



# 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 11, 2016**

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 invited Commissioner Umphlett to share a prayer and then he led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. It was announced that Commissioner Burrus was unable to attend because of a medical appointment. 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 items, some of which were handled out of sequential order –

#### **ITEM 1 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (STRATEGIC PLAN)**

The Board was briefed on economic development discussions involving Commissioner Shea, the County Manager, the Finance Director, and NC State. The timeline for the economic development project was reviewed and it was explained that a serious effort will be made to involve stakeholders and make this a broad based community effort. Mr. Outten reported that instructions were given to NC State that clarified the County's position that a thorough, complete, and accurate report is more important than speed because the County wants a meaningful plan that will work and not just sit on a shelf.

**ITEM 2 – SALARY STUDY & DISCUSSIONS ON AVAILABLE FUNDS NOW FOR SALARY INCREASES & BONUSES**

Chairman Woodard outlined research he did on County employee earnings at various compensation levels, which led to a general discussion of how to retain and compensate employees, especially those on the lower end of the pay scale. Mr. Clawson said \$781,000 is in the next fiscal year budget for salary adjustments. The Board discussed the merits of moving forward with a salary study. By unanimous consensus, the Board instructed the County Manager to move forward with a salary study by having the firms he identified resubmit bids as quickly as possible for action at the March 7 meeting. The Board also discussed the need to consider future merit pay awards and possibly restoring 401k contributions. Mr. Outten outlined a bonus plan where deserving employees would be given a one-time monetary award. By unanimous consensus, the Board authorized the Manager to proceed in developing this type of a bonus plan.

**ITEM 3 – SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET**

Mr. Clawson described the status of the Board of Education's maintenance list and Chairman Woodard noted that the 5 on 5 meetings have been very productive. Mr. Outten reported on a presentation that was made to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners about Dare County's school funding formula. It was the unanimous consensus of the Board that the County Manager and Finance Director should continue using the funding formula that is now in place.

**ITEM 4 – TWO YEAR BUDGET PLAN**

The Finance Director reviewed the budget process, which is going into the second year of a two-year cycle. He explained that Department Heads have been instructed only to submit changes for 2017 that address new mandates or items that could not have been foreseen when the budget was prepared last year. The merits of two-year budget cycles were discussed.

**ITEM 5 – CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE FUND BALANCE**

Mr. Clawson provided information about the status of the County's Fund Balance and explained the various categories. The Fund Balance target goal was discussed and it was noted that progress is being made to increase the undesignated Fund Balance.

**ITEM 6 – CONTINUE TO PAY DOWN INSURANCE DEBT**

Commissioners were briefed on the progress that has been made concerning the County's ongoing effort to pay down insurance debt. Mr. Clawson explained the stop loss provisions of the County's health plan, which led to discussion of the employee Health Clinic that is expected to be operational in about four months and the important role of promoting wellness in the Dare County plan.

**ITEM 7 – INLET DREDGING (HATTERAS INLET & OREGON INLET)**

Chairman Woodard reported on additional federal funds that Congressman Walter Jones has obtained for Oregon Inlet and Hatteras Inlet. Commissioner Boswell noted that Oregon Inlet Task Force member Harry Schiffman has done an exceptional job tracking the funds designated for inlet dredging. Vice-Chairman Overman reported on dredging activity at Hatteras Inlet and explained that safety was the reason why dredging was recently suspended and that it was not due to lack of funds. He added that efforts are still underway to expand the federal authorization to include all the waters of Hatteras Inlet. An update was given on the status of the Memorandum of Agreement. Chairman Woodard presented a letter thanking Congressman Jones for the additional funding he obtained. By unanimous consensus, the Board agreed with sending the letter of appreciation. Commissioner Boswell described areas of Oregon Inlet that need lighting and the County Manager said he would follow-up on this.

