



**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MONDAY, JULY 8, 2019 – 4:00 P.M.**

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Holden Beach, North Carolina met for a Special Meeting on Monday, July 8, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Public Assembly. Present were Mayor J. Alan Holden, Mayor Pro Tem John Fletcher; Commissioners Mike Sullivan, Pat Kwiatkowski, Joe Butler and Peter Freer; Town Manager David W. Hewett; Town Clerk Heather Finnell; and Assistant Town Manager Christy Ferguson. Also present was Fran Way from Applied Technology and Management.

Mayor Holden called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Town Manager Hewett introduced Christine Brayman.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No comments were made.

**DISCUSSION OF FEDERAL BEACH NOURISHMENT ISSUES WITH CHRISTINE BRAYMAN, DEPUTY DISTRICT ENGINEER FOR PROGRAMS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT, US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

Ms. Brayman provided information on how the Corps gets a project into the budget. She provided a diagram and explained the budget cycle and where they are in the process. There are two ways of getting something going like a coastal storm risk management project at the Town. One of the ways is by a work plan. When there is a major disaster, Congress appropriates funds. A few weeks ago, Congress appropriated and President Trump signed into law a disaster bill for communities that were impacted by hurricanes Florence and Michael and a couple of typhoons in the Pacific. Ms. Brayman said a project for Holden Beach would fall into that category. She stated the Corps has \$35 million in investigation funds to study projects that were impacted by Florence, Michael or the typhoons. Wilmington probably submitted about 10 studies. Studies now are for \$3 million in three years. It is their new commitment to get things through the pipeline. They submitted a project for a study under the supplement for Holden Beach based on the old 1966 project. When they were having discussions with Atlanta, the person in charge in Atlanta suggested putting it through under construction. There is an authorized project; there needs to be a validation report. In construction the Corps has \$740 million to be spent on projects. Ms. Brayman talked about existing projects.

The federal government will come in on the supplemental and pay for 100% of the first cost of construction. They will build the beach 100%, with no cost sharing from the Town. The non-federal

sponsor is always responsible for lands, easements and rights-of-way. She provided some examples of what this could include. When you have federal funding you need to ensure you have public beach accesses. The access point is access to the beach about once every quarter mile and about 10 parking spots in that vicinity. There is a little bit of flex in that, but you need to have clear access for the general public. You need to have significant parking and there is a peak parking requirement that would look at an average over time. Ms. Brayman said these are the details the Corps would discuss with the Town whether a study or construction is done. She said there are a lot of rules to the supplemental money. The new rules aren't written, but based on the 2018 rules a feasibility cost sharing agreement would need to be signed or a project partnership agreement within 60 days. Ms. Brayman stated now is our chance if we want something to happen. The Town has a chance at some of the supplemental funding. She doesn't have a lot of detail on the project from 1966. The bottom line is it calls for nourishment on 40,000 linear feet and it specified a berm and a dune profile, dune height and elevation. There wasn't much other engineering that happened in 1966.

Commissioner Freer said right now we don't have an agreement and we get disaster recovery through FEMA. He said the Town would be replacing the current engineered beach and it wouldn't be covered by FEMA anymore. We had two hurricanes and are waiting on a \$20 - \$25 million reimbursement for the engineered beach. He asked the impact on that and how the new agreement would work to replenish the beach after a storm. Ms. Brayman replied she would need to look into the FEMA question. Town Manager Hewett said what the Town has been told in the past was that feds don't reimburse feds. Commissioner Freer explained the Central Reach Project. Ms. Brayman said she doesn't think there would be an impact for an event that the Town already spent money on. Commissioner Freer said FEMA is going to reimburse the Town for the two storms. His understanding is there is no end date. Ms. Brayman agreed that unless policies are changed if the Town keeps maintaining the beach there is no end date on it. She said there is no guarantee of timeliness with the FEMA reimbursements. Ms. Brayman said she would assume the current engineered beach would be included in the Corps' profile, but she is not sure. She explained disasters are normally covered at 100% if a Project Information Report is approved. She talked about towns that have received projects after a disaster. Ocean Isle didn't qualify after Florence because they had so little damage. There is a certain criteria you need to meet. After a disaster, they do a report to request the funding. Once it is approved, 100% of the damage is reimbursed.

