

**Minutes**  
**Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina**  
**Joint Council/Planning Board Retreat**  
**Wednesday, March 22, 2006**

The Atlantic Beach Town Council and Planning Board held a joint retreat on Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at 4:30 p.m. at Loughry's Landing Restaurant, Atlantic Beach, N.C.

**Members Present:** Mayor Tootsie Vinson, Mayor Pro Tem Doug Creech, Council members Jim Bailey, Ruth Barnes, Eddie Dawkins, and Tom Doe.

Planning Board members Joe Tarascio, Chairman; Board members Larry Burke, Trace Cooper, Karen Koenig, Norman Livengood, Tom Outlaw and Vada Palma

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Chuck Cooper, Town Manager; Lee Smith, Town Planner; Larry Moolenaar, Facilitator; Kim Glover, Deputy Town Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Vinson called the retreat to order at 4:45 p.m. All Council members were present.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Councilman Tom Doe made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Creech, vote was 5-0, unanimous.

<b>RETREAT AGENDA</b>
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**1. Welcome and Introduction of Retreat Facilitator-Town Manager**

Town Manager, Chuck Cooper welcomed and thanked everyone for coming tonight. He introduced Lee Smith, Town Planner.

Mr. Smith introduced Larry Moolenaar, Executive Director of Eastern Carolina Council of Government, as the retreat facilitator.

**2. Overview of Retreat Schedule, Topics and Objectives-Larry Moolenaar**

Mr. Moolenaar stated his main goal is for the Council and Planning Board to be able to get out of the meeting what they came there to accomplish. He commended everyone for getting together to do this.

### **3. Introduction of Land Use Plan Vision Statement-Planning Board Chairman**

**(Clerk's note: A copy of the Land Use Plan Vision Statement is attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.)**

Mr. Moolenaar said one of the main points he would like to point out was in the second paragraph and last sentence. "A high quality of life must be maintained and a small town atmosphere preserved." He read through the vision statement for everyone. He asked Mr. Smith if he would like to discuss any parts of it. Mr. Smith stated it is the vision statement the Planning Board agreed upon. This is the premise policy decisions will be based on. Trace Cooper asked what was meant by the word "partnerships". Mr. Smith said it meant they were going to try and promote some public-private partnerships. Councilman Doe asked if it was the first time Council had seen this vision statement. Mr. Smith said yes. Councilman Doe asked if it was an extension of the old statement. Mr. Smith said it has a lot of the same concepts. Mr. Bailey asked if the order of the items was important. Mr. Smith answered no. Mr. Moolenaar asked everyone if they saw anything on the list that was more important and needed changing.

Councilman Doe stated he had some questions regarding the wording of the items. Trace Cooper reminded the Council that this was just a vision statement and they were not writing ordinances. He stated the Planning Board had talked about accommodating some higher density by over running some of the smaller cottage-type neighborhoods in Town. He would like to see growth but maintain the character of the town as well. Mr. Outlaw said they want to keep areas like Club Colony or somewhere between the Sportsman's Pier and Circle where there are cottages and homes the same. Ms. Palma suggested we poll the citizens of different neighborhoods. There are certain areas where families have been there for over fifty years. Councilman Bailey asked once it is identified how is it preserved. Mr. Smith said through development regulations. Councilman Doe said the key to it all would be the zoning. Councilman Creech said we need to look at the size of the families it would affect. Mr. Outlaw stated the Council is in control of the decisions to be made.

Chairman Tarascio stated there are some words in the statement that are clear and could be focused on. If all we look for is what we are not clear on, we will never go anywhere. He thinks the words all-inclusive are clear. It means that the beach is available to a lot of different people. Natural barrier island is another one which is what we are sitting on. It is just a little strip of sand. Mr. Tarascio said we have to decide if the market value is going to drive our ordinances or good zoning.

Councilwoman Barnes stated she thought her understanding of a vision statement was usually a couple of sentences. Mr. Moolenaar agreed with her. He felt there were a lot of things in

the statement that were conflicting. He said the vision statement should be some terminology that would reflect the balance that you would like to see. Councilwoman Barnes stated she thought that paragraph three and sentence one would summarize it all.

Mr. Moolenaar asked everyone to consider how they would like to see the Town change from where it is today.

Chairman Tarascio thought they had agreed as two boards that there are appropriate places for high rise construction and intense development. What we hear over and over again from the citizens is they live in a one story house and they do not want to look out their windows and see walls of a building. What do we do for those people? Do we have any areas that are immuned from the large structures?

Councilman Doe stated we woke up one morning and realized we were getting run over. It has less to do with how we want to go forward. We need to get the process under control. Mr. Tarascio said we are continually getting surprised. We always seem to be surprised on the side of things getting larger and never on things getting smaller.

Councilman Bailey stated we are a town with very little vacant land left. We really are in a re-development phase. Personally he does not see how we can take the attitude of not adding to the number of living units in the town. Our zoning ordinance is a mess. We need to simplify our zoning so it makes sense.

