

**TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND**  
**2022 Council Strategic Planning Retreat**  
**Municipal Center Council Chambers**  
**January 13, 2022; 1:00 pm**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order:** *Mayor Labriola called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.*

**Present at meeting:** John D. Labriola, *Mayor*  
Dan Prickett, *Mayor Pro Tem*  
Maryanne Connelly, *Councilmember*  
John Moffitt, *Councilmember*

**Present Via Zoom:** Dr. Scott Parker, *Councilmember*

**Also Present:** Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*  
Joe Wilson, *Town Attorney*  
Petra Reynolds, *Town Clerk*  
John Taylor, Jr., *Planning Manager*  
Jim Jordan, *Wildlife Conservation Manager*

**Opening Comments:**

Ms. Tillerson indicated that today's Retreat would include two presentations from staff to discuss their priorities, one from John Taylor, Planning Manager, and Mr. Jim Jordan, Wildlife Conservation Manager. Also on the agenda is communications priorities. Because Ms. Braswell, Communications Manager, has been so busy preparing for the Retreat, she will make her presentation at a later date.

**Planning Department Priorities (2022)**

**Priorities:**

- Introduce Annexation and Growth Management Strategies
- To Discuss Marsh Management Plan
- To Discuss the Process of Updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Taylor stated that planning and zoning operations are split into short-term or day-to-day zoning administration, permit review, and long-range planning. The Planning Department's priority for 2022 is to focus on the long-range side of those functions.

Mr. Taylor stated that the concept of "Beyond the Gates" was introduced in the past year and will be a continuing overarching theme. As the island moves into a redevelopment stage with less properties of undeveloped lands and increased pressure on the boundaries of town limits and along Betsy Kerrison Parkway, the question becomes what role does the Town play in the development of unincorporated Johns Island. Some of those roles are annexation and involvement in the roads and transportation network.

The second overarching theme is Adaptive Management Planning. With the concerns with flood mitigation and sea-level rise, which, if not addressed, could have a long-term detrimental public safety, environmental, and livability impact. There is a need to continue to focus on resiliency.

Mr. Taylor indicated that efforts to Prioritize Long-Range Planning begin with a review of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, which the Planning Commission will be doing in the coming year.

Major goals include:

### **Regional Transportation Network**

- ➔ Strengthen regional planning relationships

In reviewing the roads proposal, Mr. Taylor stated that Charleston County introduced the Main Road Corridor Project, from Bees Ferry Road to Betsy Kerrison Parkway:

- The primary purpose of the project is to:
  - Reduce congestion
  - Increase capacity on Main Road/Bohicket Road from Maybank Highway to Betsy Kerrison Parkway.
- The secondary purpose of the project is to:
  - Provide opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel throughout the project area safely.

Mr. Taylor went through the three-segments proposed for the Main Road Corridor Project, focusing on the alternatives for Segment "C" and the work done by the Town in building a framework of support in the community for a preferred alternative. Mr. Taylor presented the Town's concept for improvements within project study area of the corridor project tag lined "The Sea Islands Way" .

- Segment "A" – Bees Ferry to the River Road/Main Road intersection
  - Preferred alternative identified and in the design phase
- Segment "B" – River Road/Main Road intersection to Maybank Highway
  - Project inactive – improvements would not necessarily be needed with the completion of Mark Clark Extension
- Segment "C" – Maybank Highway to Betsy Kerrison Parkway
  - Working towards a preferred alternative

### **Annexation and Growth Management**

- ➔ Review existing procedures for annexation and planned developments and develop an annexation strategy

Mr. Taylor stated that the review of annexation and zoning began at the first workshop on January 11<sup>th</sup> and will be continued on February 8<sup>th</sup>. He reviewed some of the concepts expected to be introduced as part of the discussion.

- Enhance review process by which zoning can be established in sync with annexation petition
- Increase opportunity for public engagement
- Ensure timeline is fair and reasonable to community and developer
- Consider growth management strategy as part of the annexation process
  - Include fiscal impact analysis for budget and potential capital expenditures
  - List of priorities and property types to consider for annexation
- Continue to educate the community on development and planning processes

### **Development / Design Standards**

- ➔ Define development standards assuring future developments that are not subject to existing development agreement standards are compatible with Kiawah

Mr. Taylor reviewed the development of design standards. He stated that they would provide the Town with some level of protection for properties outside of the scope of the Development Agreement.

- Kiawah Island Parkway Overlay
  - Buffers to protect the character
- Tree and Landscape Ordinance
- Sign Ordinance

### **Formalize Marsh Management Plan**

- ➔ The purpose of the Marsh Management Plans is to explore methods of protection for the island's marsh, including management strategies for managing the interface between highlands and critical area that is vital to a healthy salt marsh

- Focus on FMSLR Adaptive Management Plan next phases
  - Memorialize AMP for collaborative Kiawah resiliency
  - Marsh Management Plan
    - Consultant to develop a Comprehensive Marsh Management Plan

## Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Taylor stated that the Town's Comprehensive Plan is based on state law, the 1994 Planning Act, which gives local communities/municipalities the jurisdiction to establish zoning. The Comprehensive Plan does not have technical zoning requirements but forms a basis for zoning.

Mr. Taylor reviewed the elements in the Comprehensive Plan, noting the addition of a "Resilience" element required by the state, updates done in 2018, and preparing for the plan review by the Planning Commission expected to begin in March.

