

MINUTES

TOWN OF KURE BEACH TOWN COUNCIL

117 Settlers Lane ■ Kure Beach, NC 28449



Dean Lambeth, Mayor
Chuck Keener, Mayor Pro Tem
Jim Dugan, Commissioner
Barry Nelder, Commissioner
Emilie Swearingen, Commissioner

The Kure Beach Town Council held a second work session on April 27, 2011 at 10 am for the purpose of reviewing the draft budget for Fiscal Year 11-12. Attorney Canoutas was in attendance and there was a quorum of the Council present.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor	Dean Lambeth
Mayor Pro Tem	Chuck Keener
Commissioner	Barry Nelder
Commissioner	Emilie Swearingen
Commissioner	Jim Dugan

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Fire Chief Harold Heglar
Building Inspector John Batson
Public Works Director Sonny Beeker
Police Chief Dennis Cooper
Finance Officer Arlen Copenhaver
Town Clerk Nancy Avery

Mayor Lambeth called the budget work session to order at 10:00 am stating Finance Officer Copenhaver will be running the work session.

Finance Officer Copenhaver reviewed the draft FY11-12 budget shortfall for each fund stating that the General Fund shortfall increased by \$57,000 after the last budget session, because Council directed him to add another full-time police officer to the draft budget.

Finance Officer Copenhaver handed out a recommendation to balance the budget. The recommendation included a 3-cent tax increase, an increase to the minimum water bill for both residential and commercial of \$1.50 a month, an increase to the minimum sewer bill for both residential and commercial of \$1.50 a month and a \$4 per month increase to both residential and commercial storm water rates.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated the water/sewer total increase of \$3 per month is a "band aid approach," and not a long-term fix. The budget has \$80,000 allocated as forced savings, which helps, but there is also a \$50,000 shortage. The increase only allows us to save \$90,000. Basically, we aren't saving anything for future infrastructure projects.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated that the most critical things are the General Fund and the Storm Water Fund. Council has said there are a number of storm water projects that need to be done, one at a cost of \$750,000, but we don't have the funds to do that or even

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pay the debt service. All proposed things for balancing the budget are not to fix tomorrow, but to fix the future.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated his recommendation is to do a 3-cent tax increase. The last time the tax rate was increased was in 2001. It was changed in 2007 for revaluation to revenue neutral, but overall the amount has not changed.

Questions/Comments

Commissioner Nelder stated he liked that the water/sewer and storm water increases go directly to those funds. He also asked if Finance Officer Copenhaver knew the median home value in Kure Beach.

Finance Officer Copenhaver replied it could probably be determined, but he doesn't have it at his finger tips.

Mayor Lambeth stated he is really concerned about storm water. If we have another major storm, we will have work that needs to be done.

Commissioner Swearingen asked Public Works Director Beeker if his staff can do some of the work for Phase II of the Storm Water project. Is staff time built into the budget? How much would materials cost?

Public Works Director Beeker replied we could probably use Powell Funds to purchase materials.

Finance Officer Copenhaver said that the Powell Bill Fund is \$170,000 now.

Public Works Director Beeker said we do need to spend it by law and we get \$68,000 per year. The streets are in pretty good shape. We are doing some patching. Some streets are going to need resurfacing in the next few years. If his staff does any storm water work, it has to be done off season.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated that the Powell Bill Fund is used for a lot of things, so we shouldn't count on that for storm water projects.

Commissioner Nelder stated that there are certain limitations Beeker's staff can do. At some point it has to be contracted out.

Public Works Director Beeker stated, "We are doing the right thing. When was the last time we looked at increasing revenue for storm water? Phase II is going to be a bear of a

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project. The Town can't afford another big project like we are doing now and we'll be paying for it into 2023."

Mayor Lambeth asked Public Works Director Beeker if there is percentage he tries to put back. The Town has done the \$80,000 for years and built it up but, then, we did major sewer and water tower projects. Now, \$80,000 is not much money. That's four pumps on one of the lift stations.

Commissioner Nelder asked when we would see the effect of a tax increase.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated July 1, 2011 is the effective date, and we would see the bulk of the property tax collection from November 2011 through January 2012. A contingency fund is part of your budget. Statute limitation is 5%, so the Town could have \$150,000. This fund can't be used unless a resolution is passed by Council. It is sort of a forced savings and it is available, if needed.

Mayor Lambeth asked if Finance Officer Copenhaver could average how much has been taken from the General Fund in the last few years.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated he would have to look at the General Fund and Capital Project Fund, but from 2007 to 2008 it has been about \$500,000 to balance the budget.

