

**TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND**  
**2021 Council Strategic Planning Retreat**  
**Kiawah Island Municipal Center**  
**Council Chambers**  
**January 20, 2021**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order:** *Mayor Labriola called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.*

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Present at the meeting:** John D. Labriola, *Mayor*  
Dan Prickett, *Councilmember*  
Maryanne Connelly, *Councilmember*  
John Moffitt, *Councilmember*  
Dr. Scott Parker, *Councilmember*

**Also Present:** Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*  
Brian Gottshalk, *Public Works Director*  
Stephanie Braswell Edgerton, *Communications Manager*  
Jan Fox, *Code Compliance Clerk*  
Petra Reynolds, *Town Clerk*  
Michael Sosnowski, *Barrier Island Ocean Rescue, Code Compliance*  
Rob Edgerton, *Barrier Island Ocean Rescue, Beach Patrol*

**Opening Comments:**

Mayor Labriola began by stating that meetings such as this Strategic Planning Retreat were very important to discuss where the Town has been and where the Town wants to go. His hope that the Retreat would provide a platform that can be built upon, and at the conclusion, members can clearly identify the objectives they want to accomplish in 2021, the work plan, and member roles and responsibilities.

Mayor Labriola stated that the agenda was specifically planned to include objectives they want to accomplish and integrate the defined roles of the Council, the Town Administrator, Senior Staff, and Town Committees. He noted that Council has some very important things they would like to accomplish. By focusing on the objectives, working cooperatively and collaboratively with staff, and listening to the community's needs, observations, and concerns, the accomplishments can be achieved.

Ms. Tillerson reviewed the topics that will be discussed throughout the meeting, which included updates on ongoing priorities established for the previous year.

**Operational Priorities (2020 & 2021):**

- Town Landscape Project on the Parkway

Mr. Gottshalk gave an update on the Parkway Landscape project. He stated that challenges with the repairs to the irrigation system have caused continuous delays and completion to fall behind schedule. With the irrigation system being in worse shape than originally anticipated, the contractor has exhausted the funds allocated for repairs, and a change order for \$40,000.00 will be submitted to complete the necessary repairs to make the system operational. The landscape architect reviewed and deemed legitimate all the disputes, damages, and descriptions.. The additional time required for repairs has pushed the completion date to mid-March.

Councilmembers discussed the existing irrigation system's condition, the lack of maintenance as the probable cause, the recovery of repair expenses, and the maintenance contract rebidding.

- Public Works Staffing Consideration

Mr. Gottshalk stated the Public Works Department oversees the operations maintenance of public services and infrastructure of the Municipal Center, Parkway, Beachwalker Drive, and solid waste removal on the beach. He reviewed challenges with increasing litter and solid waste services as the island grows. As a way to cut costs, he investigated the addition of a public works assistant that could assume responsibilities currently contracted and provide more focus and accountability on the Town's aesthetics and assist with public service-related calls.

Mr. Gottshalk reviewed the initiatives and financial scenarios associated with the expansion of the Public Work Department.

Councilmembers discussed the proposal and agreed to have staff explore the concept further.

- Communications

- Redesign of the Town's Website

Ms. Braswell Edgerton described the Town's website as one of the primary ways the Town communicates with the public. She described the analytics used to evaluate how audiences use the website reviewing the top ten pages viewed in 2020. The last redesign of the website in 2016 transitioned from a governmental to a community asset and tourism resource. She reviewed the redesign's strengths and shortfalls, pointing out considerations, components, and technology that will influence the next redesign cost. Also discussed was the RFP (Request of Proposals) process, branding, and the inclusion of links to other community entities.

- Media, Communication, and Meetings Protocols

Ms. Braswell Edgerton stated that meeting agendas and materials are made public when posted and can be of interest, so members should be prepared to speak publicly on those items.

Ms. Braswell Edgerton stated that Town Council meetings are lived streamed and cataloged on the Town YouTube channel. She cautioned members to be mindful that any comments made can be reflected in the audio.

Ms. Braswell Edgerton stated the Town's official spokesperson is the Mayor, Town Administrator, Town Attorney, or Communications Manager unless otherwise granted. She reviewed communications or interactions with the media and communications on public forums or social media platforms. Also discussed was the importance of providing accurate information and communication challenges.

- Accommodation Tax Publicity Spending and CVB Discussion

Ms. Braswell Edgerton reviewed State Accommodation Taxes (SATAX) and dissemination of the funds received by the Town. In discussing the 30% allocated to a tourism program and currently received by the Charleston Visitors Bureau (CVB), she reviewed the state requirements for the funds' expenditure and the funding amounts allocated to the CVB over the past ten years.

Ms. Braswell Edgerton stated while there is value in the relationship with the CVB and should be supported, there has been a growing desire to retain a portion of the funds to promote Kiawah as a community. She reviewed a conceptional outline of a mock Tourism Committee detailing membership, format, tasks, and required elements.

