



# COUNTY OF DARE, NORTH CAROLINA

District 1: Roanoke Island & Mainland; District 2: Nags Head, Colington, Kill Devil Hills; District 3: Kitty Hawk, Southern Shores, Duck; District 4: Chicamacomico, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras; District 5: At Large

## MINUTES

### DARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

#### SPECIAL MEETING – BOARD RETREAT

For discussion and planning about the challenges and issues facing Dare County and for the Board to explore solutions that will best serve the residents and visitors of Dare County

Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Conference Room, Manteo, NC

**8:00 a.m., February 20, 2015**

Commissioners present: Chairman Robert Woodard  
Vice-Chairman Wally Overman  
Warren Judge, Jack Shea,  
Beverly Boswell, Margarett Umphlett

Commissioners absent: Allen Burrus

Others present: County Manager/Attorney, Robert Outten  
Finance Director, David Clawson  
Public Information Officer, Dorothy Hester  
Clerk to the Board, Gary Gross

Chairman Woodard called the Special Meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. He led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and offered an opening prayer. No one from the public was in attendance; however, the news media was present throughout the entire retreat. The Chairman led Commissioners in a discussion of the following issues –

#### **BEACH NOURISHMENT PROJECTS BY TOWNS & COUNTY**

The Board reviewed beach nourishment plans being developed by municipalities in Dare County. The Manager reported that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Dare County and Towns is being prepared and he described provisions of the agreement. It was noted that leaders in other coastal regions are amazed at the cooperative way Dare County and its municipalities work together on beach nourishment issues. The group also discussed the County's plan for Buxton and Chairman Woodard gave an update on his letter to the Governor requesting help. Commissioners observed that although the new National Park Service Superintendent is being responsive, the lengthy environmental review process, which is required by law, must be squeezed into a limited period of time in order to hit the project's target goal date of summer 2016. The Board explored options in the event the Buxton project receives higher than expected bids.

### **BONNER BRIDGE**

The County Manager summarized the mediation process that is now underway and described how it differs from arbitration. The group speculated on what might be going on between the parties during the closed-door negotiations. He noted that the negotiating process only addresses the legal impediment to the bridge replacement, not the required permitting process.

### **OREGON INLET**

The Board discussed the current condition of Oregon Inlet and the impact of the recent adverse weather. The group explored various options for ongoing dredging and the funding that would be required. It was noted that the state legislature is discussing the possibility of allowing counties to have a local option without a referendum. The issue was raised of appealing to the White House for help and the Chairman outlined how that might effectively be done. Commissioners acknowledged that while dredging solves the immediate problem, a long-term solution must be developed and that obtaining federal help is imperative.

**RECESS: 10:07 a.m. – 10:35 a.m.**

### **SCHOOLS**

Mr. Outten reported on school funding discussions that the County has had with representatives of the Board of Education (BOE). He outlined costs that are not influenced by the number of students. Commissioners talked about the local impact if the State Legislature were to give raises to teachers in the upcoming budget. Chairman Woodard reported that he has not received the information that he requested about the number of pupils in every class at each Dare County school. School maintenance was discussed along with the need to properly maintain existing facilities. The group also commented on performance reports published about each Dare County School and questioned whether an independent audit is needed in view of the huge amount of money that is allocated for education. It was agreed that a meeting is needed between the Dare County Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education prior to the preparation of the upcoming fiscal year budget.

### **HEALTH INSURANCE**

A report was given on talks that staff has had with insurance consultants and health care providers. Mr. Outten said that rising rate increases are not unique to Dare County and that our increased costs are driven by about a half dozen employees with substantial claims due to major medical issues or accidents. He reported that a 10% increase is coming and outlined possible solutions. After discussing cost-cutting options, the Board gave guidance to the County Manager. Commissioners also discussed misuse of the hospital emergency room and the County's effort to promote employee wellness.

**RECESS: 12:18 p.m. – 12:58 p.m.**

### **ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING THE TOWN HALL MEETING**

Chairman Woodard said he appreciated all the excellent issues raised at the recent Town Hall meeting and asked the Manager to give an update on each one. In his report, Mr. Outten noted which ones are under the jurisdiction or control of Dare County. Commissioners discussed how to respond to the issues and keep the public informed. The Clerk was directed to revise the public comment sign-in sheet to include contact information so citizens can more easily be reached when follow-up is necessary. The Chairman expressed willingness to do additional Town Hall meetings and said the Board is receptive to having one on Hatteras Island.

### **LOBBYISTS**

Mr. Outten reported on initial research looking into lobbyists that might help the County. He outlined a range of costs depending on the scope of services that are provided. It was noted that while lobbyists can help open doors, they are no substitute for personal relationships with legislators. By consensus, the Board directed the Manager to arrange a meeting with lobbyists so that additional information can be gathered for consideration during the upcoming budget process. Additionally, a letter will be sent to the Board Chairman of each coastal county seeking their interest in forming a coalition to address legislative issues of common concern. Chairman Woodard said he would also contact Senator Cook and Rep. Tine about the status of the former Coastal Caucus in Raleigh.