Mr. Smith said we have nine or ten zoning districts and there is very little difference in each zoning district. We do not have a zoning district that would separate densities. We will get to the point where we will have to do some development regulations.

Councilman Dawkins asked if we are moving too fast or too slow. We basically approve what comes before us because the thought and knowledge is good.

Mayor Vinson said she agreed with the statement Mr. Tarascio made about the market driving us to do what we do. She stated she served on this Council for eight years as a voting member. She was there when citizens would come to meetings to have things changed and the Council would do so to accommodate them. She agreed that the zoning ordinances are messed up. She would like to see all the ordinances taken off and start all over and get the zones correct. She said once things are correct, you have to have Councils strong enough to say no.

Trace Cooper stated that a lot of what the Council is saying is what the Planning Board had hoped to hear. It sounds like everyone thinks something should be done with re-working our zoning ordinances.

Donna Turner, Inspections Director commented we are known here at Atlantic Beach for fishing and entertainment. Our motels and marinas are gone. You need to make a stand or either lose your memories.

Councilman Doe stated a lot of people here tonight have been working on this for twenty years. We have to take responsibility for the ordinances getting changed over the years. It seems we have three different problems. One is the transition from commercial to residential. Second is the re-development. Third being the new property we have to start on.

Councilman Bailey said he had been coming down to this beach for fifty-nine years. A lot of the stuff that was allowed twenty years ago was because nothing was going on. We were happy to get anything down here. He stated he feels growth is good. Managing it so we do not create abscess is what we should be all about.

Councilman Creech said he moved here in 1969. They let us do anything we wanted to then. You cannot stop growth.

#### **4. Questions/Discussions/Consensus regarding ten key issues-Towns Council and Planning Board**

##### **A) Beach Maintenance**

Vada Palma stated we need sand fences put up immediately. The Christmas trees have helped a lot. We need to do whatever it takes to get more sand dunes in place.

Councilman Doe said we need to change our mindset of taking care of the beach year round. Every time I mention doing something in the winter the response is we will do that in the spring. We have staff during the winter so we should do what maintenance needs to be done then and not wait until spring.

Mayor Vinson said we need more beach accesses.

Councilman Doe said our public parking is critical. We only have ninety-six spaces around the circle. We need to look at getting some of the off-street parking back.

Trace Cooper stated we do not have a lot of land left. We need to balance growth with public needs.

## **B) Beach Nourishment**

Mr. Tarascio said we need to have a policy where someone on the Council keeps in contact with the Corps of Engineers.

Councilman Doe said we can not even get an appointment set with them. We need to find out if the Corps wants to meet with us or not and we need to review how we want to be involved.

## **C) Density of Future Development**

Councilman Bailey said one thing we have to decide is what is the density, height we are okay with and what kind of trade-offs we want to make. Height is not all bad because then you can reduce the footprint.

Karen Koenig asked what is the definition of density. She thinks if we are going to build upwards, there has to be a minimum area of land that we are going to create these structures on.

Vada Palma stated we still need to be able to see our sunsets and sky.

Ms. Koenig said we need to look at our zoning ordinances again. She is not against density but she is against density everywhere.

Mr. Tarascio stated when and if we get sewer we are going to have some real issues.

Mr. Livengood stated Myrtle Beach went through a rough time but is now creating green areas and we need to do the same.

Trace Cooper suggested they talk about areas like Ocean Ridge that are single family and want to be preserved.

## **D) Development of Sewer System**

Mr. Outlaw asked if sewer was going to be limited to a certain area in this town. Mayor Vinson answered no.

Vada Palma asked why we can't have a few acres at Fort Macon to use for treatment or whatever we need it for.

Councilman Bailey said his perception on the sewer issue was to sewer the entire town in stages. What is going to have to happen is we need to have a central processing sewer plant located somewhere in town that will process the entire sewer in one place.

Councilman Doe said most of the condos want out of the sewer business.

Councilwoman Barnes asked if we really wanted to set up our Land Use Plan based on sewer. Mr. Tarascio agreed with Councilwoman Barnes that sewer is not a guarantee.

#### **E) Tree Ordinance/Tree Protection**

Ms. Palma said she was very upset when the new ABC store cut down the big beautiful oak tree. We have very few maritime forests left and our tree ordinance does not protect our trees.

Mr. Tarascio reminded everyone that the trees protect the houses. You can look at the loss records of the houses located back in the woods and the houses that are out in the open.

All of Council and the Planning Board agreed the Tree Ordinances needed to be enforced.

#### **F) Commercial and Residential Development**

Mr. Outlaw stated he had a problem with our commercial and residential developments being unbalanced.

Trace Cooper said obviously the growth pressure in this town is residential and that is not going to change. The way he has seen this problem handled in other places is they are mixing the two, like we did at the Circle. This seems to work well all over the country. We need to give the developer an incentive, such as an extra story of residential if you do some commercial on the ground floor.