Councilmembers engaged in an in-depth discussion of the promotion done by the CVB, advertising and promotion-specific to Kiawah, the historical funding of the CVB, and clarification that allocation of 30% to tourism is state-mandated but at Council's discretion.

Mayor Labriola indicated there would be further discussions with staff and the CVB.

- COVID-19

Ms. Tillerson stated the Emergency Ordinance currently in place will expire on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and would be presented to the Council to consider the extension of the ordinance as is or make modifications.

Ms. Tillerson noted the two vaccines that have been quickly developed and now on the market. She noted that information received from DHEC (Department of Health and Environmental Control) was communicated to the community by eBlast and that data information, links, and the availability of vaccines could also be found on the Town's COVID 19 webpage. Updates are also obtained by attending bi-weekly calls with the Charleston County Emergency Management Division, which includes representatives from various agencies.

Ms. Tillerson indicated that from March 4, 2020, to January 17, 2021, Charleston County reported a total of 29,418 COVID cases. She reviewed the statistics on the percentage by population, average age, cases in the 29455-zip code and statewide, and hospital utilization statistics. She noted the last report she received showed a slight drop in reported cases, but a spike was seen after the holidays. Also discussed were efforts that have been made to have a vaccinations day on Kiawah.

- Short Term Rental, Plastics, and Metal Shovel Ordinances

Ms. Fox reviewed a breakdown of the type and number of citations issued by daytime code enforcement for emergency ordinance violations.

Mr. Sosnowski described the services provided as evening code enforcement and reviewed the type and number of warnings and tickets written during the hours of 5 pm to 1 am. In 2020 he stated there were a total of 6959 violations recorded. All STR violations are forwarded to Ms. Fox, who then notifies the rental agency, property manager, or authorized agent. He noted very few tickets issued during the year considered an educational phase to allow time to understand the ordinance. While the goal is compliance, rental agencies were notified that as of January 4<sup>th</sup>, tickets would be written at the discretion of the code enforcement officers.

In further discussion, Mr. Sosnowski reviewed the types of violations captured. He explained that those violations which the Community Association enforces are forwarded to livability and security for follow-up. Violations are forwarded to the Resort, Wildlife Department as required, and Sheriff's Department assistance is requested for those violations that involve illegal substances. Also discussed was the direct line that was established to address code enforcement complaints called in.

Ms. Tillerson stated after some amendments, the Short-Term Rental ordinance in place was working well. She explained modifications made to the licensing process to ensure that both managers and owners can be notified of any concerns or violations.

Ms. Tillerson indicated the ordinances banning single-use plastics and metal shovels were approved in the past year. She briefly reviewed the motivation and purpose for each ordinance along with the information and implementation process.

Mr. Edgerton explained the metal shovel ordinance regulates the size of the shovel rather than the size of the hole, making enforcement easier. He indicated that a strategy was used to educate and remind beachgoers not to leave holes behind. The ordinance was created primarily to benefit nesting turtles but also to mitigate public safety risks.

#### **Council & Committee Priorities (2021):**

- Public Safety

Councilmember Connelly stated that in her view, Public Safety policies and procedures are designed to improve residents' quality of life. Public Safety provides interagency collaboration, law enforcement, fire officials, emergency medical services, Beach Patrol and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team). She reviewed the deputies' role, credentials of members on the Public Safety Committee (PSC), and the agencies who participate in the monthly meetings.

Councilmember Connelly stated that one of PSC's goals is to continue to support the quality of life for all property owners and visitors through its enforcement work.

- Law Enforcement

Councilmember Connelly stated a major goal was the implementation of a Bike Patrol program for Kiawah. She indicated that bike patrols are perceived as less threatening, provide more citizen contact, have better property access, costs are reasonable and leave no carbon footprint. The two deputies participating are already assigned to the island will attend the required training program and hopefully begin at the start of the high season.

Councilmember Connelly stated the bike patrol deputies would be patrolling areas on the island not easily accessed with a vehicle, such as recreational areas and bike paths. She indicated that bike paths were of special concern due to their increased use, lack of enforcement, and the number of opportunities for accidents.

Councilmember Connelly stated the beach was another area frequently utilized by residents and visitors. She indicated that Kiawah's Beach Patrol was not only trained as lifeguards and a goal of the PSC was for Beach Patrol to achieve DHEC Certification. Mr. Edgerton stated that Beach Patrol presently holds several accreditations in addition to seeking DHEC Certification. He explained that Beach Patrol would be interwoven in the pre-hospital response system, and resources dispatch automatically dispatched with fire or EMS for any area calls with the certification.

Councilmember Connelly reviewed the number and type of calls that Beach Patrol responded to in the past year.