**ITEM 8 – BEACH NOURISHMENT PLANS & DISCUSSION OF A POSSIBLE TAX SERVICE DISTRICT**

Chairman Woodard presented a resolution that was prepared based on discussions he had with the Governor's staff suggesting that a resolution from the Board might be helpful in obtaining federal assistance for Buxton. Vice-Chairman Overman recommended that language be added clarifying that NC Highway 12 is also the sole source of access to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

**MOTION**

Commissioner Judge motioned to approve the resolution for immediate sending. Commissioners Woodard, Overman, Shea, Boswell, Umphlett seconded the motion.

VOTE: AYES unanimous

The Board discussed the bids that were received for the nourishment projects in Duck, Kitty Hawk, and Kill Devil Hills. Commissioners explored the merits of rejecting the bids and by unanimous consensus adopted a position that the bids should be rejected and that the project be rebid for contract in 2017.

**MOTION**

Commissioner Judge motioned to authorize the County Manager to talk with the Managers of the Town Beach Nourishment projects and outline the County's position (as reflected above) and if the group agrees, staff should move forward as outlined.

Vice-Chairman Overman seconded the motion.

VOTE: AYES unanimous

Mr. Outten reviewed the process for establishing a Tax Service District and outlined possible options. In discussing possible Service Districts, the Manager explained that there must be a demonstrated benefit to the district. It was noted that this item is on the Board's agenda for the next meeting on February 15. Commissioner Umphlett announced that she will be unable to attend the next Board meeting, but sees the need to have Public Hearings on a Service Tax District.

**ITEM 9 – CONTINUE EXPLORING CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES**

An update was given on consolidation talks that have taken place. It was reported that the Towns are apparently not interested in consolidating services for fire, police, trash, and water. However, it was noted that there are many ways that the County and Towns already work together to share equipment and resources as the need arises. The Board was told that consolidation will be an ongoing topic of discussion at monthly meetings of the Town/County Managers.

**ITEM 10 – MONITORING OF TAX REDISTRIBUTION IN RALEIGH**

The Board discussed reports that tax redistribution will not be in the 2016 short session, but may be reintroduced by Senator Brown in 2017. Commissioners brainstormed on ideas that may be viable options to help poorer counties without hurting other counties by redistributing tax revenue. Chairman Woodard said Dare County will need to continue monitoring this issue and stay in close contact with our Legislators.

**ITEM 11 – TECHNOLOGY ISSUES - CREATING REMOTE ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

Commissioners were briefed on plans to establish a video link with the Fessenden Center to allow citizens on Hatteras Island to remotely make public comments during Board meetings. Mr. Outten outlined options for providing this service and by unanimous consensus, the Board agreed to authorize the Manager to take \$5,900 out of contingency to provide this service with a target implementation date of early May.

**OTHER ITEMS –**

The Board discussed how to respond to the issues that were raised by citizens during the Town Hall meetings in Manteo and Buxton. By unanimous consensus it was agreed that a general narrative letter will be prepared that reflects the Board's position on the topics that were discussed. The letter will be shared with those who spoke and it will also be publicized.

Chairman Woodard updated the Board on the County's ongoing effort to have the Attorney General issue a report on their investigation into the high gasoline prices on the Outer Banks. He expressed frustration that it has been over a year since he requested this investigation and so far has not received any meaningful information. The Chairman said he intends to write a very strong letter calling for answers from the Attorney General.

At the conclusion of the Retreat, County Manager Outten thanked the Board saying this has been a worthwhile endeavor because it gives clear direction and guidance to staff.

During the Retreat, breaks were taken at the following times –

**RECESS: 9:05 a.m. – 9:17 a.m.**

**RECESS: 10:37 a.m. – 10:51 a.m.**

At 12:28 p.m., the Dare County Board of Commissioners adjourned the Board Retreat.



Respectfully submitted,

By:   
Gary Gross, Clerk to the Board

APPROVED:   
Robert Woodard, Chairman  
Dare County Board of Commissioners