Commissioner Nelder asked how long the 3-cent tax increase would carry the Town until another tax increase is needed.

Finance Officer Copenhaver replied it depends on inflation and gas prices. Hopefully two years.

Commissioner Swearingen commented it also depends on what future councils do.

Finance Officer Copenhaver said the increases are a lot all at once. Some increases should have been done over the last ten to twelve years.

Grace McGee, resident and member of the Citizens Budget and Finance Committee stated it is a lot. It is a 22% increase on the tax bill and a 6% increase on water/sewer and storm water rates.

Commissioner Dugan stated that, if we don't do this and hold the line and make cuts, after revaluation there is going to be a huge bite. He stated, "It seems to me whatever we do with the cuts, we have two options: hurt a little twice or hurt a lot once."

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Finance Officer Copenhaver stated his personal opinion is that it will be a lot worse to increase after the revaluation. Everyone expects the tax rate to come down, but with next year's revaluation it will go up.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated that the Citizens Budget and Finance Committee has recommended we don't use the fund balance to balance the budget. Also, the Local Government Commission has issued a statement highly discouraging this. There are two ways to balance the budget: increase revenue or decrease expenses. What I hear is that everyone says they want the service levels to remain the same.

Commissioner Dugan said, "We have all been talking to people in Town, and I haven't gotten the response to cut back on services from anyone. Everyone I've talked to wants to keep the services they have. Now whether they are willing to do what they need to do, that's another questions. I asked them how much they saved on insurance for the fire rating and the response was \$200 per year, so they are ahead of the game if taxes go up."

Mayor Lambeth stated that most of the responses he has received are that residents are happy with services and are willing to accept it. The new water tower and the savings on insurance will only neutralize the increase.

Commissioner Swearingen stated that most say they are happy with services and have been surprised taxes haven't been raised sooner.

Mayor Lambeth asked Council members for any changes they have for this second revision of the draft budget.

Police Department Budget Discussion

Mayor Lambeth asked Police Chief Cooper what other expenses there would be besides the \$57,000 salary and benefits.

Police Chief Cooper replied that there would be no other expenses. The officers would share vehicles to make it work.

Police Chief Cooper stated that some committees, particularly Beach Protection, demand that officers be put on the beach, but that has to be on an availability basis. He said, "If we can, we will. If we can't, we can't."

Changes to Draft Budget for Police Department

Swearingen – No change except to add one full-time officer, if we can afford it.

Nelder – No change and add one full-time police officer.

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Keener – No change and include one part-time officer as requested.

Dugan – No change and include one additional part-time officer and, when done with all the numbers, look at adding an additional full-time officer

Lambeth – Include only one additional part-time officer. No full time officer; not now.

CONSENSUS - Include one part-time police officer, as requested, and revisit the budget at the end for an additional full-time police officer.

Public Works Budget Discussion – Streets and Sanitation (General Fund)

Commissioner Swearingen – I heard lots of compliments on the recent free trash pick up.

Mayor Lambeth asked how Public Works Director Beeker is doing with personnel.

Director Beeker said he has two employees out. One should be back in May and the other he didn't know about. He said, "We have to start running garbage five days a week."

Commissioner Swearingen asked how many take town vehicles home.

Public Works Director Beeker replied, "Three of us. One lives across the river and the other two live close by."

Mayor Pro Tem Keener stated the Atlantic Avenue landscaping contract ends this month. He asked Director Beeker if he had anything built into the budget for landscaping of Atlantic Avenue and other areas in town.

Public Works Director Beeker replied that nothing had been built in and that, no matter what his department does, the committee will say it was done incorrectly. He would prefer that Council look at outsourcing landscaping.

Commissioner Dugan said that , if the volunteers take over the Disc Golf Course maintenance, that would allow Public Works more time to do other things. He asked if there was another less costly way for the alarm system to be hooked up to the phones. He also asked what the Town would lose financially because of the Thursday trash pick up.

Public Works Director Beeker responded that the High Water Alarm horn and the second system are pretty reliable. He said, "I don't know if there is a cheaper way. I like the situation we have with a two back-up plan. Wells are set up on telemetry with a radio system that goes straight to the shop. We may be able to switch the radio system to land lines, but if it goes out, we have problems. We lose \$6,000 to \$7,000 in man hours and dumpster costs for the Thursday trash pick up."

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Mayor Lambeth stated that, if the debt service for the garbage truck doesn't hit until next year, he is okay with the purchase.

