

Minutes
Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Town Council Budget Work Session
Wednesday, May 3, 2006

The Atlantic Beach Town Council held a budget work session on Wednesday, May 3, 2006 at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Meeting Room.

Members Present: Mayor Joyce Vinson; Mayor Pro Tem Doug Creech; Council Members Jim Bailey, Ruth Barnes, Eddie Dawkins, and Tom Doe

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Chuck Cooper, Town Manager; Scott Kilpatrick, Police Chief; A.K. Miller, Police Captain; Marc Schulze, Public Works Director; Adam Snyder, Fire Chief; Donna Turner, Inspections Director; Sabrina Simpson, Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Vinson called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. All Council members were present. Mayor Vinson then turned the meeting over to the Town Manager.

1. Police

Chuck Cooper presented the Police proposed budget to Council. Police Chief Kilpatrick explained the equipment and capital outlay needs to Council.

Council asked Chief Kilpatrick about his staffing levels. Chief Kilpatrick said in 1998, when he was hired, there were 24 positions between police and communications. Now, there are 22 staffed positions department-wide. This includes cutting the full-time marine patrol position that was approved during the last budget process so he could shift funds to increase the part-time and overtime costs.

Council members discussed potential dock locations and vehicle fuel purchases at length. When asked to prioritize the requested capital outlay and equipment needs requested, Chief Kilpatrick stated 1) boat lift, 2) vehicle replacements, 3) cameras for vehicles, and 4) tasers.

2. Fire

Mr. Cooper and Fire Chief Snyder explained the proposed Fire budget to Council.

Council members showed concern over the fact that the Atlantic Beach Volunteer Fire Department seems to have such a hard time getting Atlantic Beach residents to volunteer, even if just as “gophers” to assist during a fire. Chief Snyder explained that the Town does

not provide any benefits to our volunteers. In the past, the Town provided free water usage to Atlantic Beach residents who volunteered as well as paid for all the volunteers to be members of a pension plan. These benefits have been repealed by the Town over the years. Chief Snyder also explained that it is hard getting volunteers, regardless of their residency, who are trained in either fire or EMS, due to the increasing levels of training that are required to obtain and keep their certifications. Council showed great appreciation for our current fire volunteers and for the volunteers that work mainly with the King Mackerel Tournament.

Councilman Bailey asked why the Town doesn't receive reimbursement funds from Carteret County for part of our EMS costs. Mr. Cooper was tasked to write a letter with such a request to the County.

Chief Snyder explained the equipment and capital outlay needs to Council. He explained the need for a Deputy Chief position and how he plans to lessen the costs over time through replacing one Firefighter/EMT-Paramedic per shift with a Firefighter/EMT-Basic per shift. He explained that since the majority of the paramedic level calls are during normal business hours, the service levels provided by the Town would not lessen because the Deputy Chief will also serve as a back-up paramedic to the shifts on duty.

3. Inspections

Mr. Cooper reviewed the proposed Inspections budget and equipment and capital outlay needs to Council.

Councilman Doe recommended the Town implement a storm water fee during the permitting process and a fee consisting of a percent of the construction costs as an impact fee during the permitting process. This construction impact fee would be completely separate from the currently charged water impact fee, with a potential for bringing in much needed additional General Fund revenues.

Councilman Bailey believes that many of our permitting fees seem to be conservative. He would also like to see the Town implement a fast-tracking permit process. He believes developers would be willing to pay increased fees as a offset for a much quicker turn-around time.

Donna Turner believes that implementing a fast-track program would not help, as she does not feel like there is a way to speed up the current process. She said the hold-up is not with the Atlantic Beach planning or inspections staff, so much as having to wait on the health department or occasionally waiting for engineers to return calls to her when things need clarified or changed.

Council members were concerned that Ms. Turner's request for an additional inspector may be a mute topic in a few years. They wonder how much longer the building in Atlantic Beach can continue with such momentum and are not sure if an additional inspector would even be necessary in a few more years. Ms. Turner stated she believes that the permit requests lately are not so much for new construction on vacant properties as much as reconstruction. She believes that between the reconstruction/redevelopment occurring within the Town and knowing how much more that will increase if the Town does obtain a sewer plant, the need for an additional inspector will not go away. She stated that she simply needs more help in the Inspections Department in doing some of these inspections.

(Clerk's Note: A copy of the proposed police, fire, and inspections information provided to Council is attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.)

4. Scope of Future Budget Discussions

Councilman Doe would like to see a way to make approximately \$160,000 in additional General Fund revenue using his proposed construction impact fees.

Councilman Dawkins showed concern that we were not able to come up with any right-sizing ideas, while instead asking for three additional employees: an administrative assistant in Public Services, a Deputy Chief in the Fire Department, and an additional inspector in the Inspections Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Creech and Councilman Bailey thought we need to walk through the capital outlay items one by one for further discussion and possible approval for adding them to the budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Creech discussed the probable need of raising the tax rate approximately one or two cents.

Mr. Cooper would like to walk through each department and closely look at the services and activities provided and nail down capital outlay and equipment requests.

Councilman Bailey would like to see the impacts of the two options proposed from the Pay Plan study on each department, instead of just by General Fund and Water Fund totals.

Councilman Doe would like to see how the budget would be impacted with not only zero COLA, 3% COLA, and each with Option One and Option Two as proposed by the Pay Plan study, but also with a 1% and 2% COLA.

Councilwoman Barnes agreed with making developers pay an increased impact fee due to the increased level of services provided by the Town for each new construction or redevelopment project.

Due to Councilmember Barnes being out of town next week and Mayor Pro Tem Creech being out of town the week following, Council members agreed to cancel the Budget Workshops that were scheduled for May 4, 2006, May 8, 2006, May 9, 2006 and May 10, 2006. Council scheduled Budget Workshops for May 22, 2006, May 23, 2006, May 24, 2006, May 25, 2006, and May 26, 2006 for 3:30 p.m. in the Council Meeting Room.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Town Council, Mayor Pro Tem Creech made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Barnes seconded, and approval was unanimous, 5-0. It was 6:10 p.m.

Submitted by:

Sabrina Simpson, Town Clerk

These minutes were approved at the May 15, 2006 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Town Council.

Joyce Vinson, Mayor