

Tacks in the Road

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Resiliency. In addition to the real-time preparations described above, we are also actively engaged in thinking about longer-term efforts to make our towns more resilient. Resiliency, as the word is used today, is more than just another fashionable buzzword. It is similar to sustainability, but it encompasses much more. Plans and activities are sustainable if they allow you to continue doing what you are currently doing into the foreseeable future without any adverse effects. Resiliency, on the other hand, encompasses sustainability, but it also includes elements of prevention, adaptation and preparation. Resiliency incorporates lessons learned, in the sense of building back stronger and smarter. Our Bogue Banks 50-year Master Beach Plan for maintaining the island's beaches, managed by the county's Shore Protection Office, is a prime example of resiliency, as are many of our building regulations covering impervious surfaces, storm water runoff, tree densities and more. We spend a lot of time, money and brainpower trying to make our governments, policies and critical infrastructure more resilient.

Coastal communities' efforts to promote resiliency for the long-term have been gradually institutionalized into collective programs at the state level. The most recent effort, called the North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, and its component plan for Resilient Coastal Communities (RCCP), is directed by the Department of Environment Quality (DEQ), and its Division of Coastal Management (DCM). According to the DEQ:

A resilient North Carolina is a state where our communities, economies, and ecosystems are better able to rebound, positively adapt to, and thrive amid changing conditions and challenges, including disasters and climate change; to maintain quality of life, healthy growth, and durable systems; and to conserve resources for present and future generations.

In late 2020, communities wishing to participate in the program were invited to apply, and in March 2021, the DCM announced that it had selected 25 communities for the program, each of which will receive a grant to help them with their resiliency planning efforts. I am very pleased to announce that Pine Knoll Shores was among the communities selected to participate. The program consists of four phases: 1) community engagement, risk and vulnerability assessment; 2) planning, project identification and prioritization; 3) engineering and design; and 4) implementation. From our perspective, the timing of this program couldn't be better. Pine Knoll Shores is in the middle of updating its Strategic Plan, and the town's Strategic Planning Committee, which is working on that update, will oversee our participation in the RCCP, along with the Planning Board. As the term is being used, there is a resiliency component to practically everything. For example, finance ministers from around the globe attending the annual International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings this week in Washington, DC, spoke about financial resiliency in the wake of the economic devastation caused by the COVID pandemic. In our Strategic Plan update, resiliency could be a stand-alone strategic area, or it could be seen as a goal added to all the other strategic areas.

Sales and use tax distribution update. The method for distributing the sales and use tax revenues the county receives from the state each year to the municipalities in the county is currently (and has been for the last 49 years) based on the ad valorem distribution method, which reflects each town's contribution to the total amount of property taxes assessed by the county. Earlier this year, several mainland towns requested that the county change the distribution to a per capita method, based on official full-time population numbers. A change in the distribution method, if it were to occur, would be exceptionally harmful to Pine Knoll Shores and the other towns on Bogue Banks. The reason for this is that the Bogue Banks towns have relatively high property values, large numbers of second-home owners, but

relatively small full-time populations. As a result, a switch to a per capita method would effectively remove a large number of visitors and second-home owners, who are large and legitimate taxpayers in the county, from the equation. Needless to say, Pine Knoll Shores, the other Bogue Banks towns and Beaufort are against this.

The county BOC discussed this issue at their annual retreat in February and voted 4 to 3 to keep the ad valorem method in place. Subsequently, a number of the commissioners requested that the issue be placed on the agenda for discussion during a regular BOC meeting in March, when each side (mainland vs. island) was given 10 minutes to make their case. As a result of that meeting, the county BOC kicked the can down the road and created a committee to study the issue and report back to them in 90 days, which would be mid-June, when all the towns would be finalizing their budgets for FY 2021-22. The BOC then realized that making a last-minute change at this point in the budget cycle, involving several million dollars, would be impossible for towns to manage, and they clarified their position by saying that a change, if it were ever to occur, would not take place this coming fiscal year.

The newly appointed committee has met once and made little or no progress on resolving the issue. I don't see this going anywhere anytime soon, especially since the county is already beginning its next revaluation cycle. Our representative, Pat McElraft, who lives in Emerald Isle, has also recently introduced two bills: HB441, which mandates that Carteret County use the ad valorem distribution method, and HB442 that stipulates that if Carteret County were to use the per capita method, per capita would include seasonally adjusted population figures that account for second-home owners, tourists, renters and hotel/motel occupancy. These are a shot across the bow and possibly an indication of a clear consensus preference for the ad valorem method.

Stay safe and respect the virus.

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

Have You Heard . . . ?

31st Annual Art From the Heart. The Arts Council of Carteret County is pleased to announce the return of Art From the Heart, which will feature an Adult Show & Sale and a High School Student Art Show this year. This year's event will be held at 1700 Arendell Street in Morehead City (former Salvation Army building). Artist registration is May 7-9, 2-6 p.m., and the show dates are Thursday, May 13, through Sunday, May 22, 12 noon-6 p.m. Visit artscouncilcarteret.org/art-from-the-heart for registration forms and to learn more about COVID-19 protocols for this event.

New Bern Historical Society's History Quest. The New Bern Historical Society invites you to test your sleuthing skills in an all-new, family friendly outdoor history hunt. On Saturday, June 5, at 10 a.m., teams will gather at New Bern Battlefield Park to receive clues to a series of quests.

Teams are limited to six people and can be made up of family, both adults and children; friends and co-workers; or other teams to which you may belong. Smart phone use is allowed, and team members must all travel in the same vehicle. In addition, teams must observe COVID safety precautions when not in the car.

The search for clues will take teams throughout the New Bern area, and those who compete the quests by 4 p.m. will be eligible for prizes. Participants are encouraged to be on the lookout for Sherlock T. Bear, who wants in on all the action. The quest begins and ends at New Bern Battlefield Park.

Register by visiting NewBernHistorical.org/quest or calling 252-638-8558. The fee is \$20 per team.