



**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.**

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Holden Beach, North Carolina met for a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Public Assembly. Present were Mayor J. Alan Holden; Mayor Pro Tem Tom Myers; Commissioners Rick Smith, Tracey Thomas, Page Dyer and Rick Paarfus; Interim Town Manager Christy Ferguson; Town Clerk Heather Finnell; Police Chief Jeremy Dixon; Inspections Director Tim Evans; Finance Director Daniel McRaine; and Town Attorney Sydnee Moore.

Mayor Holden presented the invocation and called the meeting to order.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

*Motion by Commissioner Paarfus to approve; second by Commissioner Thomas; approved by unanimous vote.*

**CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST CHECK**

No conflicts were disclosed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Motion by Commissioner Paarfus to approve the minutes (Special Meeting of February 27, 2025, Special Meeting of March 13, 2025 and Regular Meeting of March 18, 2025), second by Commissioner Thomas; approved by unanimous vote.*

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

John Woods spoke in support of the Town's application for the N.C. Resilient Coastal Communities Program. He said the SeaSide at Winding River community is attempting to get the Department of Transportation (DOT) to reinstate the engineered swale that was installed in 2016 as part of the stormwater plan for the west parking lot construction at 162 Ocean Boulevard East. He asked that a Town representative attend a meeting with the DOT.

Keith Smith spoke about the need for boat parking at Block Q.

Joe Utly spoke about his concern about handicap parking.

Becky Greene said she is frustrated with the misinformation circulating on the Holden Beach Happenings website. She said the commissioners are getting the facts to make an informed decision. She doesn't support parking on Block Q.

Peter Freer said he is confused about the recent town hall event that was held at Block Q by Keith Smith. He thinks parking around the perimeter at Block Q is sufficient.

Ryan Williams asked the Town to be involved and support putting a boat ramp on the mainland. He asked the Town to keep parking for the current boat ramp on the island.

## **HDR ITEMS**

Interim Town Manager Ferguson introduced Will Fuller and Bill Kincannon from HDR. She said at the March meeting, the Board voted to move away from the repair option and to a rebuild option only for the pier as recommended by HDR. They have some follow-up questions in order to proceed with the plan. The revised scope and final structural analysis report was included for the Board's review.

Mr. Fuller explained relating to timber, hybrid and concrete, with the cost estimates, you should expect to see two – three times increase with each upgrade in the structure material. He said with concrete, you would have more drivability with the concrete piles. You wouldn't have as much of an issue with potential splitting when you drive in the piles. You would be able to drive the piles deeper, which would give more structural security. He explained you would not have the potential for warping like you would with timber. There is also a savings in potential hazards. Concrete also allows better suitability for top-down construction. Mr. Fuller said a hybrid would be a concrete substructure with a timber superstructure. He provided details on the hybrid design and explained the benefits of that type of design. He said having a concrete or hybrid design will have much more favorable maintenance and will increase the service life. Mr. Fuller provided information on top-down versus land-out construction. HDR is looking for guidance if the Town would like to pursue a concrete or hybrid pier. Currently, they are looking at land-out construction. If they could do a top-down design, top-down construction would be the recommended methodology.

HDR answered questions from the Board. Mr. Fuller doesn't know the cost differential at this point. It will come back to the roughly two to three times. Mr. Kincannon provided estimates on recent historical data. A rough ballpark for wooden piers would be \$3,000 – \$7,000 per linear foot, \$10,000 – \$15,000 per linear foot for hybrid and the \$20,000 – \$25,000 range for concrete. Design, loads, methodology, construction and maintenance were discussed.

After discussion, the Board would like to look at a timber design, to today's code in the most economical manner, built to 1,000 feet with a "T" structure on the end. Inspections Director Evans added he would like to see it be taller. Construction windows were discussed. The

Board would like to work straight through once work begins, without stopping for the summer season. Inspections Director Evans explained a major permit will need to be obtained.

*Motion by Commissioner Thomas to approve the contract and to instruct the staff to execute it; second by Commissioner Smith.*

Commissioner Dyer asked if demolition is included. Mr. Kincannon said it could be priced and provided. Mr. Fuller talked about the design area. He believes the cost estimates should include demolition.

Interim Town Manager Ferguson said initially HDR was contracted by the Town to explore both a repair and rebuild option. At the last meeting, the Board moved away from repair. The contract that the Board is voting on takes it down from the original cost which had both options down to \$198,620. The Board came to a consensus to proceed with timber only, to be built land out, will have a "T" structure on the end and go the full 1,000 feet for the design.

