

TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND
2020 Council Strategic Planning Retreat
Kiawah Town Hall Council Meeting Room
Wednesday, January 29, 2020

MINUTES

Call to Order: *Mayor Weaver called the Council Retreat to order at 1:00 pm.*

Present at the meeting: Craig Weaver, Mayor
Chris Widuch, Mayor Pro Tem
Maryanne Connelly, Councilmember
Dan Prickett, Councilmember
Klaus Said, Councilmember

Also Present: Stephanie Monroe Tillerson, *Town Administrator*
Dorota Szubert, *Town Treasurer*
Joe Wilson, *Town Attorney*
Petra Reynolds, *Town Clerk*
Bruce Spicher, *Development Services Director*
Jim Jordan, *Town Biologist*
Stephanie Braswell Edgerton, *Communications Manager*

Opening Comments:

Mayor Weaver thanked everyone for attending and opened the meeting by highlighting some of the undertakings and achievements over the past year;

- ✓ 119 public meetings
- ✓ Addressed plastics and the use of single-use plastics
- ✓ Dealt with significant building service with multiple new projects
- ✓ Working on the Development Agreements
- ✓ Taking the first actions around sea-level rise
- ✓ Working the Short-Term Rental Ordinance
- ✓ Clean-up after Hurricane Dorian
- ✓ Beachwalker Drive project completed
- ✓ Engineering work completed on Parkway project
- ✓ Initial implementation of the new law-enforcement approach
- ✓ Implementation of the new Arts Council Board
- ✓ Changes to the Comprehensive Plan
- ✓ Communications publications;
 - Four editions of *Town Notes*
 - Twenty-four regular editions of the bi-weekly e-Blasts
 - Forty-one special e-Blasts
 - Seventy-eight special new items on the Town's website and social media accounts

Mayor Weaver stated that the focus on this year's retreat would not be adding new items but instead building on the primary issues and projects that are currently in progress with updates or open discussion to gain a better understanding of the issues, projects, and strategic planning for the coming year.

Operational Priorities (2019):

- ***Short-Term Rentals***

Ms. Dorota Szubert gave an update on the implementation of the new software used for business licensing and the latest information required in the Short-Term Rental (STR) license application

process. She also reported on the 2019 STR statistics of licenses issued, and revenue collected along with discussion of the current licensing process, the amount of licenses currently issued, comments, concerns or issues with the new regulations and fees, monthly updating of the rental licenses available and rental location mapping on the new STR page on the website, and the STR Code Enforcement and violation process.

Mr. Bruce Spicher reported on the previous STR inspection process along with the new inspection process, which additionally requires the confirmation and then a verification process for information provided in the rental license application. He also discussed the implementation of the STR code enforcement personnel, their approach to issuing violations, along with the enforcement, fining, and complaint processes.

- **Town Road Projects**

Ms. Stephanie Tillerson gave an update on the Parkway repaving project by providing an outline of the scope of work, indicating the project was out for bid with a closing date in the next week. Once the bids are received, they will be reviewed by the Public Works Committee, who will recommend a contractor selection for consideration by the Ways and Means Committee and approval by Council. The proposed completion of the project is prior to the Memorial Day holiday weekend. Discussion included the cost of the project, challenges with traffic control, and communication to residents.

Ms. Tillerson indicated the second phase of the project is the refurbishing of the landscaping along the Parkway, which included more native plants for better longevity. Conceptual plans were presented with additional expense information being requested before a bid package is released.

- **Law Enforcement/Deputy Implementation**

Council Member Connelly reported on the Public Safety Committee (PSC) and some of the items that were addressed of the past year. Included were the training of firefighters as EMTs, beach access, and discussions of concerns with Low-Speed vehicles (LSV). She noted that the Community Association recently banned the use of LSVs inside the gate. Discussion included future assessment of beach crowd control, the success of having permanent deputies, reports submitted to the PSC along with current modifications to EMS shift changes.

Ms. Tillerson provided background information on the subcommittee that was established to evaluate the Town's law-enforcement arrangement and the circumstances which led to the hybrid model of law-enforcement chosen. She stated that along with the off-duty deputy contract, a separate contract, implemented last year, provides for four permanent deputies to work a twelve-hour 7 am to 7 pm shift. With only six-months having passed the committee determined no decision could be made; therefore, they determination to extend the contract to twenty-four-hour coverage will be deferred to the end of the fiscal year when more data is available for evaluation.

Operational Priorities (2020):

- **Property Value, Branding Study**

Mayor-Pro Tem Widuch indicated a proposal submitted by HR&A, will be presented for consideration and approval, to provide the Town with a study of Kiawah's property values. Background information will be acquired from the Town, the Resort, Kiawah Partners, and the Community Association. The consultant will meet with the core group, tour the island, and plans to meet with individual representatives of each of the entities. Two additional visits are anticipated, along with seeking public input and comments. The report is expected to look at a variety of aspects, include visionary recommendations, along with a broad study of property values, outlooks that may impact Kiawah going forward and short-term rentals. The final report is expected in July for Council review.

- **Environmental**

Mr. Jim Jordan reviewed the mission of the Environmental Department and provided some background on the ongoing studies and the information provided.

