

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2012**  
**CHINCOTEAGUE SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**JOINT WORKSHOP WITH CHINCOTEAGUE TO**  
**ASSATEAGUE BEACH ACCESS COMMITTEE**

**Council Members Present:**

John H. Tarr, Mayor  
J. Arthur Leonard, Vice Mayor  
Ellen W. Richardson, Councilwoman  
John N. Jester, Jr., Councilman  
Gene W. Taylor, Councilman  
Tripp Muth, Councilman  
Terry Howard, Councilman

**Beach Access Committee:**

Wanda J. Thornton, Supervisor  
Ted Lewis  
David Schulte  
Denise Bowden

**Members Absent**

Donna Mason

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Tarr called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**INVOCATION**

Councilman Taylor offered the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Tarr led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS AND ADOPTION**

Councilman Howard motioned, seconded by Vice Mayor Leonard to adopt the agenda as presented. Unanimously approved.

**1. Guest Speaker – Presentation of FWS Chincoteague Baseline Economic Analysis**

Mr. Joe McCauley thanked Council for allowing him to come before them once again. He introduced those present from the FWS. He also introduced the guest speaker Mr. Edward “Ted” Maillett who is from the Economics Division in the Arlington office. He has been working for some time on the economic analysis.

Mr. Maillett gave his credentials and reviewed a power point presentation regarding the economic analysis. He advised that they are trying to create a document that is transparent and describe the community on a financial and economic aspect. He stated that this study is based on information they have collected. He shared highlights. He also stated that they expanded on the economic contributions of the Wallops Flight Facility. He mentioned the contributions of the shellfish industry also. Mr. Maillett referred to the 2010 Census data and population.

Supervisor Thornton interjected that the Census data was incorrect and was revised.

Town Planner Neville stated that the population was corrected to 3,666.

Town Manager Ritter advised that with Accomack County's count of the school age children the population is 3,776.

Supervisor Thornton explained the population recount for the Census.

Mr. Mailett thanked her for that information. He then reviewed the Census population information. He also spoke of housing units, education and poverty status. He reviewed employment, earnings and the businesses within the Town along with tourist related and not tourist related employment. He discussed revenues, lodging tax and gross receipts. He mentioned commercial fishing.

Mr. Mailett then reviewed the Assateague Island National Seashore economic impact study. He mentioned visitors and the average spending per visitor. He advised that there is a survey directed to Chincoteague visitors that may or may not help. He reviewed the traffic counts and the average expenditures per day.

There was further discussion.

Mr. Mailett discussed the expenditures further. He advised that it is not exactly known how the money is spent.

Supervisor Thornton asked about the visitation impact. She stated that regarding the beach there is no way the average spending is what is reported.

Councilman Jester commented.

Supervisor Thornton mentioned the activities that were mandated by FWS such as hunting and fishing.

Mr. Mailett explained the revenue study. He advised that it doesn't necessarily target those people who go on to Ocean City.

There was discussion regarding costs, lodging, food and transportation.

Town Planner Neville asked how the Town can have confidence with the computer model and is there a way to test it. He stated that based on the assumptions the tax revenues were a known amount and was within a reasonable degree of accuracy of what the computer was projecting.

Mr. Mailett moved on to explain the impact on the Town. He gave revenue figures and employment statistics.

Councilman Jester stated that the real estate values and taxes are 25% more of the County's tax revenue. He advised that there is a large number of people that come to the island to work who are contractors and hard to keep track of. He suggested the impact beyond the Town of Chincoteague.

Mr. Mailett stated that they know that there are a number of people that come to the Refuge for the day and not staying. He agrees that there are people that come in and not counted.

Supervisor Thornton also added that those people that live in Accomack County would go to the beach here or to Ocean City.

There was discussion regarding out-of-town suppliers.

Mr. Mailett stated that this is an assessment of the Town's economy and feels that the Town can have a more civil relationship with the Refuge based on figures. He stated they are trying to bring to the table something to lay a good framework.

Councilman Taylor stated that the Town is dependent on this.

Mr. Mailett thanked Council.

Supervisor Thornton asked about the services that Chincoteague utilizes and mentioned the County's Economic Impact Study and the service providers. She feels that there are a lot of services and providers that come to the Island and it is hard to factor this in.

There was further discussion regarding services taken into consideration and the cost per person per day. They also discussed the gross sales and transient occupancy.

Mr. Mailett stated that they tried to look at this in an entirely different way.

Mayor Tarr mentioned the negative news in newspaper articles and that people are not purchasing homes here because the beach access is challenged. He stated that if the beach is gone then the assessments would drop.

Mr. Mailett added that real estate is tough to work with. He stated that it is challenging to be accurate with this.

Supervisor Thornton asked about the seasonal campers and those who own campers here do not pay transient tax but pay regular taxes on their camper. She also added that they spend a lot of money here with the services, restaurants and meals tax. She asked if they were taken into consideration for the impact they have.

Mr. Mailett advised that they have paid for the study of visitors, however, it's not perfect. He stated that the question was where the visitors come from and what they spend money on. He added that it is also only administered in a 2 week period. He stated that if the Town has more data they would be willing to review it.

