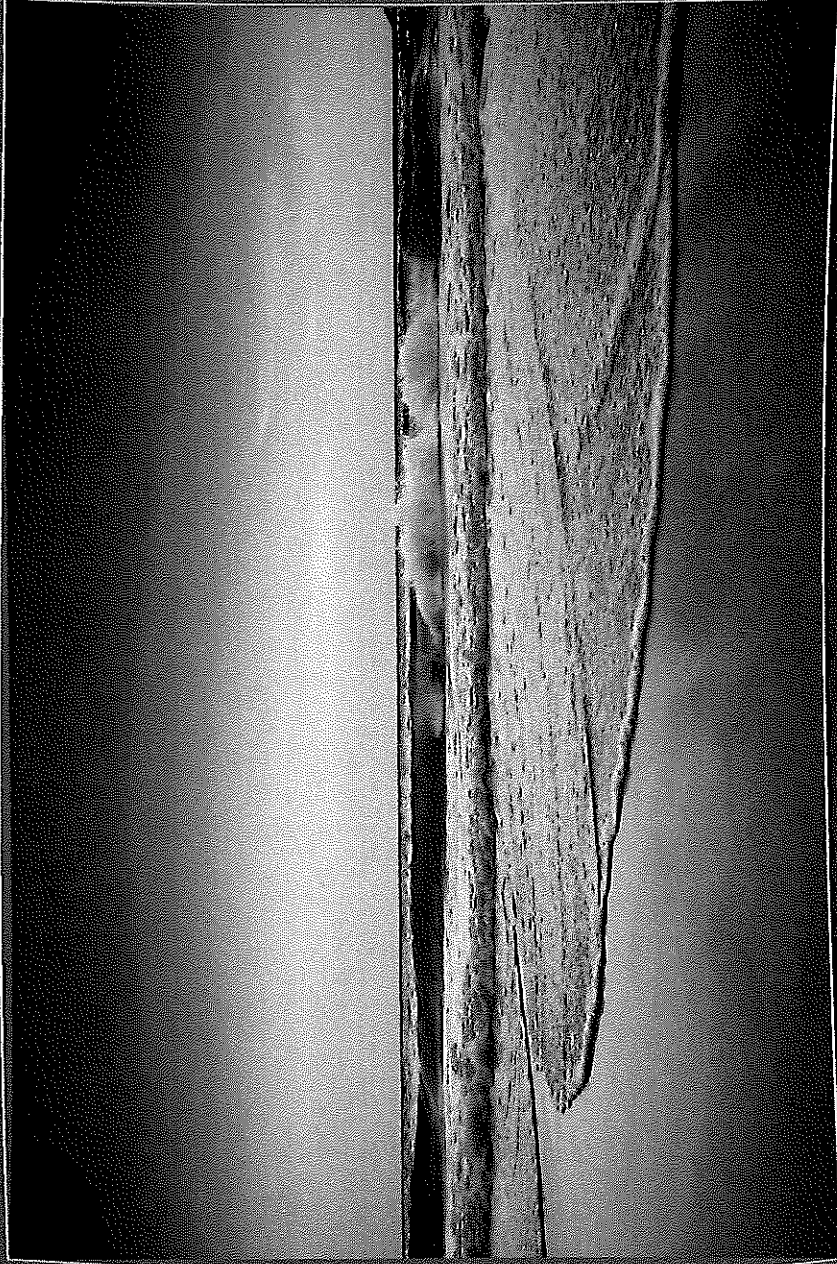
Alderman Grant asked if an officer is on vacation, does the police car stay at his/her home?

Chief Younginer responded if they are on regular vacation, yes. If it is for an extended time, the car will stay here. We do not allow personal use of police cars.

Five Year Outlook

Finance Officer Elliott reviewed the Capital Improvement summary with these highlights:

- Added \$20,000 for an engineer assessment for rebuild of the Public Works project in the next 2 to 3 years
- Plugged in \$3,000,000 for the bike path project in the following fiscal year – the number we just verbally received from DOT
- Fire Department ladder truck is in the latter part of the five-year plan



THANK
YOU!

Town of
NORTH TOPSAIL BEACH
FOUNDED IN 1956 *Nature's Tropical Beauty* NORTH CAROLINA



SHORELINE PROTECTION FUND SUMMARY

- Assuming current tax rate of \$0.43 per hundred dollar valuation, with \$0.10 assigned to the Shoreline Protection Fund.

	TOTAL REVENUES	2007-07-01-2023	PROPOSED	DIFFERENCE AMOUNT	DIFFERENCE PERCENTAGE
720 Beach	\$ 3,178,204.00	\$ 3,248,283.00	2.17%		
Future Projects 999 Fund	\$ 1,076,612.65	\$ -	-100.00%	DIFFERENCE:	
	\$ 4,254,816.65	\$ 3,247,283.00	-23.68%	\$(1,239,160.81)	

Total Revenues: \$ 4,254,816.65 \$ 4,486,443.81 5.44%

CAPITAL ASSETS

	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	Total Estimated Cost
PD Replacement Vehicles	\$ 40,000	\$ 62,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 90,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 452,000
Police Dept Expansion		\$ 2,000,000					\$ 2,000,000
Weapon Replacement		\$ 29,500					\$ 29,500
Roxor Vehicle	\$ 24,100						\$ 24,100
FD Chief Vehicle Replacement	\$ 50,000						\$ 50,000
FD Dep Chief Vehicle Replacement		\$ 50,000					\$ 50,000
FD Engine Replacement	\$ 700,000						\$ 700,000
FD Ladder Replacement					\$ 1,500,000		\$ 1,500,000
South End Fire Department	\$ 6,616,698						\$ 6,616,698
Equipment Replacement	\$ 30,500	\$ 20,500	\$ 39,300	\$ 35,300			\$ 125,600
Cascade System		\$ 105,000					\$ 105,000
Streets Wet/Dry Unit		\$ 75,000					\$ 75,000
PW Skid Steer		\$ 30,000					\$ 30,000
Streets Crack Sealer		\$ 35,000					\$ 35,000
Replacement Vehicle	\$ 50,000			\$ 50,000			\$ 100,000
Crosswalk Project		\$ 75,000					\$ 75,000
Mowing Equipment	\$ 20,000		\$ 35,000				\$ 55,000
PW Puilding					\$ 3,000,000		\$ 3,000,000
Boardwalk/Docks Project		\$ 200,000	\$ 35,000				\$ 235,000
Admin Replacement Vehicle			\$ 40,000				\$ 40,000
Off Site EOC / Storage				\$ 1,000,000			\$ 1,000,000
NCDOT Bike Lane Project			\$ 3,000,000				\$ 3,000,000
Computer Replacement		\$ 62,000					\$ 62,000
PD Vehicle Replacement					\$ 30,000		\$ 30,000
Inspections Replacement Vehicle				\$ 50,000			\$ 50,000
Planning Replacement Vehicle			\$ 50,000				\$ 50,000
Total:	\$ 7,531,298	\$ 744,000	\$ 5,279,300	\$ 1,220,300	\$ 4,620,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 19,489,898

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

- Police Department Cameras
- Donations to Other Agencies
- Mosquito Spraying
- Crosswalks
- Any Other Items



NOTEWORTHY CHANGES

- Updated Salary figures with a 4% Cost of Living Adjustment
- Estimated 5% increase in employee insurance
- Cascade System for new Fire Department included
- Additional Funding for legal fees
- Allocation for a Town wide Compensation Study
- Received Updated Levy from Onslow County

