



**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2025 – 6:00 P.M.**

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Holden Beach, North Carolina met for a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Public Assembly. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Tom Myer; Commissioners Tracey Thomas and Rick Paarfus; Interim Town Manager Christy Ferguson; Town Clerk Heather Finnell; Inspections Director Tim Evans; Police Chief Jeremy Dixon; Sergeant Adam Milligan; and Attorney Sydnee Moore.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Rick McInturf spoke on behalf of the Holden Beach Community Alliance. He explained how the pier building is a major piece of history and heritage of the beach. He asked the Board to delay any action of the demolition of the building until a comprehensive development plan can be put in place, including input. Mr. McInturf requested that the Alliance be allowed access to the building to salvage any historical artifacts and items that could be used in a new building.

Regina Martin said several meetings ago, the Board was not ready to discuss a public private partnership as a possibility for funding a new pier building because that was premature. She believes tearing the building down is also premature without a plan in place. She said the Board has stopped every project except the lift station and the required ADA requirements.

Martie Arrowood said two months ago, the Board took Commissioners Smith and Dyer's item concerning a public private partnership off the agenda. She asked why the Board is discussing demolishing the pier building now. She expressed her concerns regarding the transfer to the Beach & Inlet Capital Reserve Fund made at the last Board meeting.

Dawn Merzlak said her family has been waiting for the pier building to be reopened. She doesn't understand why the pier building needs to be torn down.

Sylvia Pate recommended going with option 2 if the Board proceeds with awarding the contract to HDR. She suggested the repair and renovations for the fire station and funding for the pier also be considered as federal priorities. She is not sure why tearing the building down has become a priority. She suggested having a plan in place before tearing it down.

Stephen Kimbrough supports awarding the contract to HDR. He sees no reason that the Board shouldn't move ahead with removing the pier building. It should be replaced with something that his generation and future generations can enjoy.

Jim Bauer supported the HDR contract. He said it should also include the removal. Mr. Bauer said removing the pier is probably the cheapest and best thing to do. He provided reasons for his recommendations.

Gay Atkins asked the Board to slow down and put some thought into it concerning the pier building.

Peter Freer said there are recommendations in the packet and suggested the Board listen to the experts and remove the building. He explained it makes sense to do it as soon as possible based on timing and costs.

Becky Greene supports the commissioners' recommendation to remove the pier building at this time based on the recommendations in the packets.

Lisa Ragland asked the Board not to take action on the agenda items because she does not believe there is a quorum and has filed a formal complaint. She said at previous meetings, it was stated that moving forward with the pier project should be a complete project. She recommended not taking action on the pier building until the HDR report is completed.

Keith Smith said if you wanted to save the pier building, you can find a way. He suggested slowing down.

Maria Surprise supports moving ahead with the engineering bid. For the pier building, she supports going out to for bids to tear it down. She commended Interim Town Manager Ferguson for her list of federal priorities. She said at the November Holden Beach Property Owners Association meeting, street flooding was a hot topic and the directors have been tasked with evaluating the stormwater flooding concerns of the members. Ms. Surprise said she supports the item on establishing a network policy.

Jennifer Fishback asked if Holden Beach has a mission statement.

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO AWARD THE CONTRACT FOR PIER ENGINEERING SERVICES TO HDR

Interim Town Manager Ferguson said the Board received four proposals and selected HDR at the December meeting. The reason the public saw a couple variations of the scope of work and contract is due to questions the Board had. The contract is for more than the number in the budget. If the Board decides to move forward, her advice is to use Available to Appropriate in the BPART Fund.

Bill Kincannon and Will Fuller introduced themselves. Mr. Fuller provided information on the scope of services. There are two main options. The first would be looking at the repair and a full reconstruction. They will be looking at the construction timeline, preliminary designs and cost estimates for both. The second option is to do the same work and also add a 250-foot extension to bring the pier back to its original 1,000-foot length.

Motion by Commissioner Paarfus that we move forward with the contract to approve option 2 pending a favorable review by the town attorney (I understand she has some concerns with that) and that we fund the contract with the Available to Appropriate funds in BPART; second by Commissioner Thomas.