Changes to draft budget for Streets and Sanitation (General Fund)

Swearingen - I want to delay the purchase of a new garbage truck by one year.

Nelder – No changes.

Keener – No changes.

Dugan – No changes.

Lambeth – No changes.

CONSENSUS – Readdress landscaping contract and leave in the purchase of a new garbage truck. Public Works Director Beeker to check on possibility of a less expensive alarm system.

Changes to Draft Budget for Storm Water Fund

Nelder – I want to see us build a contingency fund. I'm okay with the proposed increase of \$4.

Keener – No changes.

Dugan – No changes. I'm okay with the proposed increase.

Lambeth – We have some major storm water work that needs to be done. The material used for the work that has been done is dissolving and collapsing. It is not fair to put this on whoever comes after us. We need to do it.

CONSENSUS – Take the recommendation of the Finance Officer for the \$4 per month increase. No other changes.

Public Works Budget Discussion - Water/Sewer Fund

Public Works Director Beeker stated he didn't put money in the budget to replace water meters. He said he has gradually been replacing them every few years due to salt erosion. He suggested having a re-read fee, and he will bring suggestions for other fees to the next budget session.

Commissioner Nelder asked if the \$3 increase would be enough for future needs or would rates need to be raised again next year. He said he was okay with the \$3 increase.

Public Works Director Beeker replied, "No. The increase only matches expenditures this year. We break even."

Commissioner Swearingen asked about the fee for the second irrigation meter.

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Commissioner Dugan stated he met with the Public Works Director and the Building Inspector to review the fee and they believe it is in line.

Changes to Draft Budget for Water/Sewer Fund

Nelder – No changes. I'm okay with \$3 fee increase.

Keener – No changes. I'm okay with \$3 fee increase.

Dugan – Increase is necessary.

Lambeth – I have to go along with the Finance Officer with the \$3 increase.

Commissioner Swearingen did not comment.

CONSENSUS – No changes to draft budget which includes increasing fees for minimum service for water and for sewer for residential by \$1.50 per month, each, for a total fee increase of \$3. Public Works Director Beeker is to bring recommended fee changes to the next budget session.

Building Department Budget Discussion

Mayor Lambeth asked if the Town is compensated for issuing CAMA permits.

Building Inspector Batson replied that it is compensated a small amount to do inspections and to issue permits.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener asked Finance Officer Copenhaver for his recommendation.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated there is an amount for beach renourishment that we might look at.

Building Inspector Batson said he thinks we can cut out \$5,500 for beach fertilization. He said he has been told for the last two years it hasn't been needed. He said there is an additional \$2,000 in that line item for the Beach Protection Committee for sea oat plantings. He said he wasn't sure what they have in their budget. If the committee is budgeting also, we can subtract.

Commissioner Dugan said he wants to work out a mileage system instead of a gas allowance. Mayor Lambeth and Commissioner Swearingen stated they both also want to visit a mileage system instead of a gas allowance.

Building Inspector Batson asked how that would be tracked. He stated this comes up every year and he has been asked several times to provide mileage. It averages 200 miles per week for Town business. He said, "Why don't you look at buying me a vehicle?"

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Commissioner Swearingen stated “At that rate, the Town would save about 1,000 per year.”

Commissioner Nelder asked the Finance Officer if it affects the Town one way or the other.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated that, right now, we pay FICA tax. Using the other way, it would be a Town expense with no FICA.

Commissioner Swearingen asked the Building Inspector if he was qualified to do fire inspections.

Building Inspector Batson stated he has his certificate now. He would have to make sure the certificate covers everything in Kure Beach. We pay New Hanover County \$1,892.00 annually to do fire inspections.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener asked what it would add to the job.

Building Inspector Batson said it will add a lot because he would have to check fire extinguishers, sprinklers, etc. It wouldn't be worth an increase in my salary because of the work that would be added.

Mayor Lambeth asked the Building Inspector if he monitored Privilege Licenses. Whose job is it to check on people working in town to see whether they have a license? Building Inspector Batson said he doesn't do much in that area. If he sees someone without a license, he sends them to Pat at Town Hall to get a license.

Fire Chief Heglar stated there are approximately 50 units in Kure Beach that will have to be inspected. The County gets about \$38 per inspection. The County also charges each business \$45 for the inspection fee. If Building Inspector Batson did the inspections, the Town would bring in about \$5,000. In his opinion, the more the Town can do in-house, the better off we are.

