

**Town Council Minutes
Morehead City, North Carolina**

**Thursday, March 1, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.
Special Meeting/Work Session**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City met in Special Session on Thursday, March 1, 2012, at 8:30 a.m., in the Municipal Building Auditorium at 202 South 8th Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of the Special Meeting was a work session to discuss: Allowed Uses at the City's ballfields, North Carolina Department of Transportation [NCDOT] Highway #70 Median Project and an Update on the City Manager Search. Those in attendance were:

MAYOR:	Gerald A. Jones, Jr.
MAYOR PRO TEM:	Harvey N. Walker, Jr.
COUNCIL:	George W. Ballou
	William F. Taylor
	Demus L. Thompson
	Diane C. Warrender
INTERIM CITY MANAGER:	Pete Connet
CITY CLERK:	Jeanne M. Giblin
OTHERS:	Mike Lawrence, Dwayne Alligood, Haywood Daughtry, Lennie Griffin, Joey Giffin, Jim Hinds, Lynn Hinds, David Freshwater, Mark Frawks, Beth Parker Henry, David T. Willis II, Lois Brooks, John Brewer, Richard Abell, Scott Kelly, Sammie E. Turner, A. G. Felton, Jack Askew, P. Kittrell, Ralph Nitt, Franklin White, Carole Compton, David Horton, Tom Kies, Buddy Bengel, Iva Fearing, Dawn Gaskill, Police Chief Wrenn Johnson, Public Works Director David McCabe, Parks & Recreation Director Craig Lands, Planning Director Linda Staab, THE CARTERET NEWS TIMES Reporter Mark Hibbs, Deputy Fire/EMS Chief Jamie Fulk

Mayor Jones opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed NCDOT median project on Highway #70, the establishment of rules and regulations for the use of City athletic fields which was prompted by a request from One Harbor Church for the use of O'Neal Field for an Easter Church Service in addition to several other individuals who have expressed an interest in using O'Neal Field for other than athletic purposes, and an update on the City Manager search.

Use of City Ballfields

Parks & Recreation Director Craig Lands reported that prior to the development of the soccer and baseball fields at Rotary Park, there were few requests for the use of these areas. He gave a brief description of the various recreation facilities available and stated that the two [2] large celebrations on City park property have been the Harvestfest in October and the National Night Out under the auspices of the Morehead City Police Department. The Seashore Soccer League uses the soccer fields at Rotary Park and O'Neal Field is used by American Legion, Babe Ruth and Marlins Baseball Teams.

Mayor Jones commented that the present lease with the Marlins Baseball Team on the use of O'Neal Field states that baseball is an allowed use, any other use must have permission from the Recreation Department. There is a need for a set policy for the use of the ballfields.

Councilman Walker stated that he would like to allow One Harbor Church the use of O'Neal Field for Easter services before the City makes a policy and that a worship service is different than holding a concert.

Councilman Ballou stated that he wanted to treat everyone the same as to the ability to lease City facilities. It was his intent that the Council should discuss the possible uses of City athletic facilities and for the lease and use of those facilities to be fair for everyone.

Councilman Thompson stated that Jaycee Park is a more preferable place to hold a concert and for church services. The other various possible uses of O'Neal Field must be considered because a baseball field carries significant expenses for grounds upkeep. He was of the opinion that athletic fields should be restricted to athletic use.

Councilwoman Warrender stated that she would prefer a set policy in place for the lease of City athletic facilities prior to allowing their usage by private parties. She continued

that she was in favor of more usage of the facilities, however, specific requirements should be in place.

Interim City Manager Connet explained that One Harbor Church has found an alternative place for Easter services at Katherine Davis Park and the Church was satisfied with holding services at this venue.

Parks & Recreation Director Lands stated that he checked with the City of Wilson, N.C., as a comparative to Morehead City for the use of athletic facilities. Wilson does not allow their sports facilities for any other purpose than athletics. It was his opinion that from a recreation facility aspect, athletic facilities should be used for athletic purposes only. If other than an athletic use is requested, it should be a City sponsored event.

Councilman Taylor stated he did not want to have a high impact activity on a soccer or baseball field and he agreed that although he would like to see more usage of the City's athletic facilities, an established policy and pricing system should be in place. The issue of liability should also be addressed.

Councilman Walker commented that although he was of the opinion that it was a good idea to have a church service at O'Neal Field, he was satisfied that One Harbor Church would hold Easter services at Katherine Davis Park.