- **Prepare for Comprehensive Plan Review**
  - Organizational Structure
    - Town Staff and Committees
  - Review Data & Land Development Patterns
    - Remaining Entitlements
    - Update Future Land Use Map (Ocean Park)
    - Freshfields and Betsy Kerrison Parkway
  - Community Facilities Element
    - KICA, Berkeley Electric Infrastructure Improvements
  - 2019 HR&A Housing Study
  - Restructure for Resilient Element
  - Kiawah Conservancy Projects
  - Incorporate Beach and Marsh Management Plan

## Wildlife Department Priorities (2022)

Mr. Jordan stated that his department's goal continues to be to maintain a functioning natural Ecosystem on Kiawah in perpetuity. The overall strategy to maintain the ecosystem is to focus on the species most important to it, categorized as:

- **Keystone species** – vital for ecosystem health, can change habitat
  - Bobcats
  - Alligators
  - White-tailed deer
- **Indicator species** – used to monitor environmental changes, assess the efficacy of management and provide warning signals for impending ecological shifts
  - Migratory Songbirds
  - Marsh Sparrows
  - Painted Buntings
  - Wilson's Plovers

### Priorities:

- 📉 Return bobcat numbers to historic levels

Mr. Jordan stated bobcats are a Keystone species and vital to the ecosystem. They provide natural control of deer and rodent populations. A rapid decline in bobcat numbers began in 2017 due primarily to second-generation anticoagulants (SGAs). With a decline in adult mortality rates and successful kitten production in 2021, the bobcat population has stabilized and started to increase.

Mr. Jordon discussed the impact of SGAs on the bobcat population and other Kiawah wildlife. He indicated that bobcats and other wildlife testing began in October 2019. Sixty-four animals from seven different species were tested to date, confirming a 73% exposure rate. All the bobcats tested showed exposure to SGAs; the concentration of exposure decreased over the past year

Focuses or Initiatives for the coming year:

- Support current Clemson research study over the next four years
  - \$50k committed in FY 21-22
  - Additional funding is needed for the next three fiscal years
- Continue and expand the Bobcat Guardian program and outreach efforts
  - Questionnaire in the Business License portal
  - Regime/Property Owner education sessions to be provided by the Clemson Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)

📌 Maintain deer population at historic, acceptable densities (60-80 deer/square mile)

Mr. Jordan stated white-tailed deer, also a Keystone species, can impact the environment by what they eat and are a public safety concern. Coinciding with the bobcat decline, there was a rapid increase in deer population beginning in 2018, reaching a density of 123 deer per square mile in 2020 and 142 deer per square mile by 2021.

Focuses or Initiatives for the coming year:

- Continue biannual spotlight surveys (Fall/Winter)
- Deer Management Plan approved by Town Council in April 2020
  - Sharpshooting
  - State permit and tags (Sept 15-March 1)
  - Meat donated to charity
  - 100 deer removed in February 2021
  - Annual harvest until population goal is achieved
    - 200 deer are scheduled to be harvested before March 1, 2022

📌 Increase use of native plants in landscaping (80% native)

Mr. Jordan stated that native plants are of critical importance to Kiawah's Ecosystem. Over centuries, local insects and animals have adapted to feed, lay eggs, and take advantage of native plants.

- Sustain pollinators vital for fruit production and provide high-quality food and shelter for 10 to 15 times as many species of wildlife as non-native plants.
- Reduced use of fertilizers and pesticides
- Provide essential watershed protection, helping natural aquifers recharge, serving to filter water naturally flowing into rivers and estuaries, lessening erosion and flooding.
- Resistant to saltwater intrusion from flooding and storm surge

📌 Eliminate invasive, non-native plants

- Many provide no wildlife value (other than cover)
- Require more fertilizers and pesticides
- Susceptible to climate changes (saltwater intrusion)
- Several are very invasive, destroying native habitats
  - Chinese Tallow Tree
  - Giant Reed (Phragmites)

Mr. Jordan stated that the Town first began targeting the removal of Tallow Trees in 2010. The efforts have been successful, but seeds can remain in the environment for up to 100 years and require frequent monitoring and treatment.

Focuses or Initiatives for the coming year:

- Reinvalidate and expand Grow Native Program
  - Town Hall Nature Trail
  - Events, Promotions
  - Urge local growers to provide native plants
- Encourage 80% native plants in all landscaping projects on Kiawah
  - ARB, KICA, Club, Resort, Town
- Eliminate Chinese Tallow and Phragmites
  - Continue control programs (\$30k per year)

⬇️ Protect native habitat from sea level rise impacts

Further discussion included the status of the coyote and armadillo populations on the island, Chinese Tallow and Phragmites control programs by island entities, beach erosion, and the dolphin outreach and education program.

### Wrap up

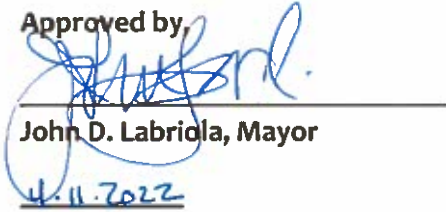
*Mayor Labriola adjourned the meeting at 3:10 pm.*

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



John D. Labriola, Mayor

4.11.2022

Date