Building Inspector Batson stated that, if he is going to be the Fire Inspector, he should be paid an additional \$1,892 in salary.

Changes to Draft Budget for Building Inspections Department

CONSENSUS –

- Decrease beach renourishment by \$5,500 and not do beach fertilization.

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- Decrease beach renourishment line item by \$2,000 for sea oats because it is budgeted under committee.
- Mileage versus Gas Allowance - Lambeth, Dugan, Keener are FOR mileage unless Batson starts doing Fire Inspection. If he does, then they are in favor of a gas allowance. Nelder and Swearingen in favor of gas allowance.
- Fire inspection – unanimous that Batson will be Fire Inspector when the interlocal agreement ends.
- Increase in salary for Batson to do Fire Inspections – Council will discuss when salaries are discussed.

Rescheduling the Time of the May 5, 2011 Budget Session

MOTION – Mayor Pro Tem Keener made the motion to reschedule the time for the next budget session on May 5, 2011 from 10 am to 1 pm due to a scheduling conflict.

SECOND – Commissioner Nelder

VOTE - Unanimous

NOTE - Commissioner Nelder left the meeting at 12:05 pm.

Fire Department Budget Discussion

Mayor Lambeth stated he has a concern about the debt of \$35,000 for two trucks.

Fire Chief Heglar said that \$31,000 is for the big truck. He also stated that \$5,000 is for the little truck, and that the volunteer Fire Department pays half of that. There are two more annual payments on the little truck.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener asked the Finance Officer for his recommendation.

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated the budget has been consistent year to year. The only change is the request for an additional full-time employee that they had previously.

Mayor Lambeth asked what the cost of another full-time employee would be.

Fire Chief Heglar said the salary would be \$27,500. He said, “Right now, if we have to respond to a call, 12 volunteers have to respond at a cost of \$12 each. If we have staff on duty overnight, the two on duty would cost \$40. Calls have gone up 20%, annually, for last two years.

Changes to Draft Fire Department Budget

CONSENSUS – No changes. The budget stays as presented with the addition of on full-time employee.

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Changes to draft Lifeguard budget

CONSENSUS – No changes. Okay as presented.

Lunch break

Mayor Lambeth called for a thirty minute lunch break at 12:30 pm.

Mayor Lambeth resumed the work session at 1:04 pm.

Governing Body Budget Discussion

Commissioner Swearingen – Recommended deleting the cell phone stipend.

Mayor Lambeth – Suggested deleting the cell phone stipend and the salaries.

Commissioner Dugan – Stated that he would like Council to consider when making cuts whether they are temporary or permanent. Cuts may be nickel and dime, but it shows residents we are willing to give too. He said he is okay with deleting the cell phone stipend and salary.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener – Said that he is okay with deleting both.

Commissioner Nelder was not in attendance.

Grace McGee, member of the Citizens Budget and Finance Committee, stated there may be a flip side to doing this. This may decrease or eliminate the number of people that will step up and take the job. She said, “It will be all the abuse you can take for free.”

Changes to Draft Governing Body Budget

CONSENSUS – Delete the cell phone stipend and salary.

Contributions line items, as follows:

- Christmas Show – \$3,300
- Federal Point Help Center – \$0
- Katie B. Hines Senior Center – \$0
- Chamber of Commerce for concerts – \$8,000
- Island of Lights – \$0 (in-kind only)
- Fund TDA reimbursable requests only
- TOTAL FUNDED – \$11,300

Commissioner Swearingen abstained on consensus on funding the Chamber of Commerce, but she agreed to the Island of Lights and Christmas Show contributions.

Administration and Finance Budget Discussion

Commissioner Swearingen suggested deleting cell phones for non-emergency employees, deleting newsletter cost of \$6,000, decreasing the annual employee luncheon to \$2,000,

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deleting the \$4,000 cost for chairs for the Council Chambers and beefing up enforcement of Town decals.

There was general discussion on ways to enforce collection of the Town's decal tax.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener asked the Finance Officer for suggestions. Finance Officer Copenhaver suggested deleting the newsletter expense and the purchase of new chairs for the Council room.

Changes to Draft Administration and Finance Budget

CONSENSUS –

- Leave budgeted amount for cell phones for Town Clerk and Finance Officer.
- Budget \$1,500 to mail another newsletter after the budget is adopted in order to explain the budget and to inform residents that there will be no more newsletters.
- Budget \$500, only, for annual employee luncheon. Council will provide labor.
- Delete Council Room chairs at cost of \$4,000.
- Delete \$5,200 from capital budget.
- Finance Officer and Town Clerk to investigate enforcement of decal tax and determine if needed.