Ms. Brayman confirmed that if the Corps does the project where they restore the beach, then that portion is no longer eligible for FEMA reimbursements in a subsequent storm. Commissioner Sullivan asked if the project the Corps is proposing can only encompass the area of the beach that isn't currently an engineered beach so the Town can retain our ability to get FEMA reimbursement, while gaining the benefit of the Corps' project. Ms. Brayman replied it is for 40,000 linear feet so you would need to look at if you want your money from FEMA or the Corps. Commissioner Sullivan asked if the project could be structured so the engineered beach isn't included in the project, just the two ends of the island are. Ms. Brayman responded that her gut feeling is no, but she will ask. Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher asked if the Town would have defeated the engineered beach by not maintaining the rules of maintenance for the engineered status if the Town were to do the Corps' project and then wanted to go back to FEMA. Town Manager Hewett answered there is a bundle of activities that are necessary to maintain the status. Ms. Brayman said she can't speak for FEMA. She suggested if the burden of maintaining it wasn't much she would keep doing it. The Corps does

monitoring, but it may not be as much as what FEMA wants. She doesn't know the difference in FEMA and Corps monitoring.

Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher asked what happens if there is severe erosion. Ms. Brayman said this funding process is just for named storms. For any projects or studies they have, they do look at long-term erosion. That is a component of it. They look at long-term erosion and storm induced erosion. Commissioner Butler said erosion factors are a hot button for the Town, especially on the east end where we know the erosion factors are greater. He explained it is important to know the threshold of the erosion. He stated the Town didn't receive the sand replenishment on the east end. He went there yesterday at high tide and noticed there wasn't much sand on the beach so that threw off a red flag for him.

Commissioner Butler asked about the details associated with the project that was supported for the Town. Ms. Brayman said the authorizing language is as simple as it is 40,000'; the berm is at 15' above mean sea level; and the dune has a top width of 25' and an elevation 20' above mean sea level. She is not sure how that relates to the current project or the profile of the current beach. Ms. Brayman said the only community that had a project that was completed is Ocean Isle. They had it constructed. No other beach has had any construction. The Town's project was authorized, but not constructed. Commissioner Freer said east end erosion on Ocean Isle is terrible. Ms. Brayman asked if that is where they are going to put their terminal groin. Commissioner Freer said they are going to extremes to try and resolve that issue. The Town decided not to do that. They have other permits to supplement the plan. He asked what happened to their plan. Ms. Brayman replied that she is not aware of issues, other than at the end of the inlet. That wasn't part of the project. They didn't even have damage from Florence so she would say the project is working. Commissioner Kwiatkowski said the project is not tip to tip of the island. Ms. Brayman added that the Town's wouldn't be either because they are high hazard inlet zones for a reason. She doesn't know the exact profile of the 40,000 linear feet, but that amount will not cover tip to tip. Town Manager Hewett stated it is 2,500 feet from each inlet. You also would need to remember that in 1966 the inlets were in a different place. Commissioner Sullivan said based on that, what he asked early isn't viable because he was talking about placing the project on both ends of the island and it is now being said there wouldn't be a project that includes the ends of the island. Ms. Brayman confirmed that is correct. Commissioner Sullivan said the Town would need to decide if we would prefer to have the Corps' project or reimbursements.

