



**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING
THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.**

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Holden Beach, North Carolina met for a Special Meeting/Public Hearing on Thursday, July 8, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Public Assembly. Present were Mayor J. Alan Holden; Mayor Pro Tem Gerald Brown; Commissioners Brian Murdock, Mike Sullivan, Pat Kwiatkowski and Rick Smith; Town Manager David W. Hewett; Town Clerk Heather Finnell; Assistant Town Manager Christy Ferguson; Inspections Director Tim Evans; and Town Attorneys Rick Green and Katie Madon.

Mayor Holden called the meeting to order and explained the purpose of the meeting. Contract details are on a sheet in the back of the room.

**PUBLIC HEARING – CONTRACT TO PURCHASE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 441 OCEAN BOULEVARD
(PARCELS 246DB001 & 246DB002)**

Tom Myers, President of the Holden Beach Property Owners Association summarized responses they received in response to their solicitation. He talked about different options for the building and providing incentives/tax breaks without purchasing the property. He talked about options for parking and beach access. He said he thinks it is fair to say everyone would like to keep the pier; the question is at what cost. Mr. Myers talked about the current budget and said you would need to either reduce the current budget to cover amounts for the pier, increase taxes or take money out of savings. He asked the Board to not jump blindly into this without knowing what the costs will be. Mr. Myers said he summarized comments received, but he was not speaking on behalf of the HBPOA.

Haskell Cowan said he wants to make sure the beach remains accessible for residents, homeowners and tourists. We have benefited for many years by the generosity of the Bass family allowing public access through their property. The access also serves as an emergency vehicle access which helps with emergency access, beach patrol and nourishment projects. He believes it would be in the best interest of the Town to purchase the access.

Steve McManimen said he feels strongly that this Holden Beach icon needs to remain for future generations to enjoy. He talked about some of the pier's history. He said it is time for the Town to get permanent Town-owned access. Eliminating the access will create a 0.9-mile gap for beach access for

some of the canals. Mr. McManimen said the Town will hurt these homeowners' ability to rent these houses and the Town will lose rental taxes. He is for the purchase of the property as proposed.

Lyn Holden stated Mr. Bass has been an asset to the Town. He is concerned as a taxpayer that it is not the best long-term thing to do. He talked about expenses that could be associated with ownership of the pier and pavilion. He thinks private enterprise could do better than the Town.

Keith Smith talked about the importance of growing up near/visiting a pier. The location of the pier influenced his family's decision on purchasing his house. He suggested looking at public and private partnerships for the property.

John Pierce said he believes the family beach environment is the reason many people purchased at Holden Beach. This is one of the few places that you enjoy a family environment. He supports making the purchase depending how the analysis comes out.

Terri Watson talked about her experiences with the pier. She thinks it is an important part of the history of Holden Beach. She supports the Town doing what it needs to do to support the memory and keep it for future generations.

Johnny Craig said this is a critical opportunity to purchase, obtain and preserve such a treasure. He referred to the Land Use Plan. It says CAMA considers public access facilities to be one of the key components of a coastal community's infrastructure. The plan also talks about maximizing and maintaining accesses and the need for public parking.

Anita Hegarty said they are for it. This gives landlocked homes the opportunity to go on the pier and fish.

Larry Blume provided some money raising options. He suggested selling family plan cards and yearly fishing licenses.

Elaine Jordan is concerned with the cost. She thinks there are other alternatives to explore first. She thinks private enterprises should be held privately, not by towns. She objects to purchasing the property.

Tony Marwitz said he trusts the Board to work out the money. The Town has a chance to get beach access; we need to take advantage of it while we can. He thinks it is a good move for the Town to acquire it. He is concerned with who will buy it if the Town doesn't.

Mike Oats said from Raleigh Street to the firehouse there are no beach accesses. This would give beaches access to people in the area. He talked about prices for purchasing oceanfront property. He stated he is for purchasing the property.

Ken Rogers stated he wants us to respect the past and plan for the future. He wants the Town to protect the family beach. He thinks it is a good move, but only a first step. He talked about the need for other

services, including a first-class restaurant, parking and services that will attract families. He suggested pursuing grant money, generating revenues for services and involving the property owners on the island. He talked about purchasing the whole strip.

Regina Martin talked about the history of the beach. She believes if you are going to have a family beach, you need a pier. Our neighbors have piers, one was just redone with grant money. We have been successful in securing grant money. Mrs. Martin would like to move forward with the purchase.

Shannon Itzaina talked about her family's history with the beach. She thinks the Town needs to be financially responsible. She said she is a real estate agent and talked about commercial contracts. She is not against the purchase; she is against rushing into it.

Dave Keech loves the island and wants it to be a family beach, but he is a commercial realtor and thinks the purchase needs to be fiscally sound. He doesn't want to see taxes go up.

