

## Annual Village Council Retreat Recap

The Bald Head Island Village Council conducted its annual retreat on Friday, February 16, 2022. A recording of this meeting has been uploaded to YouTube as a playlist. The first video in the playlist is the full-length video, the following videos are the presentations by subject in the order they appeared on the agenda. The playlist can be viewed [HERE](#).

Below is a recap of the items presented and discussed.

Shoreline Management – Erik Olsen, P.E., from the Village’s coastal engineering firm gave a presentation on the Village’s shoreline management efforts. He provided a history of the Village’s shoreline management activities which go back to the 1990s. He described the Village’s shore stabilization strategy as a “three-legged stool” which is comprised of beach disposal through the Wilmington Harbor Sand Management Plan, renourishment events that are initiated by the Village, and structures (like the terminal groin, the sand tube groin field, and the jetties and breakwaters at the marina entrance). He discussed beach fill options for the erosion near the Shoals Club, including the sand source options, and other future considerations for the Village’s shoreline management strategy.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Greenburg Traurig Update – Steven Barringer, a representative from the Village’s Government Law and Policy Practice advocacy firm introduced his team, the history of their work with the Village, and updated the Council on the status of several issues that they have engaged in on behalf of the Village through 2021 and into 2022. This includes the firm’s work in representing the Village regarding wind energy, the Wilmington Harbor Improvement Project (WHIP) which is being advocated by the NC State Ports Authority and assisting the Village with finding opportunities for Federal funding. Of note, it was mentioned that the path of funding for the WHIP is blocked by a backlog of \$90 billion worth of authorized U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that have never received appropriated funds and likely never will.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Duke Energy Update – Pam Hardy and Scott Jennings from Duke Energy provided the Council an update and overview of the grid improvement project. Key pieces of the work that has been completed to date include replacing and extending the main underground power lines on the island, upgrading switchgear, adding new switching equipment that can automatically reroute power, installing new smart meters, enhancing approximately 50 overhead poles, and installing approximately 30 new poles on the overhead portion of the main line that begins in Smithville and runs submarine to the island.

Work still remains on the system so that Duke can leverage these upgrades in the future. The remaining work includes adding three automatic switches that are being custom manufactured for the island, upgrading switches serving the southeast portion of the island, and connecting the existing underground lines to create isolation of outages and the ability to reroute power. This work will likely require some short isolated planned outages.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Update – Tony Boahn of McKim & Creed gave an update on the wastewater treatment plant expansion project. The Village is currently in a preliminary design status and the current capacity, project buildout, and disposal capacity was evaluated. The plant is going to be designed to go from a capacity of 300,000 gallons per day to 650,000 gallons per day. Various methods of treatment processes were explored and a cost-effective alternative, the SBR method, has been selected. This method is also compatible with the island because it works well when there are fluctuations in demand.

The remaining tasks that need to be completed include evaluating preliminary improvements and summer testing protocols that Village Staff will be completing this year. The preliminary design is expected to be completed in the fall or winter of this year. Mr. Boahn explained the State's rules for WWTP capacity thresholds and went over an estimated timeline for design, permitting, bidding, and construction. The Village is meeting its goals in anticipation of reaching the 90 percent capacity threshold and avoiding a required construction moratorium. The Council will be looking at adopting Phase 2 of the expansion design in the FY23 budget with the goal of having the permit and design completed in summer 2024.

McKim & Creed has also assisted the Village with its application for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) which was submitted in September 2021. Mr. Boahn has not received notification on the status of the application, but it is expected soon. He does not think that the Village is going to score well with this round of funding since there is currently an emphasis on funding rehab projects and failing systems. The application can be resubmitted in the fall of this year and could be more successful since additional funds will be available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed by Congress.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Public Services – J.P. McCann, Public Services Director, gave an update on the ongoing lift station maintenance project. Materials have been ordered and work is expected to begin in April, and it should take a little over a month to complete. He said that the Utilities Department has been continuously upgrading the water meters and eventually all will be upgraded with the capability of transmitting meter data to a central collections system where usage can be monitored. This system will send alerts to the Village when there is excessive usage which can show when there may be a leak. The funding for this upgrade will be included in the FY23 and FY24 budget in the enterprise fund.

The Utilities Department is looking into zoning the island into approximately seven different areas so that there is an area of impact that will allow outages to be isolated to just one area of the island instead of having to shut off water to the entire island. This is going to take a while to implement since crews will have to locate various valves, replace some valves, and run parallel lines. Mr. McCann said he will include this project in the FY23 budget request and that this could be added to regular maintenance and implemented gradually.

Mr. McCann reviewed the staffing for the Utilities and Public Works Departments. He will be proposing two new positions, a project manager, and a senior facilities maintenance technician, for the FY23 budget. He presented data on the workload impacts for Public Works and a comparison of pre-COVID-19 summer and winter to 2021 summer and 2022 winter. He discussed improvements to the recycling drop off area to encourage compliance with recycling guidelines, those are being worked out with GFL and will be implemented in the near future. He thanked the Village for being proactive with the 2% annual rate increase so that the Village does not fall behind in funding the necessary WWTP upgrades. He provided an overview of current and future projects (last slide).