**RECESS: 2:17 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.**

### **COLA's, 401k, NON-HEALTH BENEFITS, BONUSES, SALARY STUDY**

The Chairman led in a brainstorming session about ways to help Dare County employees. Among the ideas discussed were a possible cost of living increase, 401(k) contribution, and other non-health benefits. The Board explored each option and its cost along with creative ways to reward employee performance. Concern was expressed about the needs of employees on the lower end of the compensation range. Commissioners discussed the merits of doing a salary study and it was suggested that this money would be better spent by doing something that would benefit employees now. The County Manager was given guidance on preparing compensation related material for the upcoming fiscal year budget.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Commissioner Shea reported on economic development talks that he and staff have had with representatives from the Department of Commerce and the UNC School of Government. He outlined the goals, means, method, and structure of a possible economic development plan for Dare County. The Board discussed the merits of hiring an Economic Development Director and using resources that may be available at the Albemarle Commission and other agencies. It was noted that the County needs to identify its economic development niche in order to effectively promote it. Commissioners also explored event promotion as a means of economic development. The Board directed the County Manager to contact John Loyack with the North Carolina Department of Commerce to see what assistance he can provide as Dare County further explores the important issue of economic development.

**RECESS: 3:49 p.m. – 4:01 p.m.**

**WRAP-UP INCLUDING – RECYCLING, TRASH PICKUP, DARE DAYS, OUTER BANKS CATCH, EVENTS, AND COMMISSIONER CONCERNS**

In wrapping up the Board Retreat, Commissioners engaged in discussion of a wide range of issues, including –

**Recycling**

The Board discussed possible third party recycling and gave guidance to the Manager.

**Trash Pickup**

Reducing the frequency of trash pick-up during the period of time from November to April was discussed, which might help reduce fuel costs and tipping fees. Guidance was given to the County Manager.

**Dare Days**

Mr. Outten reported on the status of Dare Days and the individuals who have been organizing the effort. It was suggested that 2015 might be the last year for the event unless someone steps forward to manage it. The County Manager said he would discuss it with the Manteo Manager and prepare a letter to the Tourism Board.

**Outer Banks Catch**

A report was given on discussions that have taken place regarding transitioning Outer Banks Catch to a non-profit entity separate from Dare County. The benefits of this arrangement were discussed and individuals were identified that might lead in this effort. Outer Banks Catch plans to have another meeting on this issue on March 4.

**Commissioner Concerns**

Chairman Woodard asked staff and Commissioners if they had any concerns and following is a summary of their remarks –

**Finance Director, David Clawson**

He expressed concern over the Sales Tax issue that is looming in Raleigh. He reported that if the legislature makes a change, it would cause 7 to 9 counties to suffer financial harm. He added that a five-year projection of the General Fund is being developed.

**Commissioner Shea**

In response to complaints from boat captains, he suggested that a letter or Resolution be prepared opposing a requirement that GPS coordinates be provided for the location of fish catches. He said giving this information is akin to giving away trade secrets.

**Commissioner Judge**

He said he was glad to see salary issues being addressed for Dare County employees.

**Commissioner Umphlett**

She expressed excitement about progress being made by the Board of Commissioners.

**Commissioner Boswell**

She raised concern about the issue of offshore windmills and said she is not in favor of it based upon the information she has seen. This led to Board discussion of offshore oil drilling and it was expressed that there are other places to drill that are safer than here. By consensus, the group stood opposed to offshore oil drilling. It was noted that previous Board Resolutions opposed offshore drilling and it was suggested that a Resolution be prepared that renews Dare County's ongoing opposition of this issue.

**Vice-Chairman Overman**

He described the Dare County Substance Abuse Task Force that was started last year and reported that discussions are now underway within the Task Force concerning whether to seek official status from Dare County.

**County Manager, Robert Outten**

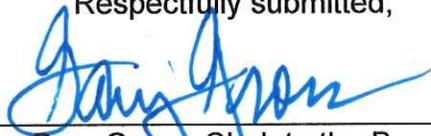
He said getting the Board's guidance on the various issues that were raised during the retreat was beneficial. This led to a discussion of possible dates for Board Workshops on the upcoming fiscal year budget. The first one will be 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 11, 2015 with the Board of Education. A general budget workshop was then scheduled for 5:00 p.m., Thursday, March 26, 2015. Both events will be held at the Dare County Administration Building in Manteo.

At 5:05 p.m., the Dare County Board of Commissioners adjourned the Board Retreat.

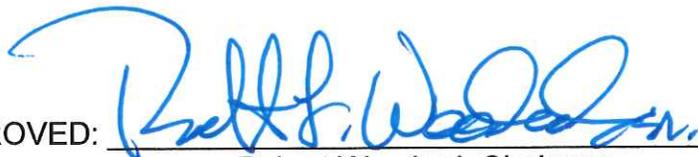
Respectfully submitted,

[SEAL]

By: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Gary Gross, Clerk to the Board

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Robert Woodard, Chairman  
Dare County Board of Commissioners