



BIS COMMITTEE WILL HOST A BEACH PROJECTS FORUM MAY 21ST

Topsail Beach Citizens & Property Owners -
Ask Yourself these Beach Project Questions:

- How much of your town taxes is dedicated to maintaining our Beach, the Inlet, and Topsail Sound waterways?
- What's the difference between an *erosion control program* and a *storm damage mitigation program* and what are the benefits of each?
- Which one is Topsail Beach following now?
- How is the Army Corps of Engineers involved in each program?
- What is an *engineered beach*? Why is it important to have one?
- What are the roles of the town's Beach, Inlet, & Sound (BIS) Committee and of Chris Gibson our coastal engineer?

Inside this issue:

- BIS Community Forum
- 2016 Strategic Planning Priorities
- Getting to Know Mike Rose, Town Manager
- Dog Ordinance
- Town Center's Flags

Want to know more? Please join the BIS Committee and Chris Gibson for an informative community forum.



Community Forum

on

*Topsail Beach's
Beach Projects -
Past & Future*

Saturday 21 May 2016

10:00 – 11:30 am

Topsail Beach Town Hall

Come hear the BIS Committee and Chris speak to these questions and many more. They will outline our town's future options, and provide direct answers to your questions.

(Cont'd on next page)

Forum Preview:

Our Beach, the Inlet for ocean access, and the nautical playground of the Sound are Topsail Beach's critical natural and economic assets. The Town Board of Commissioners is responsible for prudent stewardship of these assets, aided by The Beach, Inlet and Sound (BIS) Committee, which objectively evaluates beach project options and makes recommendations to the Board for future activities. The BIS Committee also fosters communication with the public on these matters: that's the purpose of this Community Forum -- to discuss our town's past beach projects, what has been achieved so far, and to frame options that the town is evaluating for the future.

The presentation itself should last about an hour, including a short informational video about the most recent project, followed by an open-ended question and answer period to factually address your questions and concerns.

Necessary jargon & unavoidable bureaucracy:

Maintaining an attractive beach seems simple enough: ("Take sand from here and put it over there"), but it quickly gets mired in technical terms, and in a web of titles and abbreviations for State and Federal laws, agencies and regulations, and yes, a bit of politics. The Committee has assembled a handy Glossary of these; copies will be available at the Forum. Meanwhile, here are a few key items, needed to finish this preview:

Erosion Control Project - a project where sand is placed on the beach to replace sand lost due to on-going natural erosion. Sand is placed from the toe of the dune seaward.

Hurricane Damage Mitigation Project - a project that includes not only placing sand on the beach as in an Erosion Control Project above but also using sand to build a large reinforcing dune in front of the current dune structure, specially designed to absorb and dissipate the energy of high waves and storm surge. A strong dune system is important to protecting property during storms where a storm surge is present that could breach the natural dune.

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

USACE - United States Army Corps of Engineers

Program - A planned series of projects, designed and managed for a specific purpose (either Erosion Control or Hurricane Damage Mitigation), over a stated number of years.

30 Year Beach Program – A series of Erosion Control projects developed and implemented by the Town lasting 30 years, with no regular federal funding.

50 Year Beach Program – A USACE-designed and controlled Hurricane Mitigation project lasting 50 years, with shared federal and local funding.

FEMA Engineered Beach – A designation by FEMA recognizing a beach municipality's established erosion control plan that includes a schedule and local funding for sand replacement at regular intervals, but also provides FEMA funding for sand replacement after certain severe storms.

NC Shallow Draft Inlet Grant – A capped grant from North Carolina that triples local funds to keep certain small inlets, including Topsail, along the NC coast navigable.

Past Projects:

Topsail Beach has been very proactive in developing and implementing a plan to stabilize the erosion on our beach. Though work had been in progress for several years toward meeting the extensive prerequisites for the Federal 50 Year Program, the first physical beach nourishment project was done in 2010-2011. Called variously the Emergency Beach Project, or simply the Interim Project, and funded with town and state funds, it was undertaken to stabilize beach erosion even as the town continued to pursue the 50-year hurricane mitigation program. It was the seed that grew into our present 30-Year Erosion Control Program.

The Emergency Project was completed to the specifications required to qualify our beach as a FEMA Engineered Beach. That was fortunate, because shortly after the town received the FEMA designation Hurricane Irene passed just offshore and caused significant erosion. An application was made to FEMA and federal funds were committed to replace the sand lost.

The second and third beach projects were really one: a small sand placement in 2012 and a larger placement in 2014-2015 covering the entire beach, together called the Hurricane Irene Project. They were paid for with the FEMA commitment, local taxes, and a NC Shallow Draft Inlet grant. Sand dredged from the Inlet was placed on the beach in addition to sand removed from Topsail Creek and Banks Channel.

During the forum, we will discuss how these projects have contributed to minimizing property loss, improving the beach appearance, helping avoid some proposed flood insurance premium increases, and maybe, even raised our property values! We trust you will be satisfied that these projects were successful and achieved their stated goals and objectives.



