

Shore Protection Manager

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CARTERET COUNTY BEACH COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

Emerald Isle Board Room

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

October 25, 2021, 2 pm

Attendance.

Commission Members Jim Normile (chair), John Brodman (vice-chair), Larry Baldwin, Larry Corsello, Mike Luther (remotely), Danny Navey, Woody Warren, secretary Greg Rudolph, and the general public. Members Archer, Farrington, Guthrie, and Rule were absent.

- (1) **Call to Order.** – Chairman Normile welcomed everyone in attendance (both live and remotely) including the team from Moffatt & Nichol, and proceeded to call the meeting to order.
- (2) **Approval of Minutes - Regular Beach Commission Meeting (August 23, 2021).** – Chairman Normile asked the Commission if there were any corrections, additions, or comments regarding the August 23rd regular session minutes provided in the agenda packet. With no comments forthcoming, vice-chair Brodman subsequently made a motion to adopt the minutes as presented, which was seconded by member Warren and unanimously approved.
- (3) **Room Occupancy Tax (ROT) and “Beach Fund” Update.** – Secretary Rudolph introduced the topic by noting the July and August 2021 collections figures (the two largest months of the year) were up by +17% (\$403,809) and +19% (\$344,778) compared to July and August 2020 collection, respectively (see [Slides 1 & 2](#)). With the August +\$2 million collection report, we now have three “\$2 million months” (June, July, and August) – interestingly, July was our only \$2 million month prior to 2021. Otherwise, we are on a 15-month continuous record-breaking streak that started in June 2020 and through the first eight months of the calendar year, the collection is up by over 48% compared to this same point in time last year. \$10,089,563 has been collected thus far in 2021 vs. \$9,004,643 for the entire calendar year of 2020, and if the remainder of the 2021 collections mimic the 2020 collections, then we should conclude the 2021 calendar year in excess of \$12 million.

The secretary subsequently transitioned to a discussion regarding the nourishment reserve, or “Beach Fund” balance, which was estimated to be ~\$19.6 million at the conclusion of August. Important to note however, is we are awaiting ~\$1.7 million reimbursement from Emerald Isle (via FEMA) to close out Phase III of the Post-Florence Renourishment Project and on the expenditure side; there is ~\$566,000 in process for the Phase III project PLUS an upcoming \$4.0 million State Reimbursement Payment. The Commission may remember the County received over \$20 million (cash) from the State for hurricane Florence related beach nourishment that required a 1:1 match and quite simply, we didn’t spend all of the original \$20 million and therefore owe the State a reimbursement. We asked if some of these funds could be utilized for our

upcoming Sand Search Project, but that is unfeasible because the monies (by State law) have to be applied to *Florence*-related projects. However, if the State budget is passed this year and the \$30 million appropriated thus far for the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund survives, then this would be an ideal funding source for the Sand Search effort. With no further comments regarding the collection or reserve, the secretary asked member Warren if the growth trend will continue based on the reservations he is seeing (Bluewater Realty). And to this end, the response is “yes” as he (member Warren) is seeing reservations in excess of that of 2020 for the remainder of the year.

- (4) **Beach Vitex Informational Mini-Forum.** – Chairman Normile and the secretary introduced and thanked our presenters today, Dale Suiter with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Raleigh Field Office and Jarred Driscoll, Regulatory Weed Specialist with the N.C Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This “mini-forum” was prompted by our prior meeting when the Commission first discussed the invasive plant as we could see *Vitex* beginning to overwhelm the ~1 million dune plants that were installed as part of the three-phased Post-*Florence* Renourishment Project. Mr. Suiter proceeded to provide a presentation summarizing *Vitex*’s physical characteristics, especially noting the long-life span of the *Vitex* seed (can float in water for years) besides those we are familiar with – i.e., woody root, waxy leaves, purple flowers, prolific seed producer, rapidly growing, etc. Mr. Suiter also reviewed the larger education and eradication/control efforts that started in the 2000s, which kind of sun-setted because of funding and other resource issues. As discussed many times before, eradication/control has proved to be difficult and requires multiple returns regardless of the method. Manual removal actually is not recommended because there will always be seeds and roots that are left behind. Treating the plant with an herbicide that will let the plant die in place is the preferred method.

