

Beaufort Comprehensive Plan Update

Steering Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Information

Date:	» December 9, 2020
Time:	» 4:00 PM
Location:	» Zoom Meeting: Video / Conference Call
Attendees:	» Steering Committee Members: Guy Copes, Johnna Davis, Paula Gillikin, Robert Harper, Diane Meelheim, Ralph Merrill, Heather Polling
	» Stewart: Jay McLeod, AICP, Caroline Richardson, Jaquasha Colón
	» Town Staff: John Day, Town Manager, Kyle Garner, AICP, Director of Planning & Inspections, Kate Allen, Town Planner

Agenda Items

- Project Purpose and Schedule
 - Jay McLeod, AICP, Project Manager, explained the project purpose and schedule for both the CAMA Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Unified Development Ordinance. He asked for any questions from the committee. There was some discussion about expanding the plan boundaries beyond the Town's planning jurisdiction. Ms. Gillikin asked how that would work in comparison to the Carteret County CAMA Land Use Plan. Mr. McLeod explained that the County Plan would have ultimate authority for those areas as it is within the County's planning jurisdiction – unless the area was annexed into the corporate limits or the extraterritorial jurisdiction boundaries were expanded.
 - Ms. Caroline Richardson explained the various aspects of public involvement throughout the planning process. She added that Stewart's first virtual public meeting had 1,000 participants and virtual events have proven to be quite effective thus far.
 - Steering Committee: Regular working group meetings to review progress and provide direction
 - Stakeholders (Focus Groups): Interviews to get a local perspective on opportunities and challenges facing the area
 - Public Meetings and Info Sessions: Large, open, public engagement events to show progress to the larger community and gather perspective, input, and guidance
 - Surveys: Large public survey (online and paper format) to gather focused community perspective and guidance on discrete topics
- Introductions
- Focus Group Summary
 - Ms. Jaquasha Colón provided the Focus Group Summary. Four small group interviews were

held on Tuesday, December 8, 2020. The four focus groups were split into four focus areas:

- Economic Development & Business Community
- Community Leaders and Developers
- Planning Board Members
- Environmental/Resiliency Professionals
- Responses
 - Opportunities/Assets
 - Small town/coastal charm
 - Historic downtown and built environment
 - Solid residential growth occurring and in high demand
 - Safe, neighborly community
 - Challenges
 - Preserving the character of Beaufort
 - Protecting the coast/water quality
 - Increasing infrastructure demands due to growth
 - Affordability and long-term rentals are in short supply
 - Short-term rentals (STRs) are not regulated
 - John Day, Town Manager, mentioned that staff and the Board of Commissioners have had recent discussions about regulating short term rentals. He said that the last time, the Board decided to wait on STR regulations until the UDO update process.
 - Other Context
 - Climate change/sea level rise/flooding
 - Established neighborhoods are under threat of being bought out (i.e. gentrification)
 - Accessibility for disabled population
 - Affordability (housing and industry) hard to manage due to costs incurred due to location – buildable coastal land, sewer access, etc.
- CAMA Issues and Assets
 - Mr. McLeod referenced the CAMA topics worksheet that was sent out prior to the meeting. He said that worksheet serves as a bit of an introduction to the CAMA focus areas. The CAMA focus areas are:
 - Public Access (to public trust waters)
 - Ralph Merrill voiced concerns about the loss of publicly owned waterfront properties. He added that there have been several examples over the years, and that he feels that public access is something that should be preserved.

- Robert Harper said that his understanding is that there was a lot of quit-claim activity with Front Street landowners over the past few decades. He said that the Town should strive to protect that whenever possible. He added that Grayden Paul Park and the Gordon Street park are great examples of public access preservation that has been done well.
- Mr. Harper added that boating is a large part of the Beaufort community and voiced concerns about congestion from boat trailers around boat ramps, noting a shortage of available parking.
- Ms. Paula Gillikin echoed concerns about public water access and available parking. She said that there are several launch points for non-motorized vessels, but that there is a lack of parking to unload kayaks.
- Mr. Merrill said that another issue is visual access, noting a recent increase in Front Street property owners building larger docks with boat lifts that obstruct the views.
- Mr. Day pointed out that there is an option for the Town to enact policies/requirements/regulations that exceed CAMA requirements, noting opportunities to potentially protect the vista.
- Land Use Compatibility
 - Ensure that we plan for what we want and do it in a way that is responsible and respectful to both the residents and natural environment.
 - Preserve the character of Beaufort.
- Infrastructure Carrying Capacity
 - John Day said that the Town is at roughly 70% capacity at the wastewater treatment plant (existing and allocated). He said that the state requires planning efforts to begin at 80%, and at 90% that plan has to be in place and actionable.
- Natural Hazards
 - Ms. Gillikin said she is very concerned about natural hazards, noting concerns about the building code and vulnerability in the community. She added that elevation and freeboard is a frequent consideration of hers. She further added that the Rachel Carson Reserve acts as a natural buffer from natural hazards and should be protected.
- Water Quality
 - Guy Copes said that a common issue relates more so to water quality and contaminants in the waters which he believes can be attributed to the increase in recent development.
 - Jay McLeod asked if there were any recent projects to mitigate water quality issues.
 - Ms. Gillikin mentioned a recent project where the state and coastal federation partnered on improvements to the Lennoxville Road boat ramp parking lot where they resurfaced the parking area with pervious/semi-pervious pavement and installed a rain garden.
 - Mr. Merrill said that the marinas in Town Creek are a good example – over the past

five years or so there have been a tremendous number of slips built in the area which continues to increase, noting the recent approval of a marina expansion. He said that believes the increase in the number of boats is likely impacting the water quality in that area.

- Mr. Merrill said that stormwater runoff is a big contributing factor to the degraded water quality.
- John Day mentioned that the Town is currently working on a Harbor Management Plan. He said that there are issues related to water quality that may not be regulated through the Land Development Ordinance. However, the Town has legislation about managing its waters, so policies could be included in the Navigable Waters Ordinance.
- Ms. Gillikin said that a lot of water quality issues can be attributed to loss of vegetation, increased impervious surfaces, and stormwater runoff issues, tidal waters backing up into the streets with king tides – noting issues not only of contaminants from land to water, but also from water to land.
- Other locally important issues
 - Ms. Heather Polling voiced concerns about clear-cutting trees in recent developments and said that tree preservation should be considered in the plan update.
- Work Session
 - Identify Issues of Concern
 - Keep Beaufort a place people want to live in; maintain Beaufort character
 - Balance growth with caring for the environment & the history of Beaufort
 - Growing with grace and respect for the community
 - Future I-42 will have a huge impact on Beaufort and commercial development; need to plan for an economy that relies on more than just tourism
 - Encourage affordable housing; part of what makes Beaufort great is its diversity
- Next Steps
 - First public informational meeting – December 9, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.
 - Community Tour
 - Begin public outreach efforts
 - Project team to continue to analyze existing conditions