



Town of Southern Shores
5375 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Southern Shores, NC 27949
Phone 252-261-2394 / Fax 252-255-0876
info@southernshores-nc.gov
www.southernshores-nc.gov

Southern Shores Council Retreat-Meeting Minutes

Pitts Center – 5375 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Southern Shores, NC

Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM

Attendance

Present:

- Mayor Morey
- Mayor Pro Tem Neal
- Council Member Sherlock
- Council Member Batenic
- Council Member Neilson

Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Morey called the council retreat meeting of the Town of Southern Shores to order at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, March 5, 2025, at the Pitts Center. All council members were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Morey led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction

The retreat began with Councilman Neilson introducing **“13 Ways to Kill a Community”* by Doug Griffiths as a guiding framework for the day’s discussions. He emphasized using the book’s lessons as a checklist to evaluate town actions and aligning all decisions with the community vision statement to ensure sustainable, defensible outcomes.

- Councilman Neilson introduced **“13 Ways to Kill a Community”*.
- Suggested using it as a checklist during discussions.
- Emphasized linking decisions to the community vision statement.

Comments from Associations

Representatives from the CPOA and SSCA provided updates and feedback. Carolyn Bradford (CPOA) thanked the town for addressing sidewalk safety in Chicahauk, expressed concerns about traffic at Route 12 after the Trinity Bridge project, and requested town support for Earth Day and residential fence regulations. Jeff Johnson (SSCA) highlighted the association's history, property ownership, and 2024 accomplishments, including new pickleball courts, marina repairs, improved beach crossovers, Hillcrest facility upgrades, and community events, noting nearly 1,900 volunteer hours saved significant funds.

- CPOA (Carolyn Bradford): sidewalk safety progress, traffic concerns at Route 12/Chicahauk, support for Earth Day (April 26), fence regulation issue, and enthusiasm for new meeting space at 13 Skyline Road.
- SSCA (Jeff Johnson): overview of history and properties, 2024 highlights (pickleball courts, marina work, crossover repairs, Hillcrest upgrades, events), and nearly 1,900 volunteer hours.

Budget Summary

Town Manager Ogburn presented the budget outlook, reporting that \$507,000 from fund balance would be needed to balance the next budget cycle, with \$1.5 million currently available. He expressed concern about revenues potentially flattening post-COVID. Councilman Botanic noted that while occupancy was down slightly, revenues remained historically strong compared to pre-COVID levels and emphasized that conservative tourism board budgeting had consistently been exceeded by actual collections.

- \$507,000 to be drawn from fund balance; \$1.5M available.
- Revenues (occupancy, land transfer, sales tax) may flatten.
- Occupancy down 4.84%, but collections remain historically high.
- 2023 (\$7.86M), 2022 (\$8.14M), 2021 (\$7.71M) vs. 2019 (\$5.18M).
- Tourism board budgeting conservative; actuals exceeded by 24%.

Fire Study / Service Level

Fire Chiefs Grayson and Limbacher outlined options for maintaining or restructuring fire service, highlighting volunteer retention challenges, heavy workloads, and the need for additional staff. Chief Limbacher described improvements made during his tenure and explained the urgent need for four new positions to ensure sustainable operations. After discussion, the council formed a committee of two council members, the manager, and legal counsel to begin the process of bringing fire staff onto the town payroll by July 1, 2025, with funding for four new positions.

- Options: status quo, more nonprofit funding, or town takeover.
- Challenges: volunteer retention, workload, deputy chief resignation.
- Chief Limbacher: facility improvements, ISO rating, mutual aid success.

- Proposal: 4 new positions for coverage and sustainability.
- Decision: committee (Jensen, Botanic, Ogburn, counsel) formed; target July 1, 2025 payroll transition; fund 4 positions with benefits.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The council agreed unanimously that a Public Information Officer is needed to improve communication with residents and non-resident property owners, relieve burdens on the Town Manager, and strengthen outreach. The new role would combine skills in social media, marketing, event planning, and grant writing, with consensus to fund the position in the 2025–26 budget.

- Strong consensus to add a PIO position.
- Role to include: communication, social media, marketing, events, grant writing.
- Importance: timely, credible information, combating misinformation.
- Southern Shores is only local town without a PIO.
- Support funding approval for 2025–26 budget.

Infrastructure / Stormwater

BRIC Grant for project at 13th/Sea Oats

Town Engineer Joe Anlauf explained that what was previously thought to be a BRIC grant was actually a Hazard Mitigation Grant, with the benefit that the state would cover the match requirement. The engineer described the project at 13th and Sea Oats, which would involve purchasing the corner property at 393 Sea Oats Trail and moving the existing home to the owner's adjoining lot at 391 Sea Oats. A stormwater basin would then be developed on the acquired lot that would serve both Southern Shores and Duck.

