

**Town Council Minutes
Morehead City, North Carolina**

**Friday, February 5, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.
Special Meeting/Council Retreat**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City met in a Special Meeting/Retreat on Friday, February 5, 2016, in the Council Chambers, Morehead City Municipal Building, 202 South 8th Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of the Special Meeting/Retreat was a review of the goals for the next 24 months for the Town of Morehead City. Those in attendance were:

MAYOR:	Gerald A. Jones, Jr.
MAYOR PRO TEM:	William F. Taylor
COUNCIL:	George W. Ballou
	Demus L. Thompson
	Harvey N. Walker
	Diane C. Warrender
CITY MANAGER:	David Whitlow
CITY CLERK:	Jeanne M. Giblin
OTHERS:	Police Chief Bernette Morris; Reporter Anna Harvey, THE CARTERET NEWS TIMES; Planning Director Linda Staab; Parks & Recreation Director Craig Lands; Finance Director Jewel Lasater; Library Director James Swann; Assistant Public Services Director Graham Strother; Public Services Director Daniel Williams; Fire/EMS Chief Jamie Fulk; Human Resources Officer Susan Nixon; IT Director Will Lucas; Keri McCann; Libby Eaton and Holly Fletcher

Call to Order:

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

City Manager Whitlow explained that the focus of the meeting would be setting the Council priorities which the City staff would undertake during the next 24 months.

Capital Improvements Items:

Garage and Maintenance Building[s]

Public Services Director Williams reported that this item was in the budget last year. The garage would be sited on property which the City currently owns behind the Street Department Building. The cost for the new garage would be approximately \$500,000. The current garage would be demolished and turned into an area for parking City vehicles.

City Manager Whitlow reported that there has been discussion between Carteret County, Morehead City, Beaufort and Newport for a joint garage on property on Business Drive within the Industrial Park. No details have been worked out at this point. The county time frame was to begin this project within the year.

Public Services Director Williams reported that the advantage of a joint garage would be the ability to have a wider variety of services, however, he was concerned with the ability for quick service and for the two [2] full-time City employees currently working at the Morehead City garage. The City has 140 vehicles.

Existing Facilities Improvements, Maintenance and Use:

Charles Wallace Building

City Manager Whitlow reported that the City did a space needs analysis through the year 2030 which showed that the City would utilize one-half [1/2] the space for all administrative functions.

Assistant Public Services Director Strother commented that a full building structure analysis needed to be undertaken.

Councilman Taylor commented he would like to see preliminary numbers on the renovation of the entire building.

Councilwoman Warrender commented that there was public sentiment to keep the building structure as close to original as possible for historic purposes. However, the building will possibly be very expensive to rehabilitate and it was her opinion that it would be wasteful to spend money on a building for which the City only had need for half of its potential use.

Mayor Jones commented that the property was worth the costs of its purchase. There was a need for direction of what to do with the property. Some current City buildings are not compatible with their uses and the City will need to purchase property someday in the future.

Councilman Thompson commented that public input was necessary and that it would be ideal if all administrative functions of the City could be in one [1] building.

Councilman Walker commented that if the City were to request public input on the building, the suggestions needed to be followed through.

Councilman Taylor commented he would not like to see the current City buildings vacant.

City Manager Whitlow commented there would be a request in the budget to fund the next study level.

Webb Memorial Library

City Manager Whitlow explained that the Building Assessment study was completed.

Assistant Public Services Director Strother reported that the assessment showed that \$500,000 was necessary to place the building into a “whole” status. Renovation activities would be pursued by sections and specific priorities would be listed.

City Manager Whitlow commented that there has been discussion with Carteret County about the county building a new library possibly in the western part of Morehead City. The Town of Newport is also looking into this as their library needs updating as well.

The consensus of the Council was to maintain the building.

City Hall, 706 Arendell Street

Assistant Public Services Director Strother explained that the current configuration of City Hall is not up to ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] standards. A redesign of the front lobby area to aid circulation could be achieved with the removal of the mail boxes and a reconfiguration of the front counter. Currently there was \$20,000 in the budget for this project in the next fiscal year.

Mayor Jones stated this would be priority to make the City Hall Lobby ADA accessible.

Municipal Building, 202 South 8th Street

City Manager Whitlow explained that the bay area and the rooms upstairs over the bay area have never been addressed in terms of use. The bay area was below the flood level and both the upstairs and downstairs areas were not in any useful condition. The area was minimally maintained only to ensure storage.

IT Director Lucas explained that the initial quote he received was \$35,000 for an audio-visual system in the Municipal Chambers. This included complete audio upgrade with a hearing aid system and two [2] projectors. Some items may be done in-house to reduce costs.

Mayor Jones commented that a new podium system was needed with a time limit system together with revamping the dais.