Future Projects:

The Town is exploring options available for a larger hurricane damage mitigation program, either through a local plan or through the Federal 50-Year Program. The two options are very similar in their intent, but differ markedly in control and funding. Their initial construction is expensive (about 2.5 times the size of the second part of the Hurricane Irene project). If the past projects have been successful, why is the larger program necessary? It's a matter of degree. We have been quite lucky for nearly two decades. If a hurricane merely

brushes by our coast, the current erosion control program will provide decent protection, but not against one packing a 2+ foot storm surge. We'll explain why in the forum.

The USACE has conducted economic studies evaluating actual damage results after storms. These show that beach towns with hurricane damage mitigation projects do suffer significantly reduced property damage compared to those with no protection. In the case of Topsail Beach, the USACE estimates that every \$1 in project cost saves \$3.5 in potential property damage. These type estimates have been validated in the many beach projects that the USACE has undertaken nationally over the past decades. We will share data collected after Hurricane Fran and Hurricane Sandy comparing damage done in areas with and without mitigation programs.

There are some other benefits relative to reducing the number of non-conforming lots, insurance premiums and property values. Municipal shoreline erosion and property protection programs are increasingly important to new buyers on the island, spurred by the ongoing discussion of future sea level rise and the recent damages suffered in Surf City and North Topsail Beach as Hurricane Joaquin passed offshore last summer.

Our town is committed to continuing evaluation of long-term options, and finding the one most economically viable, sustainable, and provides effective protection to town residents, property, and infrastructure. The track record so far is impressive for a small town such as ours, done without incurring any debt while maintaining the lowest property taxes on the island.

We look forward to welcoming you at the Forum. Please bring a neighbor. We will try to answer any questions you have.

Note: If you wish to refresh your thoughts about anything at the forum, or are unable to attend at all, both the presentation/discussion and the complete BIS Beach Projects Glossary will be available on the Town website www.topsailbeach.org, as are all issues of *Topsail Tides*.

ANNUAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS STRATEGIC PLANNING PRIORITIES



(From left to right: Town Manager: Mike Rose, Mayor: Howard Braxton Jr., Commissioners: Linda Stipe, Tom Eggleston, Steve Smith, Morton Blanchard and Julian Bone)

One of the events that kick off the annual budget cycle is the Annual Board Retreat, held this year on February 11. The purpose of the retreat is to publicly discuss goals and set action

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priorities for the current year and beyond. Once priorities are established, they can be incorporated into the budget process to ensure adequate funding is designated to meet the needs of the town. Action plans are developed even if there is no financial impact to the Town.

Prior to the retreat, citizens were invited to submit input for consideration.

Many of these comments and concerns were shared by several people, not just one individual. Examples of these included:

- Lighting ordinances not being enforced
- Evaluating the speed limit on North Anderson Boulevard
- Enforcing town codes on the beach strand, including unleashed dogs, leaving dug holes unfilled, leaving tents out overnight, leaving trash behind, etc.
- Local post office being able to remain open
- Dog ordinances not being enforced
- Developing a long-range plan for the Town
- Closed sessions held by the Commissioners – what is their subject matter and release of closed session minutes at the appropriate time
- Better presentation of Town meetings (placement of speaker's lectern, quality of video)
- CPR training for both the staff and the public, and purchase of portable defibrillator for Town Hall
- Having enough revenue to continue to provide high quality services
- Too many signs and oversized signs, including rental, contractor, political, etc.
- Trash cans being left out all week
- Not enough sand fencing being done to protect our dunes
- Water-side house numbering (both ocean and sound side)
- Pier light ordinances not being followed

As in previous years, the retreat was facilitated by Chris May of the Cape Fear Council of Governments. Discussions, which ranged from long range planning for facilities and infrastructure to code enforcement, covered many concerns mentioned in the letters and emails from citizens.

After reviewing the accomplishments of the past year, which have been outlined in detail in previous Topsail Tides newsletters, the Board listed their personal concerns and emerging issues. Because they had been given copies of the citizens' concerns ahead of time, they were able to base their individual concerns on those of their constituents. Additional concerns of the Board included:

- Developing a street maintenance schedule
- Strengthening the roles of Citizen Boards including the Planning Board, the Beach, Inlet

& Sound (BIS) Committee, and the Board of Adjustments

- Supporting our fire department and post office
- Improving beach access dune crossovers
- Making decisions about town owned properties including the Marina and the newly acquired Topsail Realty building (generously donated to the Town by Randy Leeseberg)
- Identifying new alternative, non-town revenue sources with the goal being, as always, to avoid any tax increase

After reviewing all of the above, the Board came up with their Top Five Priorities. These are listed below, followed by the Commissioners that are to be the “Champions” for each item:

1. Designate a Code Enforcement Officer to patrol the beach, regulate the dog ordinance, lighting ordinances, appearance codes, etc., and review fines for violations. (Eggleston and Smith)
2. Develop Options for long term Water and Sewer planning and development. (Blanchard and Bone)
3. Facilitate decisions on best uses for Marina building and Topsail Realty building (Stipe and Eggleston, and Mayor Braxton)
4. Start Long Range Planning for facilities and infrastructure. (Blanchard and Bone)
5. Identify new alternative, non-town revenue sources (Smith and Town Manager Rose)

The entire Board will continue to consider citizens’ concerns regarding the traffic and speed controls for the northern parts of Anderson Boulevard. BIS Committee Chair Jerry Patton, along with Commissioners Blanchard and Stipe will take the steps necessary to protect our dunes with fencing and planting, as well as continue the ongoing work of improving and repairing our ocean crossovers.