*The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

#### **POLICE REPORT – CHIEF DIXON**

- We are picking up and seeing the crowds.
- This weekend is Easter weekend. Asked everyone to slow down and drive careful.
- Next week is Days at the Dock. There will be a huge crowd.
- LSVs must follow state law.
- Pets on the strand ordinance comes into effect May 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT REPORT – INSPECTIONS DIRECTOR EVANS**

- Busy, went over the numbers on the report. When remodels and repairs go up and the number of new construction goes down, it is an economic indicator.
- Steady and staying busy.

#### **FINANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT – FINANCE DIRECTOR MCRAINEY**

- Went over the numbers in the report. Some entries need to be made.
- In the Water & Sewer Fund, there is a big debt expense coming up in April.
- Parking revenue is up approximately \$83,000 over last year.
- Pump Station 2 grant money is not shown on the report, but can be seen on the website.

#### **INTERIM TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – INTERIM TOWN MANAGER FERGUSON**

- Greensboro Lift Station – the Buy America Build America waivers came through from the EPA on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Reviewed items completed to date.
- Block Q Restrooms and Parking – held a pre-construction meeting with the contractor on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Staff has been completing preconstruction utility locates. We are

accomplishing as much as we can before June 30<sup>th</sup>. Getting an updated number that is anticipated for after June 30<sup>th</sup> so it may change the amount in the packets for the meeting on Thursday. The extension on the timeline for the grant has been applied for.

- Employee Updates – Ryleigh Gleason is the new receptionist and Chris Thompson who started his career with us and then went to the Highway Patrol has moved from part time to full time status with the Police Department. John Bajkowski has a conditional offer of employment for the Police Department.
- Ocean Boulevard Stormwater – staff meet with the Corps regarding understanding the timing and scope of the project. This part of the project would be for the 300 block of Ocean Boulevard and the east end of Mullet/Avenue A. The Corps plans to attend the May meeting to brief the Board. There have been discussions with McGill to understand permitting and design requirements for next fiscal year.
- Pier Site – pier building was removed per last month's bid award.
- Washington, D.C. Trip/Federal Priorities – it was a productive trip that was a combination of the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association Conference and a visit to Capital Hill. Reviewed meetings attended.
- Sand Matters – it was a workshop held to explore regional sediment management. She and Mayor Pro Tem Myers attended.
- Canal dredging and beach annual maintenance surveys are underway. Last year Coastal Geomatics billed the Town at the end of the year but the bill for the beach surveys did not get processed before closeout which means they were paid in July for April's work. Money has been moved from the Raking/Tilling line to the Shoreline line to pay for the work.
- Reviewed her objectives status report.

## **CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON BEACH SAFETY WARNING STATIONS**

Interim Town Manager Ferguson said that Attorney Moore's feedback was the Town just needs to understand annual maintenance costs. She introduced Assistant Fire Chief David Ward. Assistant Fire Chief Ward said in the short term the Fire Department would cover maintenance. After the first couple of years if it works fine, they will continue to do so. The stations would be located every 600 feet. They may not be at all accesses so they would have informational signs at public accesses that can be scanned. Their focus is on prevention. He showed samples. The Fire Department will inspect the stations daily. They will take them up at the end of the season and during storm events. They would love to have them up by Memorial Day, but it will come down to supplier availability.

*Motion by Commissioner Paarfus to proceed with the partnership with the Fire Department; second by Mayor Pro Tem Myers; approved by unanimous vote.*

## **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MASTER PLANNING FOR THE JORDAN BOULEVARD AND BLOCK Q AREA BEGINNING WITH BLOCK Q IN THE INITIAL PHASE**

Commissioner Thomas would like to have a discussion on the master plan for Jordan Boulevard and Block Q, beginning with Block Q in the initial phase. We have it in our master

plan. We should consider starting it this year because there is some money left in the architect's budget. There have been several proposals for amenities for Block Q coming from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB). They recommended that the bandstand be located there and four pickleball courts. The amenities to consider for Block Q should include but are not limited to a new bandstand, dance floor/lawn seating area for concerts and our pickleball courts. She is not proposing that the parking for boats around the perimeter of Block Q be changed. She hopes that can be kept in the design as the Town moves forward. Commissioner Thomas said the Town could work towards a larger master plan next fiscal year that would include Jordan Boulevard, the old pavilion area and whatever else they want to do not limited to boat parking and optimal car parking.