In response to an additional question on Bike Patrol, Ms. Tillerson explained the two deputies would not have a set schedule. With bike racks on their vehicles throughout the day, they can park, use the bike to patrol the bike paths or beach, then return to their vehicles. Also discussed were speed limits and motorized bicycles.

- Arts Council Board and Committee

Councilmember Connelly stated that the Arts Council meets regularly to discuss the status of COVID to evaluate in-person events three months in advance rather than canceling the entire season. She reviewed the virtual events that have been very successful and the events planned for February and March. Events planned for the 2021-2022 season are having to be rescheduled due to the pandemic.

- Audit Committee

Councilmember Connelly stated the Audit Committee comprised four exceptionally qualified members to provide oversight over the Town's internal controls and risk management. The committee reviews the Town's financial statements, monitors compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, ethical standards, and monitors the Town's auditors' engagement, independence, and performance.

- Audit of Compliance & Emergency Readiness – At this time, no discussion.

#### **Council & Committee Priorities (2021):**

- Johns Island Roads

Mayor Pro Tem Prickett stated that a key focus for the upcoming years is Johns Island roads. He will be joining Mr. Taylor, the Planning Director, who has taken the lead on the road issue for some time and, as a member of the Council, would be taking a more active role in advocating improvement.

Mayor Pro Tem Prickett stated that two small single-lane roads provide 100% access on and off Kiawah and Seabrook Islands. Traffic flow on these roads can be severely restricted by any number of events and can create a dangerous situation for many reasons. Work will have to be done together with Seabrook and Johns Island residents to see what improvements can be made.

Mayor Pro Tem Prickett stated two major proposed improvements could make a difference over the next decade. He stated that the I-526 extension project is fully approved on the County level but may take more than a decade if successful. The second project that could have a more immediate impact is the Main Road Corridor Project. He noted the project is approved, funded by the half-cent sales tax, and supported by legislation at the County level that stipulates the funds must be used to improve the traffic and the capability to handle traffic on Main and Bohicket Roads.

Mayor Pro Tem Prickett gave a detailed review of the Main Road Corridor project segments.

- **Segment A** - Us 17 / Main Road Intersection – Chisolm / Main Road Improvements
  - Funded and approved
- **Segment B** - Main Road Improvements – River Road to Maybank Highway
  - Not approved and not funded
- **Segment C** - Bohicket Road Improvements – Maybank Highway to Betsy Kerrison Parkway
  - Funded and approved with five alternatives

Mayor Pro Tem Prickett stated five alternatives were released for public comment on Segment C. In addition to individual comments, the Town developed a statement not specifying an alternative but outlining guidelines for driving a decision.

- Finance Department
  - Budget FY22 Kickoff Discussion

Ms. Szubert stated the budget or financial plan is the most important document approved by Council, is required by state law, and is based on a fiscal year beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ending on June 30<sup>th</sup>. She reviewed the steps taken in the budget process, which begins with reviewing:

- Goals or incentives for the coming year
- Policies in place
- Revenue projections
- Drafting Operating Budget
- Capital planning and budget
- Council Review
- Public Hearing
- Approval after two readings

Ms. Szubert also reviewed the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget Calendar, which includes the State ATAX Committee's funding recommendations. She indicated that the quarterly overview of the budget and actual expenditures would be presented at the January Ways and Means Committee meeting. Also reviewed were the Town's revenue sources and funds.

- o Business License Process Re-Engineering

Ms. Szubert stated that business license fees, taxes levied on any business doing business on the island accounts for 44% of the Town's revenues. She stated that a new law approved in September 2020, the SC General Assembly passed a Business Licenses Tax Standardization Act, which takes effect January 1, 2022. She reviewed the requirements and the need to adopt a new business license in the coming year to incorporate a new expiration date.

- Ways and Means Committee


Mayor Pro Tem Prickett reviewed the new schedule for the Ways and Means Committee, which will meet the Monday before Town Council at 3:00 pm. He stated the Ways and Means Committee's responsibilities are to make recommendations to Town Council on budgets, funding methods, any procurement contracts, or any other financial matters facing the Town.

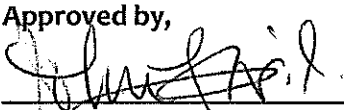
Mayor Pro Tem Prickett stated there would be two items that will be worked on by the Ways and Means Committee in addition to its normal duties. The first is to outline and detail the steps taken in the event of a critical financial emergency, such as a major storm hitting the island directly having an extreme impact on expenses and revenues. The second is to examine how the Town is investing its money. He stated that, by Law, there are limitations on where money can be invested, so the committee will review all investment options to optimize duration and not taking additional risks.

**Wrap up**

Ms. Tillerson indicated there were no questions or comments submitted from the public.

**Mayor Pro Tem Prickett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:33 pm. Councilmember Prickett seconded the motion and was unanimously passed.**

Submitted by,  
  
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Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John D. Labriola, Mayor

3-5-2021  
Date