The current Board of Commissioners and our new Town Manager, Mike Rose, are always open to suggestions from citizens and property owners. They all encourage everyone to attend monthly Board Meetings (the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 6PM in Town Hall), and to contact them regarding any concerns. Public input is always encouraged.

GETTING TO KNOW MIKE ROSE, TOWN MANAGER

Topsail Beach started off the new year with Michael (Mike) Rose as our new Town Manager. We briefly introduced Mike in the previous issue of Topsail Tides, but with several months under his belt now, we wanted to let you know more about him.



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Mike was raised in High Point, NC, the fourth of five boys in his family, and attended UNC-Charlotte, where he received his BS Degree in Geography. Although Geography was his major, his focus in college was land use and planning. He seemed to have an interest in the relationship between man and earth.

Mike briefly worked on a graduate degree after college, but, when he heard from his Advisor that there was an opportunity as a County Planner in Greenville, SC, he took that job and never looked back. While in Greenville he met his wife Susan, and shortly after their marriage they moved back to the Charlotte area.

Most of Mike's career has been in public service, and he has been successful at all levels of local government management. He spent the past 10 years as Town Administrator for the Town of Pineville and then the Town of Harrisburg, both suburbs of Charlotte. In those positions he gained vast experience in all aspects of city management, including supervision of staff, budgeting, working closely with Town Councils and citizen boards, and oversight of all municipal departments. His previous towns always operated under a balanced budget, with fund balances that increased every year.

Earlier in his career he worked with the Council of Governments, which provided him with a strong background in planning related issues such as comprehensive planning and economic development. He has been able to build relationships at the local, county, and state levels.

Although he wasn't actively looking for a job he was excited to hear of the opportunity in Topsail Beach. With a desire to retire to the coast, and with a toddler grandson living nearby, this seemed like a natural progression. Susan is employed by Trader Joe's, so she was able to transfer to their new location in Wilmington rather than having to start from scratch.

Mike and Susan have two children, Amanda and Matt. Amanda, who lives near Wilmington, is the mother of that all-important grandson. Matt is engaged and lives near Durham.

Asked what he does in his spare time, it is clear that Mike's priority is spending time with his grandson. He plays a little golf and loves baseball. He and Susan have also taken up kayaking as a hobby, which made moving to the coast attractive as well.

Asked if there had been any surprises during his first three months on the job here, Mike says he feels like he's fitting right in, and that concept of finding the right fit was important to him. He emphasizes that he didn't come here to try to change Topsail Beach, but to add to the community. He has been impressed by the professionalism of the town staff and pleased by the friendliness of the residents...people that have gone out of their way to welcome him and make him feel like he belongs here.

If you haven't already met Mike, be sure to stop by Town Hall and look him up. He would love the opportunity to meet residents and property owners before the craziness of summer season sets in.

ON MAY 15TH DOGS NEED TO PUT THEIR LEASHES BACK ON

It's getting to be that time of year when dogs have to be back on their leash. May 15th is the first day that dogs will no longer be allowed to run freely on the beach or elsewhere in Topsail Beach. Last August, the commissioners voted to increase fees for dog violations from \$25 to \$100. In most cases citations will be issued without warning even for first time offenders. The maximum length of a dog leash is now 20 feet. The only place that dogs are allowed to run off leash in the summer months is on the sandbars in the sound and the marshland on the west side of the sound. "Sandbars" means bars that are reached by kayak or swimming or boat. The shoreline of the sound is not a sandbar! Even with that freedom, your dog needs to be under your control, not jumping on others. The dog ordinance stays in effect until October 1st.



TOWN CENTER'S "OLD GLORY" WAVES 'FREE-LY' 24/7



Since first being raised at the 2014 Veterans Day ceremony, the Town Center's American flag was respectfully lowered by town staff from dusk to dawn every day, as required for those not illuminated at night.

Though a floodlight was planned, Commissioners Morton Blanchard and Steve Smith vowed to eliminate both the daily staff time and the added electricity cost. Pooling their mechanical and electrical skills, labor, time, some scrap aluminum and their personal funds, they researched, designed, built and installed a solar-powered LED lighting system that now keeps the flag waving day and night, at no cost. And, the 3-day reserve of its batteries should also power a similar light for the town logo sign soon to be hung on the restroom building's main wall. That's their plan.

Thank you, Morton and Steve. Nicely done!

Topsail Tides is written and edited by a small volunteer team of Topsail Beach NC citizens for the benefit of our residents, non-resident property owners and visitors. It is published by the Town staff on an irregular schedule and posted on the Town's website: www.topsailbeach.org. Printed copies are available in the Town Hall lobby. Past issues are archived on the website. Focusing on the facts of major Town projects and important smaller issues, we aim to summarize, inform and even amuse..