- **Deer Survey**

Mr. Jordan reviewed the report on the current Kiawah deer population which shows a 58% increase in the last two years-2019 had the highest population to date, which has been attributed to a record fawn survival rate and a decline in the bobcat population.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the deer resident survey performed in October 2019 noting the primary concerns of residents are;

- ▶ Deer-Vehicle Collisions 91%
- ▶ Landscape Shrubbery Damage 70%
- ▶ Zoonotic Diseases (Lyme) 72%

Mr. Jordan gave options to address each of the concerns; reducing deer numbers with deer management would address all of them. He reviewed the two management options along with an explanation of each option:

- 1) **Fertility Control**

- Expensive
- Not a viable long-term population management technique in free-ranging deer

- 2) **Lethal Removal**

- Hunting
- Sharpshooting
 - State permit and tags required (September 15-March 1)
 - Specialized equipment needed
 - Meat donated to charity

Councilmembers engaged in an in-depth discussion on if the current deer population needs to be managed, if other options can be explored and if the management direction should be explored. A majority of the members agreed to allow Mr. Jordan to move forward in the exploration of the management option and bring his recommendations back to Council.

- **Alligator Audit**

Councilmember Connelly indicated that a committee of representatives from the Town, Community Association, and the Resort, along with a research scientist, was charged to review the current alligator management program and develop recommendations for improvement. The Committee found that the removal of nuisance alligators based on behavior was a satisfactory management strategy and with recommendations to continue public education, installation additional signage and barriers, and increased training.

- **Plastics (2019 Priority)**

Mr. Jordan stated that an ordinance was passed and became effective in September of 2019 which prohibits;

- ▶ Single-use plastic carryout bags
- ▶ Plastic straws
- ▶ Styrofoam
- ▶ Also prohibits the items listed above plus balloons on the beach

- **Rodent/Rat Poisoning**

Mr. Jordan stated that one of the bobcats found last year was found to have died from accumulating toxic levels of four different rodenticides. He explained that second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGAs) inhibit the blood clotting process. Because SGAs do not kill immediately, the rodent continues to consume the bait, accumulating super-lethal concentrations of the poison. Any predators that feed on poisoned rodents can accumulate

a lethal dose of the SGAs that build up in their bodies as they continue to feed on poisoned rodents.

Mr. Jordan stated that the use of SGAs is likely a significant problem on Kiawah and the reason why the bobcat population is declining. To stop the use of SGAs, the Town has sent out information to residents, island entities, and pest control companies asking for voluntary compliance or an ordinance can pass banning their use. Councilmembers were in agreement with the Environmental recommendation that an ordinance should be written and presented to Council for approval.

- **East Beach Renourishment Permit**

Mr. Jordan provided background information on the Kiawah beach and the East End Renourishment Projects, which were done in 2006 and 2015. The permit that was obtained for the 2015 renourishment project expired in December of 2019. An extension could be obtained, but the project area trigger point has not been met. Mitigation work for the 2015 project ends in March 2020.

- **Beach Management Plan**

The Town is required by the state to have a Beach Management Plan. The plan has ten required criteria, is reviewed every five years, and an updated revision is submitted to DHEC for approval every ten years. The original plan was complete in 1992, with full updates in 2006 and 2012. A review was started in 2017 but was delayed waiting on DHEC to issue updated baseline/setback lines from 2018 revision, beach profile data, shoreline change data, and related analysis.

Mr. Jordan stated a majority of the document had been updated. However, he suggested the Town includes a review process for beach projects not conducted by Town. Mr. Jordan suggested the Town could contract with Coastal Science and Engineering to provide the shoreline/profile data.

- **Communications**

- **Redesign of the Town's Website**

Ms. Stephanie Braswell Edgerton presented analytics snapshot from 2019 showing the Town's website page views, and the top ten pages visited, along with the age and gender of users. She stated the last redesign was in 2016 transitioning from a basic government focused website to one that could be used as a community resource and tourism asset. She noted the current website's strengths;

- Clearly separates content by demographic
- Is an asset to visitors
- Easy to navigate
- Aesthetically pleasing
- The ticker

Shortfalls;

- It is large - Needs content consolidation
- Homepage – Asks too much
- Colors are not consistent with the Kiawah brand
- The meganav (menu is still suitable to channel information to the appropriate audiences, but the hover dropdown menu has proven to be tricky. Needs to be more simplistic
- Audience landing pages require a lot of scrolling and diversion from finding the information
- Too much below the fold
- Lacking prominent news spotlight information

Ms. Braswell Edgerton reviewed the Improvements that she would like to see in the redesign;

- Improved menu options and reduced clicks

- Consolidate information without losing the separate audience narrative
- Landing page news spotlight
- Design consistent with the Kiawah brand
- More above the fold
- Addition of “How do I”
- Video integration
- Integration of Search Engine Optimization techniques

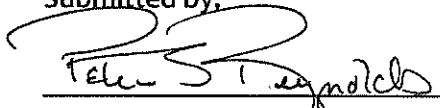
Ms. Braswell Edgerton reviewed the considerations if the redesign, which includes the RFP process, cost, and components such as the Wildlife directory, Native plant database, and Calendar that were not in the previous proposals and will require custom databases that will affect the price. She recommended that the website redesign begin soon as it is a lengthy and challenging process. Councilmembers agreed to move forward to creating an RFP to present for consideration.

Operational Priorities (2020) – If time permits

- **Public Works/Administration**
 - Emergency Management
- **Finance Department**
 - Budget FY21 Kickoff Discussion
 - Business License Process Re-Engineering

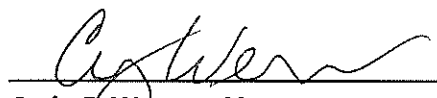
The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Submitted by,



 Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



 Craig E. Weaver, Mayor

3.6.2020
 Date