Legal Budget Discussion/Changes

CONSENSUS – Increase attorney fee by \$200 a month as requested. No other changes to budget.

Break

Mayor Lambeth called for a 5 minute break at 2:30 pm.

Mayor Lambeth resumed the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Parks & Recreation (P&R) Budget Discussion/Changes

CONSENSUS –

- Increase capital line item to match remaining NHC Park Bond funds.
- Work to get free intern from UNCW for summer and fall semester.
- Do not fund part-time director.
- Budget \$8,000 for Street Festival under P&R for budgetary purposes, only. P&R has no authority over Street Festival Committee.
- Increase work on obtaining donations for Ocean Front Park.

Committee Budget Discussion/Changes

CONSENSUS –

- Storm Water and Environmental Committee – no funding.

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- Set up combined committee budget total of \$5,500: SLAP \$2,500, Beautification \$1,000 and Citizens Beach Protection \$2,000. To be taken from amount removed from Building Inspections' beach renourishment line item.
- Landscaping – When the Ocean Front Park is completed, get bids for landscaping the Atlantic Avenue walkway, the Ocean Front Park and Town Hall.
- Set up contingency fund of \$75,000.

Salaries and Benefits Discussion/Changes

Salaries:

Dugan – 2% salary increase for merit

Keener – 2 % salary increase for merit

Swearingen – 2 % salary increase for merit

Lambeth – 3 % one time bonus

Nelder – not in attendance

CONSENSUS – 2 % salary increase for merit

Flexible Spending Plan

Swearingen – Outsource and let employees contribute, but Town doesn't contribute.

Lambeth – I don't like it but hate to take it away from the employees. I think it is good, especially for the ones with families.

Dugan – I think it is good for the employees.

Keener – I agree we should keep.

Commissioner Nelder was not in attendance.

CONSENSUS – No change to Flexible Spending Plan.

Commissioner Nelder rejoined the meeting at 4:25 pm.

401K

Mayor Lambeth stated we can't change the contribution for the Police, but we should make the rest of the employees contribute and match up to a 3% cap.

Commissioner Nelder stated his problem is that employees aren't contributing anything. The whole idea of a 401K is for employees to participate. Aren't we already contributing to their retirement? This means we contribute twice to their retirement. The Town should do 3 % if the employee contributes 1 %.

Mayor Pro Tem Keener stated we should do a 3% contribution with no match from the employee.

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Commissioner Dugan pointed out that most of the towns surveyed contributed 5% with no match. One matched up to 4%. If it is at all financially possible, the employee should contribute to this. Could we come up with an amount for the Town and a lower amount for the employee to contribute? Maybe 3% from the Town and 1 % from the employee.

Commissioner Swearingen stated she agrees with Commissioner Dugan. Town contributes 3% and the employee contributes 1 %.

CONSENSUS – Town contributes 3% and employees except for police must contribute 1% to get the Town’s 3 % contribution.

General Fund Tax Increase Discussion/Changes

Commissioner Swearingen stated she would like to keep the tax increase to 2 cents, if possible. She stated, “A tax increase and fee increases are going to be hard for our lower income folks.”

Finance Officer Copenhaver stated a 2-cent tax increase is a “band aid approach” and doesn’t give the Town any breathing room.

Mayor Lambeth suggested increasing taxes by 2.75 cents and seeing what the calculations are.

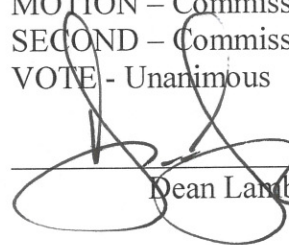
CONSENSUS – Have the Finance Officer calculate a 2.75-cent tax increase.

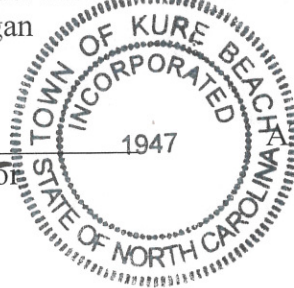
Adjournment


MOTION – Commissioner Nelder made the motion to adjourn at 4:51 pm.

SECOND – Commissioner Dugan

VOTE - Unanimous


Dean Lambeth, Mayor



TEST 
Nancy Avery, Town Clerk

NOTE: These are action minutes reflecting items considered and actions taken by Council. These minutes are not a transcript of the meeting. Persons wishing to hear the recording of this meeting may request to do so by contacting the Town Clerk