Councilman Dawkins agreed with Trace that the growth is already there. He thinks the Circle will be a unique learning experience.

Councilman Doe said we have commercial property in this town that has been sitting empty for years. The last thing he would like to see is a lot of empty businesses.

Councilman Bailey stated we have to have enough people year round to support commercial businesses. He would like everyone to consider no commercial in single family dwelling. Also, no residential on the causeway.

The Council and Planning Board took a dinner break at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:20 p.m.

Mr. Burke stated commercial businesses cannot survive during the winter. He asked the Town Manager what percentage of the water bills are mailed out of town. He was told it was real high.

Councilman Bailey said we ought to make it attractive and easy for commercial businesses. We need to give them incentives to come.

### **G) Development regulations**

Mr. Moolenaar asked if everyone was in agreement the zoning ordinances needed to be redone. Total revision was the response from everyone.

Councilman Doe said we should develop a list of tools to use as incentives.

Donna Turner, Inspection Director mentioned using a rainwater tax and storm water impact fee.

Mr. Moolenaar asked everyone if they had thought about a storm water utility tax. Councilman Dawkins commented it may be an option.

Lee Smith, Town Planner said one of the things we should talk about when we talk about storm water is we need to look at it as a whole and not just the rain that falls down on that site but the actual drainage pattern of that particular neighborhood.

Vada Palma asked about paving like at Atlantic Station where they use the turf stone. Councilman Doe said that the turf stone is an illusion and it does not work well.

Councilwoman Barnes asked if the Town was responsible for the water that drains into the roads. Councilman Doe said no the State is.

### **H) Parks and Recreational Opportunities (Active and Passive)**

Councilman Doe would like to see a continued program throughout the Town.

Mr. Outlaw would like to see more public boat ramps.

Karen Koenig said she would like to see more accesses to the sound. You can use the Hoop Hole Creek but there is no parking. Town Manager Cooper told her with the disposal site we have been able to preserve a 150 feet buffer over to the Post Office.

#### **I) Storm water Management in Town**

Mr. Smith informed every one of the Phase 2 Storm water regulations that are going to affect us in time.

Councilman Doe said he thinks we have a couple of pressures coming down. Phase 2 is one of them; sewer is another along with run-off.

Karen Koenig said she thinks there are already several critical areas in the Town and in her opinion they never have really been addressed.

#### **J) Water Supply / Water System**

Mr. Smith stated that Marc Schulze, Public Works Director said our water supply situation is fine right now.

Councilman Creech said the Town's water system is above average.

Councilman Doe said he would like to dedicate getting the Town's wells to the mainland.

#### **5) Short Term Goals-Town Council and Planning Board**

Councilman Dawkins would like to see the Council put together action items and get together with the Planning Board again.

Trace Cooper stated he would like to see the Land Use Plan take priority over anything else and then we could re-vamp the zoning ordinances.

Councilman Bailey said he would like to see everyone work together in some work sessions to overhaul the zoning ordinances.

Ms. Koenig said she thought one of the most critical aspects of the Land Use Plan is how we are going to designate each area. She would like to see the Planning Board work on this and present it to the Council for some comments before they start to write policy.

Councilman Doe said it seems that everyone wants to get the number of zones down.

Mr. Tarascio stated if we end up with a document that both Council and the Planning Board feel are strong planning, are we going to end up at the same place we did when we brought this last ordinance to the Council. If a lot of people start to complain, are we just going to fold? We are never going to make everybody happy.

Councilman Creech reminded everyone that there are a lot of people who pay taxes that do not live here and those citizens have just as much right to talk about what needs to be done as those who live here full time.

Mayor Vinson stated when you are serving on these boards you have to do what you think is the very best for everybody whether they live here or not.

Ms. Koenig said common sense goes a long way. Short term solutions are not always the answer. Just because ten people go to the Town meeting, that does not represent the whole Town and they should not be influenced by that.

#### **6) Long Term Goals-Town Council and Planning Board**

Mr. Moolenaar asked everyone how they would want the Town to change from today going forward.

Councilman Doe said a lot of the citizens came here because they want to be here and were not raised here. He hopes to see a sense of community, a proper mix of entertainment and redevelopment of those properties that are starting to get depressed.

Councilman Bailey said if he looked out twenty years from now he would see a Town that has 25% more residential units in it and with a higher quality. He does not see all concrete and steel.

Councilman Creech sees Atlantic Beach growing and being a better place. People are still going to come here to fish and go to the beach.

Councilman Doe thinks that the year round population is going to be all elderly people.

Mr. Tarascio said if we move forward with all the plans we will be able to accommodate the 25% population increase and it will make sense.

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## **7) Adjournment**

Councilman Creech moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilwoman Barnes. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0, and the retreat was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted by:

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Kim Glover, Deputy Town Clerk

These minutes were submitted and approved at the April 17, 2006 Atlantic Beach Town Council Meeting.

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Tootsie Vinson, Mayor