Mayor Tarr advised that nearly 50% of the homes on Chincoteague are transient rental units. He explained the rentals and number of possible visitors. He stated that should anyone have further questions to email or call Town Planner Neville.

Vice Mayor Leonard asked if Chincoteague was unique in the impact statement or does it fit within a certain criteria.

Mr. Mailett advised that it is unique in many ways.

Ms. Denise Bowden mentioned the impact study that was mentioned at University of Georgia and people buying property next to a wildlife refuge. She stated that there is a difference and that most wildlife refuges don't have a beach as opposed to ours. She suggested taking that into consideration also.

There was discussion as to the next step.

Mr. Mailett advised that they try to look at the impact based on the different options in the CCP. He stated that they typically look at alternatives and impact based on those alternatives. He also stated that it is a very long process. He referred to the survey.

There was further discussion.

Town Manager Ritter asked how the baseline would be used in the future. He asked if there would be an inflationary number. He explained that in 5 years if the Town is still at the baseline then the Town is going under.

Mr. Mailett explained that inflation isn't necessarily factored.

Town Manager Ritter wanted to know that in 4 years, how the alternatives would impact the Town based on the inflation factor.

Further comments continued.

Town Planner Neville stated that it bothers him if the purpose of the analysis is to look at visitor spending with demographic data focused on the Town and not the visitors within the 300 mile radius. He feels that they should recognize where the money is coming from.

Mr. Mailett advised that until they get the information back from the visitor survey they have no way to compile it.

Town Planner Neville advised that there are programs that can produce the information based on the zip codes.

Mr. Mailett reminded Council that this is the Refuges' 15 year plan and is a living document used until they go through the process again. He feels the refuge managers need to understand where they're moving to and where their neighbors are.

Town Planner Neville stated that they need to know who is visiting the refuge.

There was discussion regarding the Town's survey and Town Planner Neville advised he would give Mr. Mailett a copy of the Town's survey results.

Mr. Ray Rosenberger asked about the expenditures based on the options.

Mr. Mailett stated that if they're talking about a large scale project, they will bring jobs to the economy.

Mayor Tarr disagreed as this is considered a short-term income which is only for the length of the construction project. He stated that they want the long-term numbers.

Mr. Mailett advised that they use the short-term and long-term economic impact. He advised that in the next step they are waiting for internal comments first and then he will meet with the Refuge and work on long term effects. He stated they will then be more specific and is unsure of the schedule.

Mr. Joe McCauley commented that they had the economic analysis done as part of their CCP process. He stated that everyone will see that the Town is very tied to the beach and on the same baseline. He also added that in any type of analysis it isn't necessarily the exact dollar figure but the relative importance. He mentioned the comments that Mayor Tarr had regarding the effect on real estate. He understands the importance and feels they need to find the common ground. He feels that they need to see what drives the economy. Mr. McCauley also stated that in the next steps they will take the comments into account then try to get this reassembled.

Mayor Tarr thanked them for attending.

There were further comments from Council.

## **2. Review of Draft Beach Access Newsletter**

Town Planner Neville reviewed the draft Beach Access Newsletter. He asked if they feel this is the right set of messages to get out at this point. He stated that this is an attempt to promote one of the top issues of how to take care of the beach and parking with the storm season coming up. He issued a handout describing a dune restoration project at Cape Cod National Seashore. He feels the focus is that this project has already been done with the Seashore and Community volunteers. He advised that they used sand fence. He hopes that CNWR doesn't end up with the same language as the Prime Hook CCP. He stated that the Fish and Wildlife are trying to form the policies that the Town can work with. He stated that he added a little about the piping plovers and the FWS work over the last 15 years. He feels it is working because the numbers are up. He hopes to continue shared use of the beach. He asked for thoughts and comments.

Mr. Tom Bonetti stated that he is a Planner and has reviewed the newsletter. He talked about the language, appropriateness and compatibility. He explained that for Prime Hook, they've never used the beach there and don't have an assigned area for a recreational beach. He discussed the items that are inappropriate or incompatible.

There was further comments and discussion.

Vice Mayor Leonard asked about replenishment if the beach washes through. He feels there should be some form of restoration plan in place.

Councilman Jester suggested looking into a state or federal level infrastructure plan for storm protection.

Town Planner Neville stated that they have something in place that states they will defer this until a group of federal agencies can get together to decide the appropriate thing to do. He doesn't feel they should avoid the issue.

Councilman Jester commented on beach replenishment at Wallops and Wallops taking a tough stand.

Mr. Bonetti stated that Town Planner Neville has done a good job highlighting the restoration project in Cape Cod. He is unsure if the Park Service knows about this. He feels sand fencing is worth a try. He suggested that there may not be enough room for a beach, several rows of sand fence and parking also.

Ms. Bowden would like more notice for the public. She feels the public hasn't been given enough time or information.

There was further discussion.

Town Planner Neville advised he would make final touches to the newsletter and get it out.

### **3. Mayor and Council Comments**

Councilman Howard feels that if there isn't beach replenishment there won't need to be an economy here.

There were brief comments.

Town Planner Neville explained the studies and stated that the Town is up against the movement to allow nature to take its course. He stated that they would have to go to the national level to fight this.

### **Adjourn**

Councilman Howard motioned, seconded by Councilman Jester to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

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Mayor

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Town Manager