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

BHI Conservancy Environmental Contracts Overview – Beth Darrow, Senior Scientist from the Bald Head Island Conservancy gave a presentation on the services that the Conservancy provides to support the Village. This included forest vegetation assessment, Bald Head Woods aquifer monitoring, deer management, Bald Head Creek water quality monitoring and bacteria dynamics, aquifer modeling, beach vitex assessment and treatment, predator population assessments, and shorebird nesting protection and assessment. She provided Council with the Conservancy's recommendations on which activities to continue under the Village's contract for FY23. The recommendation was to continue all the activities discussed except aquifer modeling. Immunocontraception for deer management was indicated as an unknown because of the permitting process. The Conservancy can apply for a one-year research permit now for use in spring 2024. The Village intends to work with the Conservancy and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to apply for a permit which will likely be under the guise of a research permit and is waiting on further guidance from the NCWRC on how to proceed.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Old Baldy Museum Campus Design Effort – Mark Prak and Old Baldy Foundation executive director Chris Webb provided an update on the Old Baldy Museum campus design effort. The land for the museum has been purchased by the Praks. The current plans still require the closure of the end of Lighthouse Wynd, so the request to the Village to close the road still remains. Other plans associated with the pedestrian access from the marina to Lighthouse Wynd will determine the orientation of the museum building and sidewalks. Conversations remain to be had with several parties in getting the plans for these areas finalized.

Ms. Webb said that the Foundation is currently looking at a 2-story 4,000 square foot building which will take them into the future and will enable them to get historical artifacts out of storage and into a more appropriate and protective environment. The design of the building is expected to have a similar look to the keeper's cottage, which is of a coastal vernacular. An open-air pavilion is also part of the plan. The pavilion would eliminate the need for tents for weddings and events. There was a discussion about parking along the entire Lighthouse Wynd corridor. The Foundation asked the Village for a formal commitment to close the end of the road. The next step will be to finalize the plans of the marina gateway area and get input from stakeholders.

Video of this discussion can be viewed [HERE](#). Plans and drawings that were presented can be viewed [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Planning Initiatives for FY23 – Mayor Quinn reported that commercial design standards are being finalized and that efforts are underway to create commercial district property owner associations to enforce the guidelines, which are not ready to be stood up yet. Until that time, Limited will be enforcing the guidelines. He reported landscape design standards for commercial areas are also underway and the Bald Head Associations guidelines will be used as a model. The Village is also planning on engaging with landscape design professionals to work on the Village-owned properties which will incorporate the commercial landscape design guidelines.

Mayor Quinn announced that the Village is planning to evaluate beach access parking over the summer to determine parking needs and to prepare for future growth. Public restroom needs will also be evaluated. He said he is hoping to get some assistance from the community to help with this study.

Mr. McCall indicated that there has been discussion about adding a residential sprinkler system requirement to the Village's building code. This code may only apply to specific areas of the island, such as those who are close under the tree canopy. The fire code is an area of the building code that the Village can make stricter than the State's building code. Mr. Boyett, the Development Service Director indicated that the residential requirements are not as costly as commercial requirements and provide cost-savings on insurance. He added that these requirements may end up being in the State code in the future, so the Village would be ahead of that.

Mayor Quinn discussed the potential for the Village to add a restriction on the use of pine straw on the island because it is a fire hazard. The Village has approached the BHI Club about this, since it is the largest user of this material on the island, and the Club was receptive to phasing out the use of it over time.

As previously reported, bids for the construction of Village Hall came in too high. The Village is hoping to re-bid the project as material costs and labor shortages ease up. In the meantime, the Village will be looking to replace the old furnishings and redesign some areas of the existing Village Hall. The new furnishings will then be used in the new building when it is completed.

Mr. McCall reported that the Village continues to work on the list of Hurricane Florence Task Force recommendations. He said its main focus is stormwater management improvements, in particular the bypass lagoon to the creek outfall.

Mayor Quinn said that he would like the Village to have a building maintenance program, a formalized approach to budgeting for the maintenance, improvements, and expansion of Village buildings. He mentioned that there is also a group of folks who are working to communicate to the Council the best ways to ensure that non-voter property owners on the island have a voice. The group is developing a questionnaire to get input from property owners and will be letting the Council know what they recommend.

Video of this discussion can be viewed [HERE](#).

Human Resources – Judy Schofield, Human Resources Director provided a summary of the department metrics, which described the department’s accomplishments over the past year. This includes training and development (supervisory training, DEI, and harassment training), COVID-19 response, and promoting the Village’s educational assistance program. She provided an overview of the updated policies, the upcoming development of a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement, and the current challenges she is facing with retention and recruitment. She proposed that the Village perform a classification and pay study so that the Village can effectively compete for a qualified workforce. The \$13,000 proposal will be in the FY23 budget recommendations. In addition to the pay study, she is recommending that the Council consider a cost-of-living adjustment (3%), a merit increase (up to 3%), and funding to implement participation of Social Security for all employees. Support for a flexible work arrangement policy was also recommended.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Public Safety – Public Safety Director, Alan May reviewed the departmental goals from FY22 and provided an overview of the projects he is requesting funding for in FY23. This included information about a proposed transition of the department’s firearms from .40 caliber to 9mm, body worn and vehicle cameras, an information management system, salary incentives and the video magistrate program. He updated the Village Council on the purchase of a ladder truck. That report was relayed to Islanders in an announcement [HERE](#). The next step of the purchasing process is to solicit bids for the manufacturing and delivery of the truck.

The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Finance – Zachary Hewett, Finance Director gave a presentation with a proposed budget calendar, an overview of the Village’s debt service obligations, revenue forecasts to include ad valorem and accommodation tax revenues, and various financial comparisons to other similar municipalities. The presentation slides can be viewed [HERE](#). Video of the presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).