

Board of Commissioners

By Paige Gillespie

The regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held on April 14. Commissioner Durham was not present.

The Consent Agenda including past meeting minutes, closed session minutes, tax discoveries and releases, and the appointment of Robert Cox to the Strategic Planning Committee was approved unanimously.

Two comments were read during the public comment session.

Town Manager Brian Kramer reported on these items:

- Phase II Stormwater project: The neighborhood line restoration was underway. Pumps that had been installed at Myrtle Court were awaiting power, as was the pump at the country club. Restoration at the country club was to start the week of April 19. Commissioner Edwards and Mr. Kramer had completed a punch list for the project.
- Pedestrian Planning Group IV: The group, comprised of representatives from the Planning Board; Community Appearance Commission; the Parks and Recreation Committee; Pine Knoll Association; PIKSCO; the local aquarium; the Inn at Pine Knoll Shores, staff; and the Board of Commissioners, met on April 9. They reviewed the Pedestrian Plan and work completed to date as well as past concerns. The next step is determining where and what the town builds and how to fund any projects. He suggested when the town decides on a nature trail vs. a sidewalk to connect the public safety building to the Inn that consideration be given to the intent of the connector and build accordingly. He further suggested getting input from the public through a survey. The group needs to form a team to explore funding options.
- Quick updates: The town is working on the Phase III Stormwater project and the Myrtle/Laurel drainage project, beginning with a neighborhood meeting and consultant meeting. A flagpole at the McNeill Bridge will be dedicated in honor of Mayor Ken Jones on May 14. Work is ongoing on the solid waste RFP. The electric cooperative tree trimming project is winding down, and the 2021 beach safety information has been distributed.

Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director Julie Anderson reported that tax collections are still in line with last year, at 99.6%, and she answered some questions raised at the March 24 meeting:

- In an annual compensation comparison between local towns for mayor and commissioners, the town falls in the middle of both areas.
- The budget impact of a 1% reduction in the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and merit pay would be -\$20,000 from the General Fund and -\$2,000 from the Water Fund.
- In a comparison with local towns regarding COLA and merit pay, the town is near the top.

She is looking into a review of permit fees compared to other towns as this has not been done in years. All town staff were to begin working in person on Monday, April 19, but still by appointment only.

Fire Chief Jason Baker reminded everyone that hurricane season is coming and now is the time to begin preparations. He also reminded everyone that with springtime comes yard work and to be aware of snakes and ground hornets.

Police Chief Ryan Thompson reported that the town has been accepted into

Watch for Me NC for the fifth straight year. The department completed 257 hours of training in March, compared to 260 hours for January, February and March last year. Sgt. Bishop was able to help a citizen who was defrauded of \$5,500 via an email scam recover the money. Officer Weathers applied for and was accepted into the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) program. This requires a great deal of training and the support from our Assistant District Attorney. The NC League of Municipalities conducted an inspection for a risk review recertification, and the department passed with flying colors. He has submitted the resolution regarding a prohibition of low speed vehicles (LSVs) to the state and was told there is a 100% guarantee that the state would prohibit these vehicles on Highway 58. No date has been set for the permanent reduction of the speed limit, but it is hoped it will be done before Memorial Day.

Public Services Director Sonny Cunningham reported that they are working with a fuel management solutions company. The town had an 8-inch water main that leaked last month replaced with a 10-inch line. Sonny thanked the town for replacing the 13-year-old yard waste dump trailer with a new one. The new water truck was to be delivered the week of April 19, replacing the existing 13-year-old one.

Town Planner Kevin Reed reported that he has a signed contract with Lee Dixon for the design of the three replacement entrances to town hall as well as the replacement of Beach Access A. The Planning Board has approved the sketch design plan for the Trinity Center subdivision. Staff is awaiting submittal of the preliminary/final subdivision plat. The town's application to the NC Resilient Coastal Community Program was accepted. He met with the Division of Coastal Management (DCM) and consultant Beth Smyre on Phase I (Community Engagement and Risk/Vulnerability Prioritization) to be completed by the end of 2021. Phase II (Engineering and Design) is to commence in early 2022. Program orientation was to take place in mid-April with DCM staff and the consultant. He reported that two single-family landscape permits (SFLP) for new homes had been issued, and staff was reviewing four more SFLP applications. He noted that there are two new pieces of legislation that are very concerning. One involves not allowing towns to regulate removal of trees from private property. The other involves a community's zoning and development regulation authority and the requirement of local government to allow at least one accessory dwelling unit for each single-family dwelling.

The building inspector's report noted that 38 permits were issued at a value of \$657,496. Fees generated by these permits totaled \$7,481. There were 165 inspections performed and 72 tree removal permits were issued.

Town Clerk Charlie Rocci reported that the oyster shell bags are nearly completed for the living shoreline at the end of the Teddy Roosevelt Trail. Plantings were to begin on April 26, and it was hoped this would be an opportunity for volunteers to participate. Senator Norman Sanderson is expected to conduct a site visit on May 7 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Under new business, a public hearing was called for regarding the amendments to Chapter 74 in the Town Code. Budget Amendment 4 was approved unanimously. This amendment was necessary to properly account for the changes in estimates for revenues and expenses in both the General Fund and the Water Enterprise Fund. For the General Fund, increases were made to the restricted intergovernmental and permits/fees revenue categories, decreases to the other revenues category, and a decrease in the amount of appropriated fund balance needed to balance the budget. Expense estimates were increased

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