



Town of Southern Shores

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Town of Southern Shores

Council Retreat

February 1-2, 2007

9:00 A.M.-Pitts Center

The Southern Shores Town Council met on February 1, 2007 at the Pitts Center.

The following Council Members were present: Mayor Don Smith, Dan Shields, Jodi Hess, David Sanders, and Brian McDonald.

Also present were: Webb Fuller, Town manager; Carrie Gordin, Town clerk; and Gary McDonald, moderator.

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

The agenda for the retreat was set so council could discuss ways to meet the current needs of the town as well as the town's needs in the future. The topics to be discussed would cover what council sees as the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Mr. McDonald asked that each council member provide an opening statement.

Mayor Smith stated that he does not see the point of this meeting that council should be discussing issues like the budget, canals and having council involved in issues as in the past. He thinks the town's form of government should be changed back to council/mayor that the town manager has too much power. He stated that he was disappointed in the delay of the selection of a police chief and that there was no involvement in the selection by council other than having lunch with the candidates. He stated that he was unable to attend one of the lunches because of a prior engagement. He stated that council needs to be compensated, like the other towns. He feels compensation would encourage more candidates to run. He stated that he still is concerned with police cars going home with the officers, the equipment required, and the insurance. He stated that he will not support a tax increase and that the town should be run like a small business.

Council Member Hess stated that she believes the agenda for the retreat is on target. As a town, we have not spent enough time planning for the future. Nothing has been done to establish a reserve fund to take care of roads and other capital expenditures.

Council Member Sanders stated that he is concerned that the town has been acting like a civic association not as a government and this needs to change.

Council Member McDonald stated that he is concerned about the town's long term finances. He wants to see an efficiently run government and that paying for purchases with cash is not being frugal with the tax payers money. Council should look into using financial loans for large or long term purchases. He supports moving forward with the canal dredging project and if the project is not done now and is put off for years it will cause major tax increases in the future.

Council Member Shields stated that at the past council retreats they have only been to plan for the current year's budget and it is time to project future financial plans. He also supports the other council's comments.

Mr. Fuller stated that he is unsure of what council and the people want from their government. He stated that the town changed their form of government from council/mayor to council/manager and he has not seen from council, staff or the citizens that this is the type of government that they really want. He stated the town needs to decide and act accordingly and he asked is this a town or a civic association.

Mr. McDonald stated that it appears from council's comments that they agree that in the past the town took care of things that only needed taken care and didn't plan for the future and now this council wants to look at ways to provide for long-term financial planning. He stated that Southern Shores is incorporated---it is a town.

Mr. McDonald asked each council member to describe how they see the town.

Following this discussion all council members seemed to agree that the town is a safe and great place to live with great beaches. Consensus is that the town needs to start running like a town and not like a civic association. The council now and councils in the future need to act in the best interest of the town financially and plan for maintaining the town's infrastructure on a long term basis.

Council Member Shields stated that he feels Southern Shores is safe and a great place to live with great beaches, efficient parking, with a friendly atmosphere. He stated that the citizens expect issues to be resolved without thinking what impact there is to the town. He stated that the town needs to be run as a municipality and not for individual needs.

Mayor Smith stated that he feels that looking back the town has allowed things to be based on individual's issues but we should be doing what is best for the entire town. He stated that construction of bike paths were done because a few individuals wanted them and now the town is dealing with storm water issues from the asphalt runoff. He stated the streets are not falling apart as some have said and the town's roads do not need to look like I-95. He stated repair the roads that really need to be repaired. He would like to keep the small town atmosphere.

Council Member Hess stated that she agrees with most everyone. The town has listened to individuals and reacted and we need to look out for the town including the employees, the other towns and the county, they are all stakeholders of the town. She stated that the discussion to change the town's form of government wasn't taken lightly and was done over a period of time. She stated that the council who voted for the change was not the council who began the discussion.

Council Member Sanders stated that the town may be more fractured than is realized. He stated he sees it as three governing entities: the town, the Southern Shores Civic Association (SSCA) and the Chicahawk Property Owners Association (CPOA). He stated that the civic associations provide the recreation facilities and if there were no town certain services would still be provided by the county such as garbage pickup and law enforcement. He stated that better communication is needed between the civic groups and the town.

Council Member McDonald stated he finds that the citizens don't attend the council meetings and don't know what is really going on. They don't know the whole story. He would encourage the citizens to attend the council meetings.

Gary McDonald suggested that council find a better way to communicate with the public and between council.

Council Member Sanders stated that it has always been said that the citizens don't want the town to change they want the quality of life to remain the same. He stated that over the years the town has changed. He stated that you can't maintain what you have without change.