Sylvia Pate talked about her history with Holden Beach. She thinks the Town should purchase the property, but should do more investigation to make sure we are not getting into a hole. She suggested purchasing all of the property, not just the two properties.

Beverly Compton said she is a member/director of the HBPOA and what Tom Myers reported is what the organization received as comments. During the last land use process two people wanted the pier, other people wanted other projects. She supports the pier, but doesn't know the details on how the Board is proceeding. She suggested having an investment group take it over, with the Town controlling it.

Zach Current said he is looking for the process of how we got to where we are. He wants to know the plan and what's going on with the parcels. He wants to know it's in the best interest for the Town.

Aimee Archer is for purchase of pier, but she believes the Town should buy the whole property. She said don't miss out on the opportunity. It is part of the Town and we need to keep it.

Karen Dodd asked how the purchase will benefit property owners. She also asked how the debt service will be handled without raising taxes. She would like more information on what the Town would be doing with the property. Ms. Dodd said we have infrastructure problems (GenX, road maintenance) that need to be addressed.

Tony Jordan said they are not making any more land or oceanfront. The pier is part of being a family island. He talked about his family's history and the benefits of being on the pier. He encouraged that the Town buy the pier, but he agreed with several people who have concerns on how we will pay for it. Mr. Jordan thinks there would be more support if people have more information.

Brian Derrico talked about purchasing his home. He said this a great deal for the Town and he is in favor of purchasing it.

Steve Kwiatkowski said what he is hearing is that he thinks people want to see numbers and how the Town would pay for it. If that was presented most people would have a better understanding of what is going on.

Stan Dodd has a background in real estate business. He is concerned about the three months in the contract. He appreciates the emotion, but asked the Board to be fiscally responsible. He talked about Town-owned properties and asked what is being done with them. There are ways to do it but take your time.

The Board allowed another three minutes per person to people who wanted to speak again.

Steve McManimen said for those on the canals, you are talking about almost a mile stretch with almost no beach access. The beach access is of utmost importance. He talked about the hardships associated with no access.

Lyn Holden stated Gil Bass is giving the Town an excellent bargain. He asked people to look at what they are getting for their county taxes. He thinks the county should pay a big portion of this because a majority of the people would be coming from the mainland. Mr. Holden thinks the Town needs to pursue getting the county to do something for Holden Beach.

Keith Smith said he is all for fiscally responsible. He does think the timeline is aggressive. He talked about the benefits of the pier.

Shannon Itzaina asked the Board to take their time. She is not against it. She sees a lot of potential but wants the Town to take its time. She would have liked to have the information sheet before. She would like more transparency. She suggested a question-and-answer forum.

Brad Chaney said he understands the emotion, but he wants the Town to make the right financial decision on this. He said the Town needs a plan first.

John McEntire stated if the Town deems it to be a sound investment of taxpayer money, they should buy it. If there is a question, they shouldn't. There are other options for the pier. He said there are a lot of sound reasons to keep the pier, emotionally and culturally, but if you are not convinced it is a good enough deal to invest your own money, then it is odd you want to invest mine. He asked if it is worth spending your own money for.

Brian Derrico said if the Town doesn't buy this, they will lose taxpayer money. If access goes away for the canal properties, people won't rent them or will rent them at a reduced rate. You will get less taxes. If the Town doesn't buy it and beach access is limited, he asked that his property be reassessed.

Jody Westfall said purchasing the pier would be a great idea, but it depends on what the Town decides to do with it. He said it needs to be planned out where it is fiscally responsible. He said if he had the money, he would buy the whole thing and create a boardwalk with a restaurant.

Mayor Holden closed the public hearing at 8:22 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTE 143-318.11(A)(5), TO INSTRUCT THE STAFF OR AGENT CONCERNING THE NEGOTIATION OF THE PRICE AND TERMS OF A CONTRACT CONCERNING THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Brown to go into Executive Session at 8:23 p.m.; second by Commissioner Murdock.

Town Clerk Finnell read the reason for Executive Session.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

OPEN SESSION

The Board went back into Open Session at 9:37 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACT TO PURCHASE REAL PROEPRTY LOCATED AT 441 OCEAN BOULEVARD (PARCELS 246DB001 & 246DB02)

Motion by Commissioner Murdock that we present the offer to purchase & contract for 441 Ocean Boulevard West; second by Mayor Pro Tem Brown.

Commissioner Sullivan said he wanted to make it clear that in moving forward with the contract it doesn't bind the Town to buy the property. It is the first step in the purchase of the property. He believes as many people stated that we should look at this and only do it if it makes fiscal sense. Commissioner Kwiatkowski agreed.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. by Mayor Pro Tem Brown; second by Commissioner Murdock; approved by unanimous vote.

J. Alan Holden, Mayor

ATTEST:

Heather Finnell, Town Clerk