*Motion by Commissioner Thomas to instruct the staff to work with the current architect to move forward on coming up with a Block Q design that includes a bandstand, four pickleball courts, dance floor/lawn seating, second by Mayor Pro Tem Myers.*

Commissioner Paarfus said in his mind the goal of this task was to start fleshing out guidelines so the Board could eventually hire a design firm. The intent is to allow the design firm to bring their creativity and expertise in developing a master plan. He provided examples of what the Board could decide. To him the action is for the Board to start discussing this so a design firm can figure out what to do with the area. Commissioner Smith said he doesn't think adding a couple of pickleball courts is a bad idea. He said it goes back to a few years ago when they were told they didn't want boat parking because they didn't want pavement or gravel. Now, the Board is talking about putting four pickleball courts which are solid cement. Commissioner Smith doesn't see what the big change of heart is, but he is willing to look into it. Reality is to pay for all of this, we need paid boat parking. He said the size can be reduced, the angle changed and there will still be room for a pickleball court. He said before the Board makes a decision, he thinks it would be advantageous to get input from residents and taxpayers. He talked about the difficulty of parallel parking a boat trailer. He suggested looking at the original plans. There is plenty of room to add pickleball courts.

Interim Town Manager Feguson said right now the architect is working on the restroom in the main triangle part of Block Q. If the Board were to look at the second phase, it is a larger scope of work that would require it to go out to bid. She thinks the goal today was to see if there was a way to move towards being more position ready for a concert facility when the fiscal year started, versus having planning occur after the fact. Commissioner Smith said boat parking and the perimeter parking brings in revenue. Mayor Pro Tem Myers said they had boat parking around the right-of-way (ROW). He has a Google Maps photo that shows 37 boats parked in the perimeter, in the ROW. He said his objection when the plan came up was that it would go down from the 37 spots to only 15. He said the way he is hearing it now is that the Town would leave space in the ROW for those spots, the way it has been. He would like to get a concert setup and would like it setup to not prohibit other recreational amenities. Mayor Pro Tem Myers explained why he would like to move forward with the concert venue. Commissioner Paarfus said his concern is if the Town puts another structure there, it will add a constraint for someone to do a design. He understands the facilities we currently have are not perfect and that the Town can do something better, but he doesn't think we are broken right now. Commissioner Paarfus said his thoughts are that the Town should take a pause

and let a designer give the Town the best thing for the whole area. Commissioner Dyer said Block Q has been on pause for two years. She thinks it is essential to get a bandstand. She said the boat parking plan that the Board had was adding spots. It wasn't going to remove the spots around the perimeter. There is the Wildlife ramp there that doesn't cost the Town anything to maintain and the Town owes it to the community to add boat parking. She said the biggest argument was that they didn't want paving. She said they struck the boat parking because they didn't want pavement and now there will be pavement for pickleball courts. Commissioner Dyer said they need to get the concert venue. The PRAB has done multiple plans for the property and have done an excellent job and she thinks the Town needs to get moving on it.

Interim Town Manager Ferguson reviewed potential paths forward.

Commissioner Thomas said the PRAB came and said the only place on the island to add pickleball is Block Q so if they want pickleball then that is where it would have to be. She thinks the bandstand makes sense on Block Q since bathrooms are there. For the boat parking she drove by that area three times a week and never saw more than three to five boat trailers outside the state area, besides the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Commissioner Thomas doesn't think the Board needs to provide 15 spots in Block Q but is okay with perimeter parking. She is also okay with looking at additional parking under the bridge. The Board further discussed how to move forward. Commissioner Paarfus suggested moving the pickleball courts where the playground is and moving the playground to Block Q.

*Commissioner Thomas would like to add to the motion that it could be done in phases so they can just do the bandstand.*

Interim Town Manager Ferguson said she thinks you could start with the concert venue and then look at phasing in other amenities as they are explored more. Part of instructing the staff would be for her to get a cost estimate for pursuing a concert venue.

*Mayor Pro Tem Myers agreed to amendment. The motion passed by a 4 – 1 vote with Mayor Pro Tem Myers and Commissioners Smith, Thomas and Dyer voting for the motion and Commissioner Paarfus voting in the negative.*

The Board took a recess from 7:00 p.m. – 7:07 p.m.