Mr. Driscoll continued with a presentation of his own, initialing disclosing that *Vitex* is listed as a State noxious weed but not a federal noxious weed because it is native in Hawaii. In addition to reiterating Mr. Suiter’s recommendation concerning the most effective eradication method (scratch and dab), Mr. Driscoll also highly discouraged any type of spray application – there is too great of a chance for the spray to drift to other plants and it’s not that effective because the spray does not penetrate the waxy leaves of *Vitex* nor the root runners. And lastly the word eradication really means wholesale removal of the plant from the population and what we are really trying to do is control the plant.

Member Corsello asked if the spray method could be effective if the *Vitex* was the only plant in the area or maybe in a sheltered area. Mr. Driscoll replied that there is still a risk out there and other methods are more effective. Member Corsello followed by asking what type of herbicides should be used, which is glyphosate and imazapyr Mr. Driscoll responded. Member Baldwin asked how long do the seeds stay viable when they are floating in water? Mr. Suiter replied that they have conducted experiments and seeds have lasted 2 to 3 years. Member Baldwin also asked if the shading method and/or a genetic fertility approach has been explored. Mr. Suiter explained the shading method takes a long time and would kill other plants, plus wind is also a major logistical factor. With respect to making the plants infertile, there have been some experiments aimed to reduce the flowering of *Vitex*, which would limit seed production; but the results were not that promising.

- (5) **2020 - 2021 Annual Report: Bogue Banks Beach & Nearshore Mapping Program.** – Secretary Rudolph introduced Nicole Vanderbeke from Moffatt & Nichol (M&N) who will be summarizing the results of our annual beach survey, which is utilized to track sand, look at nourishment triggers, and ascertain the overall health of the beach – not just Bogue Banks, but Shackleford Banks, and Bear Island as well. Beforehand, the secretary noted (and not take away from Ms. Vanderbeke’s presentation) that in general we take a “debit – credit” approach and in the past year we had ~3.1 million cubic yards (cy) of credit in the form of beach nourishment emanating from the 2021 Phase III Post-*Florence* Nourishment Project AND nourishment associated with Morehead City Harbor Federal Navigation Project’s DMMP. Conversely, we had a quiet hurricane season and few winter storms as well. Ultimately we had an additional +740,000 cy that moved “upslope” from depths below -12 feet NAVD 88 to above that demarcation, which in our management scheme counts as additional gain above the nourishment volume. To these ends and others, Ms. Vanderbeke continued by starting a presentation ([Slides 3 – 72](#)), which summarized the methodology of the surveying program, an analysis of the key events (nourishment, storms, etc.) that took place over the course of the past year, and the results focusing upon volume changes, shoreline change, and the evolving geomorphology of the oceanfront beach. Also it is important to keep in mind that we are summarizing the results of two different surveys – one taken in spring 2020 after our Phase II Post-*Florence* Renourishment Project and before the 2020 hurricane season; and a second survey similarly obtained immediately after the Phase III Project and yet before the 2021 hurricane season.

Besides detailing the results along the Bogue Banks oceanfront consistent with the general overview discussed at the onset of the presentation; other notable trends along the inlets (Barden, Beaufort, Bogue, and Bear) or the islands of Bear Island and Shackleford Banks include; severe shoreline recession at the inlet fronting portion of Ft. Macon and noticeable accretion along Bear Island. The accretion along Bear Island is consistent with the natural recovery documented along Bogue Banks as well. The erosion at Beaufort Inlet (Ft. Macon) seemed to really accelerate after hurricane *Florence* (2018), but we’re still not quite sure why that trend has continued since. At the conclusion of the presentation, member Baldwin asked if it was too early to see if our alternative template design for the Emerald Isle hotspot was behaving as we expected (or differently). Ms. Vanderbeke replied that although it is too early to tell, we do laser scan this area so we should be able to answer that question in great detail as time goes by.

- (6) **Public Comment.** – None.
- (7) **Other Business.** – None.
- (8) **Closed Session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 for the permitted purpose of discussing personnel.** – No formal action was taken by the Commission
- (9) **Next Meeting Date.** – It was agreed upon that the next Beach Commission meeting would be held on November 16th at 11:30 am, Emerald Isle Board Room.
- (10) **Adjourn.** – Chairman Normile asked for any additional comments and with no additional comments forthcoming, the meeting was adjourned.