Councilman Ballou suggested changing the configuration of the room for better access.

Recreation Center

Parks & Recreation Director Lands reported that capital improvements have been done over the years. The west end bathrooms need renovation and will be in the budget request for approximately \$85,000. Some of the hardboard replacing and repainting of the outside of the building could be done in-house. The placement of an outside pickle ball area placed in the courtyard of the building was requested.

Tennis Courts at Shevans Park

There was need to renovate the court surface and improve the lighting at the tennis courts at Shevans Park.

Streets and Sidewalks

Assistant Public Services Director Strother reported that the City currently has 51 miles of streets. The last street survey was in 2003 and needs to be updated. The street survey would give an idea of maintenance, future needs and priorities. The preliminary estimate for this survey was \$50,000.

Discussion on the missing pieces for the interconnectivity of the Pedestrian Plan was discussed. With regard to the MATS [Morehead City Alternative Transportation System], Planning Director Staab reported that the City was trying to get the connection along Country Club Road. A Golden Leaf Foundation application for a grant for \$555,000 with a match from Morehead City of \$92,000 for a continuation was recently completed.

Parks and Recreation Director Lands commented that the City has been working with the county trying to improve any bike routes. Anything the City could do to connect the schools and neighborhoods and to move this forward would be appreciated.

Womble House

Public Services Director Williams reported that it would cost more than the property is worth to make it ADA accessible for recreation staff use or as changing rooms for ballgame empires. Another suggestion was to rent the building.

After discussion, Councilman Ballou suggested finding someone would could use the house and move it. The Council concurred.

Information Technology:

Fiber Ring

IT Director Lucas explained fiber optic cable which offers a higher reliability, band width and better usage of more complex IT systems. This fiber optic cable would connect all City locations with the exception of the Water Treatment Plants and offer increased speeds between locations for all software, allow the ability to expand other components such as phone, wireless, etc., and reduce the internet service bill from Time Warner. The laying of the cable could be done in-house. The initial cost is \$200,000 just for the cable.

Councilman Taylor commented that a decision on this would also require a decision on the use of the Charles Wallace Building. The Council concurred.

Telephone System

There have been growing problems with the Municipal Building telephone system. IT Director Lucas explained the request to interconnect the entire City phone system. This would allow direct all-employee access by extensions and would help paging among all City buildings as an alert system for safety reasons. This project would cost less than \$10,000.

Ongoing Maintenance and Replacement

IT Director Lucas explained the life management cycle of work stations and that every work station should be updated every five [5] years. The City currently has 230 laptops and desktops which would equate to 30 to 40 replacements each year. Tablets and I-pads should be on a three [3] year life cycle. This item will be on the proposed budget.

IT Staff

One [1] part-time person for the day-to-day Helpdesk activities was requested. Since the Helpdesk was initiated last year, there have been over 1,000 calls for service. The possibility of this being an intern position with an individual from Carteret Community College will be explored.

Waterfront/Downtown:

Management Alternatives

City Manager Whitlow explained that the current management of the waterfront was shared between different departments. He proposed creating a cohesive way of managing by making a dockmaster position. Denard Harris of Portside Marina will continue for another year dealing with the transient docks. Rents received from all the waterfront facilities could pay for the proposed dockmaster position. The position would be flexible hours according to the season. This request will be in the budget and the position would be under the auspices of the Parks and Recreation Department. The City will secure other municipal dockmaster agreements for comparison.

Councilman Taylor suggested that in the winter months this employee could review the use of the City's street ends.

Parking

Planning Director Staab commented that an inventory of downtown parking was done a number of years ago. She also commented that in part of the downtown district there was not a requirement for off-street parking. In 2013, there were 688 off-street parking spaces and 531 on-street parking spaces.

Councilman Taylor questioned if the use of Katherine Davis Park for parking was necessary.

Mayor Jones was of the opinion that there was plenty parking downtown.

Councilwoman Warrender spoke about the 800 Block of Arendell Street where there was never enough room for parking for the Chamber of Commerce patrons. She had concern about when Katherine Davis Park was developed.

Planning Director Staab reported that in the past when the North Carolina Department of Transportation [NCDOT] did a survey it was concluded there was ample parking.

Councilman Thompson commented that there was plenty of parking if people were willing to walk.

Katherine Davis Park

City Manager Whitlow commented there needs to be the creation of a Task Force for the use and future development of Katherine Davis Park. The park needs to be used not just for events but on a daily basis. He requested that the Council may want to structure a task force from a list of potential individuals with different backgrounds and needs.

Public Access and Street/Alley Ends

The City did a Waterfront Access Study in 1998 of street ends and potential neighborhood water access points.

Councilwoman Warrender stated that she receives calls from citizens with questions and concerns about access. She spoke about encroachments by residents into alleyways and the need for a precise set of regulations which would be enforced.