Council Member Sanders stated that when the town government was a council/mayor form of government each council member had a responsibility, i.e. roads, police, sanitation and there was a town administrator. He stated that the town has created irrational expectations by the citizens because they reacted to individual requests.

Council Member Sanders stated that the council/manager form of government allows the day-to-day operations to be handled by the town manager and is a better way to operate. He stated that it is harder to find volunteers to be on the boards and committees and that compensation may need to be considered for some of these positions.

Council Member Hess stated that the town needs to work towards a capital improvement plan and this may mean an increase in taxes. She stated that in the past the town has paid cash for everything but borrowing money and getting things done in a timely and cost saving manner should be looked at for future financial planning.

Mayor Smith stated that a hard look needs to be taken at the town's financial situation. He stated that personal responsibility and accountability needs to be considered. He stated each department needs to be reviewed to see that what is really needed is what is getting done. He feels some services could be deleted or reduced such as the chipping program and the life guard service. He stated that he can show how the budget can be reduced and that the taxes don't need to be raised.

Mr. Fuller stated that the town's finances are in good shape. He stated one of the goals for this council is to create a capital improvement plan, which has never been done. He stated there are some decisions that council needs to make such as maintaining a public works department or contracting services out. He stated there will be needed financial considerations for storm water issues following the storm water report.

Gary McDonald asked council to discuss what they think are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the town.

Issues discussed as strengths small town government, people like to live here, citizen involvement and low taxes. Issues discussed as weaknesses are lack of real property, low taxes, maintenance of roads, lack of capital plan, and frugality. Issues discussed as opportunities is to purchase real property as available, work with young people, work with civic associations, improve communication with civic groups and citizens, prepare capital plan, budget money and utilization of plans. Issues discussed as threats are lack or loss of revenues, overhead utilities, crime and drugs, not doing canal dredging, beach erosion, and maintenance of beaches.

Summary of issues council felt were the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the town.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Citizen Involvement	Lack of capital plan	Utilization of plans	Lack or loss of revenue
Low taxes	Lack of real property	Work w/civic groups and improve communication w/them and the citizens	Crime/drugs
Small flexible government	Frugality	Budget money	Overhead utilities

Mr. Fuller stated one issue that council needs to look at is the town hall complex with traffic flow and the efficiency of how the buildings work day-to-day. He suggested that a consultant be hired to review and recommend ways to manage the aspects of the daily operations better.

He stated that there has been discussion regarding the Pitts Center and whether it meets building code. Mayor Smith stated it is the code enforcement officer's responsibility to inform council if there is a problem.

Mr. Fuller stated there have been many administrative plans developed but no action or follow up on the plans has been taken.

Discussion was held regarding where council would like to see the town ten to thirty years from now. Consensus is to keep the town the way it is by maintaining the growth through zoning and by improving the quality of life. To see that NC12 does not become 5 lanes, to keep up with technology, no high rise apartments, secure additional staff as needed, implement and maintain a capital improvement plan, and purchase real property when possible.

Council Member Hess stated that she drafted a mission statement but council has not reviewed it she would like to review it again and present it to council. She stated it would be beneficial to have a statement that would establish how the town could be protected and what the vision for the town would be to set a direction for future councils.

Discussion was held on what services and programs should be deleted, maintained or redefined. Such services, of which are mandated by state law, are law enforcement, code enforcement, sanitation/recycling, building inspections/fire inspections, public works, fire department, administration/finance/payroll, chipping and lifeguard.

Mayor Smith highlighted some areas that he felt could be eliminated to help to reduce the budget and maintain the tax rate. He suggested that the part-time fire inspector should be eliminated and the two inspectors could perform the fire inspections, bring payroll service back in house, eliminate the administrative position at the police department, eliminate the police officers taking police vehicles home and reduce or eliminate the chipping and life guard services.

Council Member Hess stated that the new police chief should evaluate the police department and make recommendations accordingly.

Discussion was held regarding what level public works should be performing. The town manager stated that it is a building, grounds and street department with several administrative staff members performing clerical duties for the department.

Consensus of the council is that the chipping program could be eliminated or redesigned such as the services provided to be done on a quarterly basis and to keep the recycling program.

Mayor Smith feels the life guard service could be reduced considerably by eliminating the roving patrols.

Following discussion council directed the town manager to provide options for consideration of the difference between a life guard service and an ocean rescue service.

Consensus of the council is that staff should be cross trained however possible and that the developmental training should be made available to employees in order to retain employees.