## **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE APPLICATION TO THE N.C. RESILIENT COASTAL COMMUNITIES PROGRAMS FOR PHASES 1 AND 2**

Mayor Pro Tem Myers said the Resilient Coastal Communities Program is from the Division of Coastal Management. They are accepting applications for their program. If accepted, they will provide assistance to develop Community Engagement and Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (Phase 1) and Planning, Project Identification and Prioritization (Phase 2) at no cost to the Town. It would help the Town address resiliency on the island. The deadline for the application is April 25th. This would be in addition to the stormwater.

*Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Myers that we direct staff to complete and submit the application for Phase 1 and Phase 2; second by Commissioner Thomas.*

Commissioner Paarfus said he thinks it is a good program and thinks the Town needs to make application but is concerned about the staff workload and other commitments. He would prefer that we ask the staff to make the best effort to get the application in. Other higher priority things may prevent it from getting there. Commissioner Smith agreed with Commissioner Paarfus. Mayor Pro Tem Myers said he is willing to amend the motion. Interim Town Manager Ferguson appreciates the leeway. She has been working on it and feels confident that between her and the Inspections Department, they will get the application turned in. Commissioner Dyer asked if this would affect our relationship with the current engineers. Interim Town Manager Ferguson said no, but you can list an engineer the Town currently partners with. She said the Town could list all our current partners or a specific one. If you don't list a partner, they match you with someone. After discussion, Interim Town Manager Ferguson said if there is space, she will list all the Town's current engineers.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE 25-04, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING HOLDEN BEACH CODE OF ORDINANCES CHAPTER 154, FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION**

Inspections Director Evans said this is a text amendment to our NFIP. It doesn't require a public hearing. It went to the Planning & Zoning Board (P&Z). They approved it. It is a text amendment to go from 150 square feet for an accessory structure to 100 square feet. The change puts us within the NFIP guidelines and changes an error that was left in our floodplain ordinances when it was revised in 2018. This was recommended by our partners in FEMA and NC Public Safety. There is a consistency statement that goes along with it.

*Motion by Commissioner Thomas to accept the approved revisions (Ordinance 25-04, consistency statement); second by Mayor Pro Tem Myers.*

Commissioner Smith asked what it would even be. Inspections Director Evans answered it would be a storage shed, but it is rare that you could even have one.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO SET A DATE FOR A PUBLIC HEARING FOR REVISIONS TO HOLDEN BEACH CODE OF ORDINANCES CHAPTER 157, ZONING CODE**

Section 157.006 Definitions: The proposed ordinances closes a loophole and ensures that required parking spaces remain for the life of a structure. He showed an example to support the proposed change. Inspections Director Evans explained the procedure for people who would be considered non-conforming.



*Motion by Commissioner Thomas to have the public hearing before the next meeting; second by Commissioner Paarfus.*

*The consensus of the Board is to hold the public hearing at 5:00 p.m.*

Section 157.060 Residential District (R-1): Inspections Director Evans explained our ordinance is very unfriendly towards people who want to install a cargo lift. A lot of people get turned down by the Planning & Inspections Department based on the current rules. It is a hardship and ends up at the Board of Adjustment (BOA). The BOA asked to have the ordinance reviewed. He reviewed the verbiage of the proposed amendment. P&Z already approved this and signed a consistency statement.

The Board agreed by consensus to add this to the other public hearing.

Section 157.085 Relocation of Buildings: Inspections Director Evans said this was a BOA and planning staff request. It is an expensive endeavor for a homeowner when they go to move a home and it is unnecessary. The NC Building Code governs structures, how they are set and permitting. The Town can't supersede the Building Code. Currently, you are required to go to the BOA to get approval to move a house. Then they go the Inspections Department for plan review. The proposed change eliminates the need to go before the BOA.

The Board agreed to add the public hearing to the next meeting.

## **DISCUSSION OF FORMING A SUBCOMMITTEE TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS FOR GRAVEL IN PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS**

Inspections Director Evans said P&Z would like permission to form a committee so they could study what needs to be done to prevent the rocks in the bike lane and sidewalks. Commissioner Thomas recommended that the Board ask P&Z to figure it out. The Board discussed letting P&Z form a committee.

*Motion by Commissioner Paarfus to direct Planning & Zoning to form a Community Advisory Committee following the Town policy, noting that any engineering costs will require separate budget action; second by Commissioner Dyer.*

Commissioner Thomas asked if P&Z can come to the Board and ask for engineers if they need them. Inspections Director Evans thinks it would be the same process for the subcommittee and P&Z.