City Manager Whitlow replied that currently enforcement was on a complaint basis.

Councilman Thompson was of the opinion that the City should define street and alley ends.

Use of Docks and Facilities for Festivals, Tournaments and Other Events

City Manager Whitlow explained that every tournament wants every dock space that the City owns for no costs during their festivities. There is a need to develop an adequate and equitable system for use of the space. The North Carolina Seafood Festival [NCSF] has the use of four [4] free docks and must pay for any more docks. The Big Rock/Blue Marlin Fishing Tournament has two [2] weekends encumbered and a concert the weekend before. There is a blossoming of activity in downtown Morehead City and the question was what can event coordinators reasonably request and expect.

Discussion ensued on the use of City facilities during festivals, tournaments, concerts, etc., and the need for the citizens who have made the improvements possible to be able to use and enjoy the same rights for these facilities during such events.

Councilman Ballou commented that there was a need for some common area on the waterfront for individuals to come and dock during festivals.

City Manager Whitlow commented that typically the City has not charged the Seafood Festival or the Big Rock Tournament. He suggested that City staff develop a set of policies to bring before the Council for review.

Parks and Recreation Director Lands reported that he was starting to receive requests for use of Jaycee Park and the Jib site for weddings.

Service Program Needs:

Staffing for Fire/EMS and Police

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk distributed a report on staffing. He explained that staffing problems arise when sick time, vacation time and other time off needs arise. If an employee was absent, a piece of equipment was not in service. In times of need, those positions are filled with part-time staff. He requested increasing staff from 13 per day to 16. The Fire/EMS Department wants to provide good protection and would like to have the additional staff. He suggested reducing the part-time staff by one [1] position and requested two [2] more full-time positions.

Police Chief Morris stated the Police Department was not requesting additional staff at this time, but there will be a need in the future. She explained that according to the size and population of Morehead City, there should be 51 police officers where Morehead City now has 39.

City Manager Whitlow commented that the Police Department has started to look at staffing in a different way, that is, by looking at what an officer does during his tour of duty.

Signs

Planning Director Staab reported that a new sign ordinance was being drafted to conform to "content neutral" standards and that it was the intent of the City to move away from LED signs.

Update of Land Use Plan/Update of Unified Development Ordinance [UDO]

Planning Director Staab reported that Morehead City's Land Use Plan under CAMA [Coastal Area Management Act] was usually updated every five [5] years. The cycle will commence shortly. The last one was done in 2007.

Regulation of Food Trucks and Itinerant Merchants

City Manager Whitlow reported on the growth of food trucks, general retail trucks, sidewalk vending, etc., and with the elimination of the Privilege License Tax that this was exceedingly difficult to regulate. He questioned on how the Council would like the staff to approach this and then staff can proceed on plans and policies to address this situation. The City's current ordinances are not clear on these regulations.

Councilman Thompson and Councilwoman Warrender agreed there should be clear guidelines.

Inspections Staffing

Planning Director Staab reported that she had a staff of seven [7] and was requesting the addition of another position for a Building Inspector. In 2007, the Department had three [3] Building Inspectors, and because of the poor economy did not hire a replacement when one [1] left. The building permits for commercial and residential buildings have risen and the Department will look into the current Fee Schedule to see if it was compatible with neighboring towns.

Councilwoman Warrender felt that another Building Inspector was warranted.

Councilman Taylor commented that at the Downtown Morehead City Revitalization Association retreat there was discussion on the ability of citizens and the effort of opening a business.

Business Registration

City Manager Whitlow advised that the automatic mechanism for tracking businesses was eliminated with the removal of the privilege license.

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk commented that it was also an issue with zoning.

Planning Director Staab commented that the City needs to be on the front end of a business opening to eliminate conflicts and to provide guidance. At this point, the process is complaint generated.

City Manager Whitlow commented that a Business Registration Program should be considered to resolve all business planning issues.

The Council concurred with the need for a Business Registration Program.

Management Issues:

Citizen Communication/Work Order Enhancements

Public Services Director Williams stated that updated information was placed on the website as soon as possible. He requested updating the work order system and was looking into a new billing system which would integrate all the steps of the work order process.

Transparency

Finance Director Lasater reported that two [2] years ago City staff developed a program on financial transparency that the public could access on the City's website called Open Government. The General Assembly has just adopted legislation that requires more financial information on-line. The Town of Morehead City was already in full compliance.

Administrative Costs

City Manager Whitlow reported that City staff continues to develop ways on cost containment activities. The staff was extremely sensitive to comments about administrative overhead and the need to control expenses. Most of the administrative positions have multiple functioning capabilities.

Financial Software

Finance Director Lasater reported that the City was not receiving the proper support from the financial software firm and the current software was aging. Inefficiencies in the system are leading to double work. The City was pursuing a new financial software program and provider.

