

Nags Head Local Business Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

October 15, 2015 Minutes

Nags Head Town Hall; Conference Room

Committee Members Present: Annette Ratzenberger, Anne Farmer, Bobbie Stager, Gayle Drummond, Garry Oliver, Jody Crosswhite, Commissioner Renee Cahoon, Deputy Town Manager Andy Garman and Deputy Planning Director Kelly Wyatt.

Public Present: No members of the public present.

Commissioner Renee Cahoon opened the meeting and welcomed the committee members noting that there will not be a meeting of this committee through the months of November and December, 2015 and that a meeting for January, 2016 would be set before adjourning.

Adoption of Minutes: September 24, 2015 Joint Workshop of Nags Head Local Business Ad Hoc Committee and the Nags Head Planning Board. Jody Crosswhite made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Garry Oliver seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Staff members, Andy Garman and Kelly Wyatt gave a brief reminder of the main topics discussed at the Joint Workshop with the Planning Board and Shannon Brooks, County Extension Director. Committee members in attendance expressed that it was a helpful and productive workshop and felt Ms. Brooks provided great information, guidance and beneficial resources in moving forward. Mr. Garman continued discussions on the proposed ordinance, detailing the overall goal and purpose of the revised language. This includes buffering incompatible uses; softening the appearance of commercial parking lots, incentivizing natural, native and locally adaptive landscaping and to provide flexibility for owners to design natural landscapes with less focus on specific linear spacing requirements. Mr. Garman went over the framework of the ordinance and Kelly Wyatt presented information on a draft plant list broken down into planting zones (beach, highway and soundside), approximate mature growth size and evergreen or deciduous status. Jody Crosswhite asked staff to explain why there was a need delineate evergreen vs. deciduous. Staff noted it was relevant in that the regulations require a certain percentage of tree species plantings to be evergreen. The committee felt as though the proposed ordinance changes should be simplistic, easy to read and understand and such that staff could effectively enforce the regulations. Annette Ratzenberger and Commissioner Renee Cahoon both stated they felt it would be best to have the guidelines and suggested planting practices as a separate document, an evolving document that the actual code would reference as suggestions and recommendations only, not requirements. Anne Farmer was in agreement and felt that in addition to having the guidelines as an appendix to the code it should also be posted online so that not just builders and developers would benefit but anyone interested could have access to the information. Staff noted that it would be provided online and when completed we could place a note in the next newsletter making citizens aware of the changes and new information. Gayle Drummond noted that such information could be

helpful to new residents who are simply interested in the local environment and good planting practices for the unique conditions of the island. The committee inquired more about the newsletter with suggestions on other items to include that would benefit the Town as a whole including information on flood insurance, bulk trash/item pick-up and the recycling program.

Mr. Garman stated that Vegetation Guidelines would contain the planting profiles for recommended plantings and cross-sections of a variety of clustering of plantings. Providing the cross-sections could be beneficial in that engineers often provide landscape plans to meet codes but little thought or creativity as to the types of plantings and aesthetics of them. The committee discussed whether language was needed to address a desired mixture of plantings and various sizes of plantings (small, medium and large). Committee members were in agreement that the beachfront is likely not a welcome environment for trees in that few could tolerate the wind and salt sprays. Shrubs and grasses tend to thrive more along the beachfront and tend to not pose as much of a problem to overgrowth and obstruction of visibility and sight lines. Several committee members noted that large trees tend to look out of place on the beachfront.

Jody Crosswhite noted that staff should give consideration to plantings around signage; staff noted the new ordinance could certainly address this concern in that smaller plantings could be provided around signage while clusters of larger plantings could be along the perimeters. Committee members felt this ordinance would result in less business cutting down or topping off their vegetation, that they would allow vegetation to grow to mature height when given the flexibility to place the plantings in locations with light sight obstructions.

Committee members noted that in addition to the variety of plantings recommended it would be good to have an understanding of the local availability of the plantings, what are local nurseries carrying or keeping in stock and the ease of obtaining them. Staff noted that we would attempt to contact nurseries and inquire about availability. Annette Ratzenberger suggested inquiring about sizes also in terms of minimum height of the vegetation at planting and timing of planting. Certain times of the year are better for planting; consideration may need to be given to providing a mechanism to allow businesses to operate while waiting for the appropriate planting season to ensure the success of the plantings taking root and thriving. Staff noted that there currently is an allowance to place a bond with the Town for the amount of the cost of planting plus an additional percentage for those types of situations.

Committee members discussed proposed incentives for providing irrigation as Ms. Brooks noted that all plantings need attention in the first few years and proper irrigation and moisture is key. Mr. Garman suggested a reduction in planting material when irrigation is provided. While there would be slightly fewer plantings, the existing plantings would be healthier and heartier.

Committee members noted that advising and guiding the development of this ordinance was difficult and time consuming but so incredibly important. Staff thanked Committee members for the guidance and noted that updates as this moved through the Planning Board process would be provided.

Commissioner Cahoon informed the committee that the next meeting would be devoted to discussing outdoor displays and the appearance of the Town. Commissioner Cahoon thanked all the committee members for their participation and the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 2:30 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.