Discussion was held on what alternative revenue opportunities may be available. Consensus was that financing projects or large purchases should become a viable option instead of paying cash.

Summary of items council can work towards in 2007 is:

- to initiate and finance a capital improvement plan
- maintain revenue stream
- acquire real property
- proceed with the canal dredging project
- have better communication with the citizens and educate the citizens regarding the running of the town

Mayor pro tem Shields moved to recess the meeting on Friday, February 2 at 9:00 a.m. Council Member Hess seconded. The motion passed with Mayor Smith and Council Members Shields, Hess, Sanders, and McDonald voting aye; no Council Member voting no; and no Council Member absent or not voting.

Friday February 2, 2007-Council Retreat

Mayor Smith called the recessed Council Retreat to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Don Smith, Dan Shields, Jodi Hess, David Sanders, and Brian McDonald. Also present were Webb Fuller, Town manager; Carrie Gordin, Town clerk; and Gary McDonald, moderator.

Gary McDonald stated today's discussion is on the town's budget with each department head giving a presentation.

Glenn Alexander, public works supervisor, provided a power point presentation "What We Do, How We Do It, Why We Do It for the Community and the Citizens". The presentation covered such areas as traffic safety, mowing, landscaping, building and grounds maintenance, street and multiuse path maintenance, storm debris clean up and storm water issues.

He stated that the public works department has three employees and contracts with the Tyrrell County Prison that provides up to four inmates daily.

Following the presentation council addressed several issues such as how the department prioritizes it work, mowing and right-of-way clearing schedule, street repairs and building maintenance.

Lt. Paul Terry provided year-to-date calls for service as well as an itemized list of the cost for a fully equipped patrol vehicle.

Following the presentation council addressed several issues such as officer shifts, the process of an arrest and the time it takes to go to the magistrate in Manteo, firearms training, mutual aid from other towns, community policing, auxiliary officers, and shortage of eligible officers.

Fire Chief Bob Harvey provided information to council regarding the future of the Southern Shores Volunteer Fire Department.

Following the presentation council addressed several issues such as when and how the fire department would become a paid service, housing issue if fire department were to become a paid department; it falls under different laws, increase cost in equipment, recruitment is getting harder and town should do everything that it can to maintain the fire department as a volunteer service.

Mike Hejduk provided a power point presentation covering the department's operational budget, public health, safety and welfare issues, Land Use Plan, town code and town mapping. Council discussion led to questions on several issues.

It was asked if there is a need for a town planner due to the increased work load given to Mike.

Mr. Fuller stated that he is in the process of evaluating all employee's duties and job descriptions and recommendations would be made following the process.

Mayor Smith asked how Mike would balance the department's budget. He responded by saying he would increase permit fees.

Mayor Smith asked if there is a way to reduce cost. Mike stated that he might be able to reduce the cost by 10-15% but he feels that the department is under funded. He stated that reviewing the 36 unit Cove development alone does not cover the cost of the permit fees. He stated that it may take as many as twenty-two inspections for one RS-1 structure.

Mayor Smith stated that he would recommend that every department reduce their budget by 10-15%.

Council Member Hess stated that she would volunteer to help in the mapping process of the deed transfers for the SSCA owned properties.

Bonnie Swain and Mike Hejduk provided information to council on the capital improvement plan to be presented during the upcoming budget presentation.

Mike provided council with a detailed town streets report providing cost and conditions of all the streets including the 2005 ITRE report.

Council Member McDonald suggested that Mike color code the street map into sectors and that council pair up and take a sector to come up with their own chart of street maintenance priorities.

This completed the department presentations.

Mr. Fuller stated that he would prepare a summary for council from the discussion held. He would also be preparing the operating budget and the capital improvement plan (CIP) for next year. He stated that he would be submitting a maintenance operating budget and would be implementing in the CIP costs for streets and building maintenance and storm water projects.

Gary McDonald summarized the issues that council would be looking at in the future:

- Long range planning
- Long term financing
- Streets
- Storm water issues
- Buildings
- Juvenile crime

Hearing no other business Mr. Fuller thanked Mr. McDonald for volunteering his time to moderate the retreat.

Mayor pro tem Shields moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m. Council Member Hess seconded. The motion passed with Mayor Smith and Council Members Shields, Hess, Sanders, and McDonald voting aye; no Council Member voting no; and no Council Member absent or not voting.

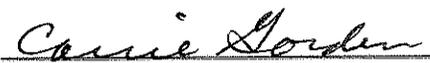
ATTEST:



Don Smith, Mayor



Respectfully submitted:



Carrie Gordin, Town Clerk