He clarified that the overage would be taken from Available to Appropriate. Budgeting for the contract was discussed.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON REMOVING THE PIER BUILDING

Commissioner Thomas said you can see from the background, two inspections were done, one by Inspections Director Evans and one by an engineering firm asked by Inspections Director Evans. In looking at the reports and talking to Inspections Director Evans, it appears there is no way the building can be repaired.

Motion by Commissioner Thomas to instruct the staff to send out a RFP to remove the pier building.

Inspections Director Evans explained when both of the reports were done, they came along with explanations and comments. The building did have the capability of possibly being able to be improved and kept. We have gone so long and the cost of construction has gotten to the point that we can no longer afford to do any more work than approximately 200 square feet before we will go beyond the ability to not have to bring it into full compliance. The structure would have to be elevated. The cost of construction has escalated and the value of a structure that is dilapidated is never going to go up. He doesn't see any way possible that the Town would want to or could propose a plan that would be capable of saving that structure. If you want to take on the two-year accumulative costs, you cannot do that in phases. It is the Planning & Inspections Department's position that we have gotten to the point where that building cannot be salvaged, it will have to be brought into full compliance and by such it will need to be removed. Inspections Director Evans explained there does need to be an anchor building. He said we have known from day 1 that the building is in the way of repairing the pier.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Paarfus.

Interim Town Manager Ferguson explained the Planning & Inspections Department has grave concerns that have been communicated to her. Based on that and the discussion that repair costs are not going to be something that the Town can do, it seems this is a step that has to be taken in one method or another.

Commissioner Paarfus said Inspections Director Evans covered some of the stuff he was going to talk about, primarily that the structure is below the floodplain. He doesn't think the Town should invest money into a structure that is below the floodplain. Not only Inspections Director Evans, but other experts have identified the building as a teardown and it is in the way of repairing or replacing the pier. Commissioner Paarfus thinks the Town deserves something nicer than that building. He understands there are emotions tied to the building, but he explained he thinks it is time to move the building on, determine what to do with the site in the interim and get the pier fixed.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO FORMULATE FEDERAL PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

Interim Town Manager Ferguson went over her recommendations on what we should pursue. The recommendations are backed by Ward and Smith. There is the ability for three recommendations on the funding side and three on the policy side. Funding recommendations include the Ocean Boulevard Stormwater 5113 Program. She suggested adding "or other Corps' funding through the federal government to that item" because we have some information that we may get some disaster relief funding. Other funding recommendations are Lockwood Folly dredging funding and exploring additional funding opportunities for projects. Policy side recommendations include Lockwood Folly Inlet dredging sand placement and FEMA items to include appropriate funding levels for the Disaster Relief Fund and advocating for the Town concerning the National Flood Insurance Program. Interim Town Manager Ferguson suggested the Board save their third policy option in case something arises that we need help with from our advocates. There are typically letters of support that go along with this. She suggested that the Board allow execution of the documents based on passing this list.

Motion by Commissioner Paarfus to accept the funding and policy priorities laid out in the memo with adding "or other Corps' funding" to item 1 and going ahead and issuing the letters; second by Commissioner Thomas.

Commissioner Thomas reminded everyone that last year the Board asked Ward and Smith to investigate any pier options and they said there were none at that time. Interim Town Manager Ferguson agreed and added they did say there was one recommendation, but the Town was not at the point that we were ready to construct as required. She said they also researched the Fire Department before so they have done some stuff that is specific to items that are coming forward as part of the Board's goals and objectives.

The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RESOLUTION 25-01, RESOLUTION PROHIBITING VIEWING OF PORNOGRAPHY ON TOWN NETWORKS AND DEVICES

Town Clerk Finnell stated NCGS 143-805 requires all public agencies to adopt a policy governing the use of its network and devices.

Motion by Commissioner Thomas to approve Resolution 25-01; second by Commissioner Paarfus

Interim Town Manager Ferguson added there are no problems at the Town, it is a requirement at the state level.

The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 6:52 p.m. by Commissioner Thomas; second by Mayor Pro Tem Myers; approved by unanimous vote.

J. Alan Holden, Mayor

ATTEST:

Heather Finnell, Town Clerk