Commissioner Freer asked what the next step the Corps is asking of the Town. Ms. Brayman replied that they have the letter of intent. They are now saying they will try to budget for it. It is in the supplemental list that the Wilmington District sent to the headquarters in Atlanta. She said if the Town gets selected, they will have about 60 days to make a decision on whether to proceed. The only place she sees a potential risk is the parking and access that the Corps would require. If the Town gets chosen for the study and not construction they can look at a lot more things. The public beach accesses would need to be every quarter mile and have approximately 10 spaces. The Corps does not have funding for that. Town Manager Hewett said some of the guidance received from the real estate office is you don't start acquiring easements or parking areas until there is an authorization. Commissioner Sullivan asked if the quarter mile is the distance from one access point to another or the distance that a person would have to travel. Town Manager Hewett said this

question has come up before. We have been in the GRR process for a while and a lot of the data already exists, to include where access points are and where at Holden Beach they would be required. Mr. Way said you would need to look at the GRR. On the west end there might be a couple of questionable spots, but he thinks they are pretty minor. Ms. Brayman said the intent is to not make anyone walk more than a quarter mile.

Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher said the bottom line is that both programs, FEMA and the Corps, are subject to appropriations annually. Ms. Brayman agreed.

Mr. Way asked if a borrow area was defined for the 1966 project. Ms. Brayman replied she doesn't think so, but she would have to look. They don't have a plan or funding right now. Mr. Way inquired about the timeline for the project. Ms. Brayman responded she would assume the project would be under \$50 million. In that case, they would have about nine months to do their preconstruction engineering and design and four years to complete the construction. It may not take that long, but that was the guidance that was given for the supplemental in 2018. Mr. Way asked if there was a volume provided in 1966. Ms. Brayman responded she hasn't dug into the 1966 information.

Mr. Way asked if the study would be for another 50-Year Project. Ms. Brayman said the Corps gave the Town two tickets. One is to do the study and the other is to construct what was proposed in 1966. She doesn't think the Town would be chosen for both. Mr. Way asked if the previous project got to a completed authorization. Ms. Brayman stated they got about 2/3 of the way through it. Mr. Way asked if the same thing could happen this time. Ms. Brayman responded that she hopes not. Town Manager Hewett said the supplemental funding actually appropriates the total amount required. Ms. Brayman reviewed the process. Town Manager Hewett said the previous study is all lengths and dollars, there are no volumes in there. That information isn't in the information that Ms. Brayman gave him; there may be an attachment. Mr. Way offered the assistance of his company if the Corps needs it and the Town agrees to it.

Commissioner Freer said if the Town does a study, we would still do whatever we do now in parallel. As he understands it, the project could never be funded. He asked if FEMA would still be validated. Town Manager Hewett said until you spend federal Corps' construction money you are still maintaining it with your own funds. Ms. Brayman said you could go beyond that and say spending federal construction money to award the first initial contact.

Beverly Compton said it seems this is a positive thing. She asked what \$66 million would be in today's dollars. Ms. Brayman explained it was \$6 million in 1966. A simple CPI is not appropriate here. They would need to get somebody with cost engineering background for these kinds of projects to escalate that. Mrs. Compton asked if there is a definition of public access. She said they rent their house in the summer and asked if that is considered public access. Ms. Brayman replied no, it has to be official accesses, adjacent to properties that go from the street to the beach, with parking associated. Town Manager Hewett added that the situation being described is private access. Commissioner Kwiatkowski asked how far away the public parking has to be. Town Manager Hewett responded it is a quarter of a mile. Commissioner Freer said we allow parking in the rights-of-way. Ms. Brayman said it doesn't need to be sophisticated. Town Manager Hewett said Ocean Isle Beach

has a mix of parking that meets the requirements. Ms. Brayman talked about parking in Kure Beach and other areas that meet the requirements.

Mayor Holden said the Town wants to work with the Corps. Ms. Brayman being here today is a good example of how we can exchange ideas and communicate.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher to adjourn at 5:09 p.m.; second by Commissioner Butler; approved by unanimous vote.*

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J. Alan Holden, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Heather Finnell, Town Clerk