Anlauf noted that the area experiences flooding after heavy rains when groundwater breaches the surface and sits on properties and roadways for weeks. He mentioned that the Town of Duck has similar problems at Charles Jenkins Lane, with limited options due to narrow right-of-way space and existing underground utilities.

The project would create a shared stormwater infrastructure with Duck contributing to the cost. Some council members expressed concerns about accepting stormwater from Duck, but most agreed the regional approach made sense for this location.

Motion: Mayor Morey moved to pursue the grant for the stormwater project with the Town of Duck at the intersection of 13th Avenue. Councilman Neilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Hickory / Wax Myrtle project

Joe Anlauf presented the stormwater challenges at the intersection of Hickory and Wax Myrtle, where runoff from multiple directions converges at a low spot and flows down a

driveway at 264 Hickory, causing property damage. The engineer explained that previous considerations included installing underground chambers, but concerns about groundwater mounding made that option problematic.

Anlauf suggested two potential approaches: 1) securing an easement on the property opposite the affected home, which has an existing depression that naturally receives water, or 2) working with the Southern Shores Civic Association to utilize their property at Sea Oats Park as a disposal area.

Council directed staff to pursue discussions with property owners about easement options to determine feasibility before proceeding with design work. There was consensus that solving the stormwater problem at this location was important, but that securing disposal rights must come first.

- 13th/Sea Oats Project: Hazard Mitigation Grant; moved to pursue the grant for the stormwater project with the Town of Duck at the intersection of 13th Avenue.
- Hickory/Wax Myrtle: runoff damages private property; solutions include easement or use of SSCA land; staff to pursue feasibility first.

Sidewalks & Access

Town Manager Ogburn reported that the town received a grant from the tourist bureau to repair/replace sidewalks between Fifth and Hillcrest. After discussion, council agreed it made more sense to redirect those efforts to the area between Ninth and Tenth, which is in worse condition with significant root intrusion and retaining walls that need replacement.

The council also discussed connecting sidewalks at the municipal complex to improve pedestrian connectivity between facilities, particularly linking the municipal buildings to 13 Skyline Road and linking to commercial areas. Council clarified distinctions between golf carts and street-legal low-speed vehicles, expressing caution about encouraging their use on busy roads.

- Grant redirected: Ninth–Tenth Street repairs prioritized.
- Discussed sidewalk links at municipal complex.
- Explored commercial site connectivity.
- Entry Corridor Committee reviewing walkability improvements.
- Clarified golf carts vs. licensed low-speed vehicles; safety concerns noted.

Parks & Community Spaces

Town-owned parcels were reviewed for potential pocket parks and community gathering spaces. Council expressed support for creating small neighborhood parks using existing land or partnerships with SSCA and CPOA. The idea of modest improvements such as

benches and plantings was supported, along with exploring partnerships for properties like Duckwoods/NC 158.

- Town-owned parcels reviewed; 29 East Dogwood (stormwater basin), Public Works facility, A small easement with Sprint at 1089 Ocean Boulevard, The municipal complex, 13 Skyline (recently acquired), A small corner parcel near the Duck wood swimming pool, A newly acquired easement at the Chicahauk access
- Concept of pocket parks endorsed.
- Modest improvements suggested (benches, plantings, signage).
- Partnership opportunities with SSCA/CPOA noted, including Duckwoods/NC 158 property.

Working Lunch Topics

During lunch, council revisited several policy areas. Members declined to pursue a tree ordinance, noting natural canopy increases and respect for property rights. A seasonal speed limit adjustment on Route 12 was considered but not advanced. Consider revisiting speed limit discussions in October. Discussion of facility master planning was deferred until 2026 due to high costs, with council agreeing that service priorities should be clarified before commissioning a new plan.

- Tree Ordinance: not pursued; natural canopy growth sufficient.
- Speed Limit (Route 12): discussed seasonal adjustment; no action taken.
- Facility Master Planning: deferred; service vision to be developed first.

Planning

Mayor pro tem Neal updated the group on the Entry Corridor Committee's survey work and interviews with commercial property owners. Discussions focused on balancing vegetative buffers with business visibility and improving commercial walkability. Planning Director Haskett presented maps showing that nearly a quarter of town parcels are under the minimum lot size, but legal precedent prevents required recombination. Council also expressed support for engaging outside resources, such as grant writers and fellows programs, to supplement staff capacity.

- Entry Corridor Committee: developing survey, interviewed property owners.
- Focus on walkability, aesthetics, and gathering spaces.
- Non-conforming lots: 23% under 20,000 sq. ft.; legal barriers prevent recombination.
- Council supports using outside resources (grant writers, fellows programs).

Final Notes

The retreat concluded with consensus to prioritize East Dogwood (bottom of hill) and Trinitie Trail as the next street improvement projects before resuming the normal street maintenance schedule.

- Street improvements prioritized: East Dogwood (lower hill) and Trinitie Trail.

Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Mayor Morey called for a motion to adjourn, Seconded by Council member Batenic. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Morey, Mayor

Sheila Kane, Town Clerk