*The motion passed by a 4 – 1 vote with Mayor Pro Tem Myers and Commissioner Smith, Dyer and Paarfus voting for the motion and Commissioner Thomas voting in the negative.*



## **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON GENERAL ITEMS**

Joy Rankin is excited about the beach safety stations. As a boat owner, it is difficult to parallel park a trailer and hopes that that will be taken into consideration when looking at spaces. She also would like to see the Board support the boat ramp on the mainland.

Jonathon Austin appreciates Board working together. He talked about boat parking and provided information on private partnerships.

Martie Arrowood said they need trash cans on the east end. She stated Martha Myers put a very positive post on Facebook about the ADA compliance areas. She said good job to Inspections Director Evans.

Keith Smith said he did a community service project with his daughters to clean up sidewalks and suggested the Town maybe can tackle the sidewalks as a community project. He didn't hear anything about funding during the pier conversation. He provided his suggestions for funding.

## **MAYOR'S COMMENTS**

- Hopes everyone has a happy and safe Easter.

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Mayor Pro Tem Myers

- Thanks for coming. Thanks for being involved and getting engaged.

Commissioner Smith

- Thanked everyone for coming out tonight.
- Enjoy this Easter season and remember why we are celebrating. It is a wonderful time of the year. The kids are on spring break. Please be careful because we will be back into the kid season and they will be out and about everywhere.
- Thanked fellow commissioners. Feels like we have a unified direction to keep moving forward. A pier is important to Holden Beach's history, as well as the future.

Commissioner Thomas

- Wanted to share for the record that Lisa Ragland dropped her frivolous lawsuit last Friday because she knew that she was going to lose after she saw our attorney's motion to dismiss which was scheduled to be heard at the same time as the preliminary hearing. She wasted thousands of taxpayers' dollars. All of the work was done by the attorneys before the Friday of the court date. At best, she saved a few hundred dollars. She has publicly stated that she will continue to fight the Town which will require us to spend more of your taxpayer dollars on attorney fees.
- Mayor Holden announced to the media that he thinks eventually the pier could be put to referendum due to the cost. Thinks it is a great idea and we should plan on going down

that path so the voters and taxpayers get to make the decision of if they want to pay for the pier, instead of five people.

- Thanks for coming out tonight.

#### Commissioner Dyer

- Getting closer and closer to the budget. Thinks our interim town manager is doing an excellent job working on the budget. Thinks that proves she is the best candidate for the job. Last she checked on the website it has not been posted. It says more information to come. Thinks we are wasting our time. She continues to strongly support her as the best candidate for town manager.
- The destruction of the pier building was a sentimental thing for a lot of people. Knows the building was in bad shape and doesn't disagree that it needed to be demolished, but wanted it demolished with a plan to replace it. Still thinks a public private partnership (PPP) is the best way to go. Never explored the options for that. Glad HDR came in and we had a productive conversation. Concern is we don't have enough money to replace the pier, doesn't know why the option to repair it isn't there. Doesn't think we should tear down the pier if we can't afford to replace it. Could also visit a PPP for the pier as well.
- Hopes we move forward with the concert venue. It has been two years and it seems that every project has been stopped. Thinks we need to move forward with a concert venue and give the people a place to enjoy concerts this summer.
- Thank you for coming out.

#### Commissioner Paarfus

- Thanked staff for completing all actions required for the ADA agreement. Staff was handed some lemons and made some mighty fine lemonade. Strongly supports and encourages the interim town manager to consider how we might recognize everybody that was involved in achieving this important accomplishment. It is a job well done.
- Happy Easter.

Interim Town Manager Ferguson said at the Town's birthday party, we did an exercise that we asked people what you like about Holden Beach. Read some of the responses. Right now, the community is very divided. Let's focus and take the time to look at the core of humanity, be kind. She said to get up in the morning and ask yourself what you can do for the Town, instead of working against each other. Wants to get back to the small-town vibe of love and friendship.

#### **CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTE 143-318.11(A)(3), CONSULT WITH ATTORNEY AND 143-318.11(A)(6), PERSONNEL**

*Motion to go into Closed Session by Commissioner Thomas at 7:53 p.m.; second by Mayor Pro Tem Myers.*

Town Clerk Finnell read the reason for Closed Session.

*The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

## OPEN SESSION

The Board went back into Open Session at 9:01 p.m.

## ADJOURNMENT

*Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Thomas at 9:01 p.m.; second by Commissioner Paarfus; approved by unanimous vote.*

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J. Alan Holden, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Heather Finnell, Town Clerk