Joe Giffen of North 20th Street, Morehead City, as one of the individuals who requested use of O'Neal Field for a concert, commented that the City's concern seemed to be damage to the field. He stated that the reason for use of O'Neal Field for a concert is that ingress and egress is controlled and for public safety. He explained the various methods he would use to assure the City that no damage or safety hazards would occur during his use of the field for a concert.

Councilwoman Warrender cautioned the Council that there were other aspects for consideration such as adequate parking, food vendors, restroom facilities, alcohol use, etc.

Buddy Bengel, Manager of the Morehead Marlins, of 1921 Oglesby Road, Morehead City, stated that his number one concern was O'Neal Field. He continued that a concert could be held at O'Neal Field if it was done correctly. He also concurred that a policy needs to be set to be assured that the field is protected, there is consideration of the City's noise ordinance and that the City is fairly compensated for the field's use.

By consensus, the Council agreed that a policy should be set in place for athletic facility usage by private groups.

North Carolina Department of Transportation [NCDOT] Highway #70 Median Project

Interim City Manager Connet introduced the Highway #70 Median Project and distributed a draft letter to the N.C.D.O.T. regarding the City's concerns.

Planning Director Linda Staab explained the project and demonstrated the placement of the median and crossings on a map. She stated that a major concern of the Council was the ability of large vehicles and trailers being able to make turns and the length of the turning lanes to accommodate the traffic.

Chris Davis of Boats, Inc., 4838 Arendell Street, Morehead City, expressed concern with the ability of long trucks and vehicles with trailers being able to make a turn. He stated that easy access to his place of business will be removed which will contribute to a loss of business. He was concerned about the safety aspects also.

Larry Holler of 4251 to 4255 Arendell Street, Morehead City, was concerned with the high volume of traffic in summer and that the proposed traffic pattern will cause traffic jams.

Mike Lawrence of 3238 Highway #24, Newport, stated that the proposed project does not give emergency vehicles enough space to turn around and will add time to emergency responses. In his opinion, the project will create road blocks and will not allow people to get to a specific business.

Ralph Nitt of 4032 Arendell Street, Morehead City, stated that Morehead City is a destination and that the proposed median project will cause more accidents.

Sammie Turner of 4802 Sound Drive, Morehead City, commented that he was a Highway Patrol Officer when Morehead City had the former median and that there were more accidents with the median. He was concerned with rescue vehicles and their access. He was of the opinion that the traffic and accident statistics from the NCDOT were not justified.

David Freshwater of 220 Roanoke Avenue, Morehead City, stated he spoke with businesses in Havelock, North Carolina, where the median was just recently constructed and the feelings in Havelock were that the median project “will kill your business.”

Mrs. Turnage of 4010 Arendell Street, Morehead City, was opposed to the traffic median project. She suggested that instead of the median, the 45 mph speed limit be lowered to 35 mph and that more turn signals should be installed.

Jim Hinds of 4425 Arendell Street, Morehead City, requested that the Council look at the economic factor. He stated he pays high taxes for good visage for retail property and was concerned that business will fall off with a traffic median.

Buddy Kittrell of 4106 Arendell Street, Morehead City, expressed his concern against the median and questioned the necessity for the median project.

John Brute of 4425 Arendell Street, Morehead City [Harborside Condominiums], questioned that years ago a similar median was removed and it did not make sense to construct it again.

Iva Fearing of 4426 Arendell Street, Morehead City, stated that safety was a concern and that the county has grown faster than expected. She questioned how to oppose the project and still keep people safe.

Walter Kittrell of 4106 Arendell Street, Morehead City, stated that the median project will cut the traffic flow to his business. He was of the opinion that the best option would be to lower the speed limit.

Lynn Hinds of Harborside, Morehead City, expressed the opinion that the speed limit needed to be lowered.

Jeff Turnage of 4131 Arendell Street, Morehead City, had concern about delivery trucks accessing his business. He was of the opinion that there would be more traffic accidents with the proposed traffic median and turning lanes.

Chris Moore of 4142 Arendell Street, Morehead City, was concerned that his business would be affected and that emergency response times will increase.

Lois Brooks of 1702 Wood Duck Court, Morehead City, stated that it will be a huge inconvenience for her boat selling business with getting boats on trailers to the boat launching area at the Visitor’s Center.

Scott Kelly of 2805 Mayberry Loop Road, Morehead City, was adamantly opposed to the median project.

Jack Adams, 113 Grayson Lane, Newport, stated that that the number one traffic safety issue was to keep the traffic flowing and the proposed median project will not keep the traffic flowing.

Mayor Jones invited the two [2] representatives of the NCDOT, Wayne Alligood and Haywood Daughtry to offer comments.

