



CARTERET COUNTY BEACH COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

Emerald Isle Board Room (<10 persons with spatial distancing - COVID-19 Precaution)

Remotely via Carteret County Zoom Account (<https://carteretcountync.zoom.us/>)

June 22, 2020, 2 pm

Attendance.

Commission Members A.B. "Trace" Cooper (chair), Jim Normile (vice-chair), Larry Baldwin (remotely), Larry Corsello, Jimmy Farrington, Joel Fortune, Tom Rule, Woody Warren, secretary Greg Rudolph, and the general public. Members Harry Archer, Jimmy Farrington, and Douglas Guthrie were absent.

- (1) **Call to Order.** – Chairman Cooper called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending either in-person with proper spatial distancing measures employed or via conference call/Zoom.
- (2) **Approval of Minutes - Regular Beach Commission Meeting (May 18, 2020).** – Chairman Cooper asked the Commission if there were any corrections, additions, or comments regarding the May 18th regular session minutes presented in the agenda packet. With no comments forthcoming, member Fortune subsequently made a motion to adopt the minutes as presented, which was seconded by member Corsello and unanimously approved.
- (3) **Room Occupancy Tax (ROT) and "Beach Fund" Update.** – Chairman Cooper introduced the topic by noting we will be discussing the April 2020 occupancy tax collection, which represents the peak of COVID-19 restrictions impacting the tourism/lodging industry. Secretary Rudolph continued utilizing a slide show aid ([Slide 1](#)) and noted the April collection was down by -89% compared to the April 2019 collection, resulting in over -\$160,000 less to the "Beach Fund" (beach nourishment reserve). Also because the COVID-19 impacts are so overwhelming, it masks any other collection trends that could be related to hurricane *Florence* (inventory issue last year vs. this year), Easter Holiday, etc. For the current fiscal year (2019-20), we are down by -11% through April, and May will certainly be in negative territory as well. However, anecdotally there has been a tremendous amount of visitation the last few weeks of May and that could very well result in a better than anticipated collection. Member Warren added that they (Bluewater Vacation Rentals) had one of their biggest Mays ever actually. The last three weeks of May easily made up for the first week or two of null activity in the month. Moreover, the months of July and August are experiencing a tremendous amount of reservation activity. Chairman Cooper thanked Commissioner Warren for that report. Secretary Rudolph concluded the briefing by noting the reserve value at the end of April was ~\$18 million and we should conclude the fiscal year at ~\$15 million looking at what is left remaining (invoicing wise) for our Phase II Hurricane *Florence* Renourishment Project. That is very much in line with our estimates.
- (4) **Bogue Banks Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project (Discussion and Path Forward).** – Chairman Cooper and the secretary reviewed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Bogue

Banks Coastal Storm Damage Reduction (CSDR) Project from its origins as a Feasibility Study, through the authorization process, and all the way to a surprise appropriation of \$44.5 million in January to construct the Project. There are a lot of terms of local cooperation that will need to be fulfilled once/if we sign the Project Partnership Agreement with the Corps. These items includes easement procurement, parking and access infrastructure, all non-federal funding, etc.; and all will require investments of time, money, or both. To help consolidate all of the issues, a “pro and con” sheet was included in the agenda packet and will be reviewed here today. Additional slides concerning some of the more “wonky” items will also be presented ([Slides 2 – 8](#)).

Before progressing to the individual issue slides, member Corsello asked if FEMA would reimburse the realignment of Bogue Inlet considering realignment plans are not included in the CSDR Project. The secretary replied “kind of” – if the inlet needs to be relocated the same time a storm hit and we used the dredged inlet sand for storm remediation purposes on the oceanfront beach – then yes. Member Corsello inquired to what triggers the Corps utilizes for nourishment and how these triggers compared to our Master Plan. Secretary Rudolph responded the Corps employs a more spatial or geometric approach – i.e., berm widths, elevations, etc., while we have adopted a more volumetric mindset. The secretary continued with slides describing the overall project budget, parking and access, implications to cost sharing regarding our current parking/access status, easement procurement, and Bogue Inlet realignment plans. Ultimately if we look at the project from an annual, amortized standpoint – the CSDR Project is sustainable with or without State funding, and with full or current/partial parking and access requirements met.

The secretary concluded the presentation with a slide summarizing the ten CSDR Projects in North Carolina – 4 have been authorized by Congress but not constructed, 1 is in the Feasibility Phase, 1 is undergoing a General Reevaluation Process, and 4 Projects have been constructed and maintained. Member Corsello asked if it was possible to see what the erosion rate was in between renourishment intervals for the older projects in North Carolina (Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach) and noting hurricane activity as well in between the renourishment cycles. The secretary replied that it might be a good idea to ask the Shore Protection Coordinator for New Hanover County to speak to us at a future meeting regarding these Projects and the issues the Beach Commission is concerned with. Vice-chair Normile and the Commission agreed that would be a good idea.

The vice-chair continued that he is more concerned with hurricanes impacting our beaches than the background erosion considering we are generally considered as a low energy, sand rich, south-facing barrier island. Also, forfeiting FEMA eligibility and the loss of engineering controls is also concerning if we opt for the CSDR Project. And lastly as discussed in the agenda and via email, all of these issues are important to evaluate now so we are prepared to provide presentations to each of the Bogue Banks municipalities as we all try to reach a unified decision. To this end, member Corsello asked if it would be possible to skip parts of the CSDR Project if a Town wanted to opt out (for instance). Secretary Rudolph replied that it would be extremely difficult to skip reaches because that would drastically change the Corps benefit/cost ratio and therefore the National Economic Development Plan, which is what the entire Project is predicated upon.

Member Baldwin (via Zoom) also inquired to which erosion approach might be better (Corps vs. our Master Plan). Again, losing control is an issue knowing the Master Plan is more

robust than the Corps CSDR Project. Chairman Cooper concluded by asking if we could compare the finances of the Master Plan vs. the CSDR Project. The secretary replied that we can look at our historical projects and begin to run scenarios and this would be a good exercise.

- (5) **Public Comment.** – None.
- (6) **Other Business.** – Secretary Rudolph provided the Commission a status concerning dune planting efforts associated with the Hurricane *Florence* Phase II Renourishment Project, and also presented several photos of the bedding and armor stone installation process that will result in the living shorelines component of the Atlantic Harbor Project.
- (7) **July 2020 Meeting Date (TBD).** – It was agreed upon that July 27th would be our next Beach Commission meeting, which is true to the normal schedule but will be dependent upon securing speakers/presenters and contingent upon the bid opening schedule for the Hurricane *Florence* Phase III Renourishment Project.
- (8) **Adjourn.** – Chairman Cooper asked for any additional comments or questions, and with none forthcoming, the meeting was adjourned.