



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

To consider and approve a sales tax resolution to the North Carolina General Assembly and to take action in support of North Carolinians for Fair Property Insurance (NCFAIR)

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

9:00 a.m., March 27, 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 9:01 a.m. He led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and invited Micah Daniels to share a prayer.

The Chairman explained that members of the Board went to the state legislature to oppose a sales tax redistribution proposal introduced by Senator Brown, which would destroy Dare County. He said among the issues discussed in Raleigh was a possible half cent sales tax dedicated to inlet dredging. He reported that there was no support for it at the state capital, which is why the Board is now looking at the idea of a quarter cent sales tax without a referendum that would generate a little over \$3 million.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Extensive public comments were made, all of which can be seen in their entirety on the Dare County website, www.darenc.com. Following is a brief summary –

1. Jamie Chisholm, President of the Outer Banks Hotel/Motel Assoc., said they support a quarter cent sales tax as a more equitable way to fund dredging.

2. Jim Tobin said access for a \$550 million industry would cost about \$7.3 million and the quarter cent sales tax would help fund a proactive dredging plan.
3. Jim Clark said a tax increase is a “want” that would be a burden on taxpayers struggling to survive. He asked the Board not to follow failed policies of the past.
4. Bob Oakes asked that any sales tax increase be implemented January 1 and not July 1 for bookkeeping purposes. He said it is a reasonable solution.
5. Ray Midgett noted that upon arriving today he received an upsetting hostile greeting from a County Commissioner. He then pointed out that Lee Nettles, as Director of the Tourist Bureau, should do his job and stay out of politics.
6. Britt Shackelford said the problem has come to a critical threshold and a decision needs to be made right now to get the inlet pumped out and the bridge replaced.
7. Bill Maxwell said the peak season is weeks away and the inlet is in bad shape. He said a dredge is needed now so take the money we have and do something.
8. Micah Daniels said commercial fishermen are weary and need help in order to survive and contribute to the economy. She voiced support for the sales tax.
9. Harry Schiffman, Vice-Chair of Oregon Inlet Task Force, cited dangers at the inlet and noted that addressing the problem has a 75 to 1 benefit to cost ratio.

SALES TAX RESOLUTION

The County Manager read a resolution requesting that the North Carolina General Assembly allow Dare County to levy a quarter cent sales tax without a referendum.

MOTION

Commissioner Shea motioned to adopt the resolution with the inclusion of Hatteras Inlet and a provision for a sunset clause as outlined during Board discussion of the motion. Commissioner Judge seconded the motion.

There was lengthy discussion of the motion. A full and complete account is archived on a video that is available for viewing on the Dare County website www.darenc.com,

Following are highlights of Commissioner remarks –

Commissioner Boswell repeatedly expressed her support for Dare County’s watermen and the urgent need for inlet management. However, she called for budget cuts and other measures to fund it rather than a sales tax increase. She added that the occupancy tax provision in Senator Cook’s bill would have been a good tool to have. She said she would like to see a public vote on this as a matter of fairness.

Commissioner Umphlett urged that Hatteras Inlet be specifically named in the Resolution. She explained that there is not enough time for a referendum with people's livelihoods in immediate jeopardy. She cautioned that budget cuts alone may not provide enough money to cover the costs for dredging.

Vice-Chairman Overman noted that the increase would not apply to groceries and recommended a sunset provision that would end it upon completion of the new Bonner Bridge and removal of the existing bridge. He said with people's lives in danger, something must be done now.

Commissioner Shea reminded everyone that Dare County has two economic engines, our inlets and beaches, which without them Dare County would be a wasteland.

Commissioner Judge criticized the federal government for abandoning our waterways. He reviewed the funding history for Oregon Inlet and in view of the economic benefits expressed support for the quarter cent increase.

Commissioner Judge explained that the proposed Resolution does not implement the tax; it is a request to the General Assembly, which will take time. He added that this is just the beginning and that we need to continue looking for additional ways to sustain our inlets.

Chairman Woodard passionately expressed support for Dare County's watermen and in explaining why he intends to vote for the sales tax increase said it is shockingly clear that the federal government has abandoned us. He thanked the Tourism Board for their financial support. The Chairman asked that the lights be turned off in the meeting room so everyone present could experience the helplessness caused by the darkness and compared that to the plight of local watermen who cannot use the inlet as their highway to work.

VOTE: AYES: 5 (Commissioners: Woodard, Overman, Judge, Shea, and Umphlett)
NOES: 1 (Commissioner Boswell)

The motion passed in a 5 to 1 vote.

NORTH CAROLINIANS FOR FAIR PROPERTY INSURANCE (NCFAIR)

The County Manager presented a letter of support for the North Carolinians for Fair Property Insurance (NCFAIR). He described the mission of the grassroots group and their effort to promote the passage of Senate bill 208 and companion House bill 182. Willo Kelly was thanked for her tireless efforts on behalf of fair insurance rates.

MOTION

Commissioner Judge motioned to approve the letter of support.

Commissioners Shea, Overman, and Boswell seconded the motion.

VOTE: AYES unanimous

At the conclusion of the meeting, Chairman Woodard asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION

Commissioner Boswell motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Shea seconded the motion.

VOTE: AYES unanimous

At 10:17 a.m., the Board of Commissioners adjourned the Special Meeting.



Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Gary Gross, Clerk to the Board

APPROVED: 
Robert Woodard, Chairman
Dare County Board of Commissioners