City Manager Whitlow commented that this will be a budget item.

Key Position Succession Planning

City Manager Whitlow advised that the transition was made with the Public Works/Public Utilities Departments and that the Planning, Finance, Fire/EMS and Police Departments were building levels of expertise for succession.

The City Clerk's position will be in the upcoming budget with a request for a Deputy Clerk for a six month position with the ability to move into the Clerk's position upon the Clerk's retirement.

The Human Resources Officer was being overwhelmed with record keeping requirements and it was critical to allow for a part-time position in this department. This request will be in the upcoming budget.

Environmental Programs:

Stormwater Program

Assistant Public Services Director Strother reported that the City continues to experience weakness in the system to handle water events. He proposed the implementation of a Stormwater Management crew which would work from the Public Works area maintaining the damaged systems around the City's public areas. The intention would be to utilize current employees using a stormwater management fee. The City does not have jurisdiction over private areas of the City. He advised that a Tom Allen from East Carolina University has offered to do preliminary information on the City's stormwater infrastructure. This would help our Community Rating System for flood insurance rates.

City Manager Whitlow offered that staff would prepare a proposed stormwater management program.

Mayor Jones commented that the need to implement a program was critical and could be as simple as to start cleaning ditches.

Councilman Ballou commented that there was a need to take care of what the City already has in place.

Flood Plain Management and Flood Insurance

Planning Director Staab reported that there was a change in the flood maps from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Act] and that over 1,000 more buildings in Morehead City were placed in the special hazard flood area according to the draft maps. The base flood elevations were rising. She explained the new parameters and rates for flood insurance.

The Council discussed hiring a consultant to appeal the flood maps and concurred to obtain a consultant.

Planning Director Staab reported that Beaufort was interested in securing a consultant also.

Finance:Life Cycle Costs for Capital Improvements

City Manager Whitlow proposed consideration of what the City's costs would be for not just capital improvements, but the maintenance of those improvements. His examples were the increased costs of maintaining the fountain on the jib and the reuse of the Charles Wallace building. There was a need to develop a way to explore life cycle costs. The example given was that City Engineer Tyndall Lewis figured in the maintenance of the Wastewater Treatment Plant such as the renewal of the media, etc., when calculating costs.

Financial Plan

City Manager Whitlow proposed a comprehensive plan to develop guidelines in budget matters and to make sure for the long term when planning for maximum debt service, to fund through current revenues or borrow, in investment policies, paydowns on debt, and other financial opportunities.

Councilwoman Warrender commented that this plan should contain a minimum of five [5] years.

Revenue Enhancement Opportunities

Finance Director Lasater explained that the state has recently approved a vehicle registration program allowing the maximum of \$35 per vehicle; the first \$5 of which could be used for any purpose with the remaining amount dedicated to street maintenance, improvements, etc. This could equate to \$40,000 in revenues for any purpose and \$250,000 for street maintenance. The North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles collects these fees with Morehead City being charged a fee for this service.

City Manager Whitlow commented that this would double the amount of money the City has allocated for streets and he would like the Council to consider this program for a possible way to do improvements to streets.

Councilman Ballou requested more information and exact figures on this proposal.

Setting Priorities:

The Council was given the opportunity to set their priorities on each of the topics presented.

City Manager Whitlow advised that he would tally the results of the priorities and a summary document would be provided.

Additional Business:

Mayor Jones announced that Morehead City received an encroachment agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation [NCDOT] to place American flags on the poles on the Morehead City/Atlantic Beach Bridge. He also proposed the need for a welcome sign and possible flags on the triangle piece of property right after crossing the bridge and entering into Morehead City.

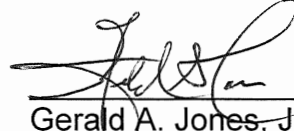
Councilman Thompson stated that he received a request on behalf of the Council from Jim Thompson on a resolution in opposition to the closing of Cape Lookout to off-road vehicles.

City Manager Whitlow explained that Cape Lookout was proposing a permitting process for off-road vehicles, adding four [4] additional ramps across the dunes and limiting areas which are nesting sites from off-road vehicles in addition to making certain areas only for pedestrian access.

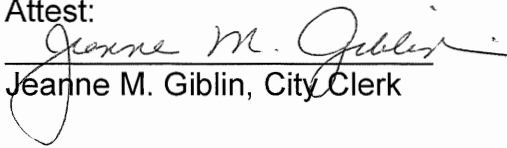
In answer to a question proposed by Councilman Walker, City Manager Whitlow replied that the sidewalk situation at 4th and Arendell Streets was being addressed, however, there were other mitigating circumstances which were delaying the project.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.



Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:


Jeanne M. Giblin, City Clerk