Wayne Alligood of the NCDOT reported that the Regional Safety Office of the NCDOT does the reviews of crash prone areas. U.S. Highway #70 is a key corridor to promote rural economic development of eastern North Carolina and the focal point of NCDOT study. The long term strategy of Carteret County is the development of the northern by-pass, however, the short term strategy report looked at the current corridor from Interstate #95 to the

Morehead City State Port. Highway #70 in Morehead City has the highest crash rate than anywhere else on the whole corridor, however, in terms of severity, Morehead City crashes are less severe. The NCDOT expects to accomplish a reduction in crashes by manipulating traffic flow volume and managing the crossings in the median.

Haywood Daughtry of the NCDOT explained how the median will allow for better traffic flow. He explained the timeframe for the study was August 2006 to July 2011. He discussed how NCDOT determines the crash possibilities of a specific area.

Wayne Alligood stated that modifications are still being made to the project which is currently scheduled for construction this autumn. The project cannot be totally deleted as federal crash safety funds are being utilized and if the project was stopped, there would be a liability issue. Part of the project will also be sidewalk installation.

Upon a question from Iva Fearing as to a traffic median being the only solution to good traffic flow, Mr. Daughtry replied there is no other corridor type project which has the highest reduction of crashes as installation of a median.

Carol Compton of 2030 Arendell Street, Morehead City, stated that Bridges Street is only being used by local individuals and that better signage toward using that route could help alleviate traffic on Arendell Street.

Wayne Alligood reported that Highway #70 has too many driveways and entrances which create traffic and accident problems.

Interim City Manager Connet reported that in speaking with Jim Freeman, Havelock City Manager, he was told that when federal highway safety money is used for a project, it becomes a liability issue from a city and NCDOT standpoint. There was opposition to the project in Havelock and businesses stated they were losing business, however, to date these losses have not been statistically evaluated. The City of Havelock received concessions from the NCDOT for additional traffic signals, better signage and landscaping, and had hired a private traffic consultant which was most helpful in discussions with the NCDOT.

Haywood Daughtry stated that the median project will not take away the volume of traffic on Highway 70, but will decrease congestion and streamline traffic. The traffic signals will also be timed.

Upon a question from Councilman Walker about emergency vehicles getting through traffic with the median, Mr. Alligood responded that the NCDOT has requested information from both the Police Department and the Fire/EMS Department.

Haywood Daughtry stated that the project in Newport has lessened the incidence of traffic accidents. The total length of the NCDOT study was 4.5 miles of the 120 miles from Interstate #95 to the State Port in Morehead City and of that 2.7 miles were in Morehead City. Highway #70 is a federal highway and the state receives funding for its improvements. He stated that the City of Kinston asked to have a private traffic study of their project done before the median was constructed.

Upon a question as to delaying the project in order to obtain an analysis of the results of the Havelock median project, Mr. Alligood responded that there is that possibility, however, the Morehead City Council would have to take action on this by requesting an additional study. He continued that it was the desire of the NCDOT to do the best for the residents.

Upon a question from Interim City Manager Connet regarding the process to request a review similar to the City of Kinston, Mr. Alligood stated that the City Council could do a resolution requesting an official review of the project by a private firm. This would cost \$40,000 to \$50,000, but is funded by the NCDOT and is available to help the Council in its decisions regarding Highway #70.

Councilman Taylor commented that he preferred a review study with an emphasis on boat towing and large truck capabilities. He also stated that scooters should also be included in the study.

Wayne Alligood stated that any specific item which Morehead City wanted addressed should be given to the NCDOT. Upon a suggestion from Councilwoman Warrender to perhaps lower the speed limit along that section of Highway #70, Mr. Alligood responded that NCDOT could review that request.

Councilman Thompson was in favor of requesting the additional study.

Mr. Daughtry stated that if this study was requested, it was his recommendation to form a committee comprised of the Morehead City Planning Director, members from the business community, NCDOT representatives and anyone else that the City may request.

The Council concurred to have a proposed resolution available at the March 13, 2012, Council Meeting.

City Manager Search

Interim City Manager Connet reported that the proposals from the agencies are due in by March 2. The following firms were requested for proposals:

Mercer Group	Springstead
Wilder	Council of Governments
Developmental Associates [Straus]	

He continued that from the review of those already received the basic pricing seems to be generally between \$15,000 to \$20,000. He advised the Council to get their thoughts together as to what qualifications they desire in a City Manager as well as benefits such as car allowance, etc. Mr. Connet stated he would give the Council an executive summary on each proposal and will set a CLOSED SESSION at the Council Meeting on March 13th to discuss a contract and personnel.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:

Jeanne M. Giblin, City Clerk