

**Town Council Budget Planning Retreat Minutes
Morehead City, North Carolina**

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City met in Special Session on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, in the Municipal Chambers located at 202 South 8th Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of this meeting was to set goals for the FY 2021-2022 budget year. Those in attendance were:

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmembers George Ballou, David Horton, Keri V. McCann, William F. Taylor, and Diane C. Warrender.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Ryan Eggleston; Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Dykeman Baily; Finance Director Jewel Lasater; Police Chief Bernette Morris; Human Resources Director Susan Nixon; Parks & Recreation Director Jerry Riggs; Public Services Director Daniel Williams; and City Clerk Cathy Campbell.

Communications Director Alize Proisy participated via Zoom.

OTHERS: Elise Clouser of the Carteret News Times.

Mayor Jones called the Budget Planning Retreat to order at 9:15 a.m. with a quorum present.

INTRODUCTION

City Manager Ryan Eggleston announced that Planning Director Sandi Watkins is not in attendance because she is participating in her second day of her UNC School of Government Class; Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Dykeman Baily is filling in for Chief Fulk who was called away by a last minute emergency; and Communications Director Alize Proisy is hosting and participating in the meeting via Zoom.

2020 GOALS REVIEW

Mr. Eggleston reviewed the 2020 goals starting with those identified as top priorities.

Assessment of Fire Station #3/Wildwood/Building/Etc:

The Fire Apparatus and Staff Study is complete and is scheduled to be presented in March. The plan will be provided to Council about ten (10) days prior to the meeting to allow time for review.

Paving:

A draft of the Comprehensive Paving Plan is in hand as developed by RoadBotics and is scheduled to be presented to Council in April. This Plan was developed as a living document that will update annually. During development, videos were captured of all roads to assist in rating them according to condition. The Plan will be used to determine the annual paving projects.

Councilmember Taylor asked about what would be accomplished by the end of this budget year. Mr. Eggleston stated that \$400,000 was budgeted for paving, and staff has been waiting on the completion of this study to determine how to get the most benefit from the City's funds. Councilmember Ballou stated that he would like to see additional monies allocated to paving and asked the Manager to look for funds that could be applied to FY 2020-2021 paving projects.

Stormwater Plan:

Wood Consulting will present the Stormwater Plan in March or April. The goal is to share the Plan in advance of the meeting to allow time for review.

Mr. Eggleston then began the review of the items he identified as medium priority projects.

Sugarloaf Island Stabilization:

An initial assessment was conducted by Niels Lindquist at the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences who provided multiple options for stabilizing the island. Councilmember Horton asked for copies of all the studies that have been conducted regarding Sugarloaf Island. He volunteered to create a list of historical highlights as a way of helping Council to move forward. Councilmember Taylor asked that historical related grant information be included. Councilmember Ballou asked that this project be moved to the top of the priority list.

Improved Housing:

Staff continues to move forward with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that approved seven (7) homes for rehabilitation or rebuild. These homes were all damaged as the result of hurricanes. They are currently in the process of testing and bid solicitation. Two (2) of the properties may have to be reconsidered due to an inability to contact the property owners.

Regionals Cost Sharing:

This topic is still up in the air as it pertains to cost sharing for animal control, fire contracts, library, and SROs (School Resource Officers). Mr. Eggleston hopes to meet with the County Manager in the near future.

202 S. 8th Street Future Plan:

Mr. Eggleston shared that he plans to initiate conversation regarding the future use of the “Municipal Building” located at 202 S. 8th Street in March or April. Current projections are that staff will relocate to the new city hall building in August with the September 2021 council meeting being held there. Councilmember Horton asked for a list of problems that would need to be addressed at the Municipal Building with potential repair costs. Councilmember Ballou reminded everyone of the commitment made to the Fire Museum. It was suggested that a commercial appraisal be obtained but this was discouraged due to cost and the fact that it may not be necessary depending on how the building is to be utilized. Councilmember Horton suggested soliciting usage ideas from the public at a later date.

Dog Park:

The City has received two (2) grants totaling \$6,500 for the dog park. This will be the first task assigned to the new Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Staff hopes to present their recommendation at the June workshop meeting.

Mr. Eggleston then addressed the goals he referred to as victims of COVID. He reported that the following projects saw little to no activity over the last year.

Annual Bike/Trail Program:

The Bike/Trail goal picked up some momentum with the Friendly Road Sidewalk Project that will connect the Galantis Drive development to the MATS (Morehead City Alternative Transportation System) Trail on Bridges Street. Mr. Eggleston agreed to send the Council copies of the Pedestrian Master Plan for review. He reminded Council that a portion of the Capital budget is allocated annually to trail connect-ability.

New Partnerships in Community:

Mr. Eggleston stated that as he understands this goal the objective is to develop mirroring organizations or partnerships similar to that of Downtown Morehead City Inc. for midtown and uptown. There has been no activity on this goal over the last year.

Resource Evaluation & Allocation:

This goal, which calls for a strategic look at staffing and resource allocation, saw no activity within the last year.

In addition to the previously identified goals, the City accomplished several significant projects. These include the establishment of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the compensation study, review and amendment of the Riverfront Sports & Entertainment (Morehead Marlins) lease agreement, management of COVID-19 response, construction of the new city hall building, sale of 706 Arendell Street (City Hall) and 3413 Bridges Street (National Guard Armory) properties, and development of the Animal Control Plan.

2021 GOALS SETTING

Next, Mr. Eggleston led Council in a discussion to identify the top priorities for 2021. The discussion identified the following as the 2021 priority goals:

1. Stormwater Plan Implementation
2. Sugarloaf Plan Implementation
3. Fire Station 3 Implementation
4. Municipal Building (202 S. 8th Street) Future Use
5. Dog Park
6. Communication with State, County, & Cities Regarding Regional Cost Sharing
 - A. SROs
 - B. Library
 - C. Humane Society/Animal Control
 - D. 911 Center
 - E. Fire Contracts
 - F. Broadband Communications
7. Comprehensive Plan for Town
 - A. Policy Plans for Long-term
 - B. Economic Development
 - C. Land Use Plan
 - D. Aesthetic Requirements
 - E. Pedestrian/Trail System
 - F. Broadband/Work from Home
 - G. Transportation

Councilmember Ballou expressed concern that these projects will pull necessary funds from the paving of city streets, which he feels should remain a priority. Mr. Eggleston explained that paving is an ongoing cost. The amount of the annual commitment and how to approach it will be part of the budget discussions.

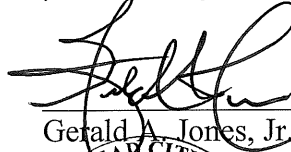
Councilmember Taylor stated that the FY2019-2020 three cent tax increase was approved to generate a stream of income for future capital expenditure projects. He was not in favor of borrowing funds for ongoing maintenance items, such as paving. Other Councilmembers stated that Council has made a significant contribution to paving each year and are committed to continuing this support. It was noted that many of the City's thoroughfares belong to North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and they are also limited by budget restraints.

The following items were added to the "Parking Lot" for potential future discussion and consideration.

- IT Remote Meetings – continue into the future
- New Staff Positions (part of budget)
- SROs
- Paving

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business to discuss, Mayor Jones adjourned the meeting 12:05 p.m.



Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest: 

Cathy Campbell, City Clerk

