

March 10, 2020

A Special Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at approximately 6:00 p.m., all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied. This meeting was held at Holy Cross Episcopal Church, 2520 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, SC 29482.

Present were: Patrick M. O'Neil, Mayor
Chauncey Clark, Mayor Pro-Tem
Sarah Church, Councilmember
Greg Hammond, Councilmember
Tim Reese, Councilmember
Bachman Smith, IV, Councilmember
Kaye Smith, Councilmember

Mayor O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and stated the press and public had been notified in accordance with State Law. There were approximately one hundred and fifteen (115) members of the public present and two (2) members of the media present. The purpose of the meeting was to receive a presentation regarding the Accreted Land Management Plan.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clark gave a brief introduction of the team of consultants. Keith Bowers, ASLA, Jessica Hardesty Norris, PhD, and Katherine Bartter of Biohabitats, Inc., Scott Parker, FASLA, of DesignWorks, LLC, Mark Permar of Permar, Inc., Timothy W. Kana, PhD PG, of Coastal Science and Engineering and John B. "Bart" Sabine of Sabine and Waters.

Presentation- Accreted Land Management Plan Recommendations: Keith Bowers thanked Town Council and Staff for inviting him and his team to participate in this process and for their hospitality. Mr. Bowers gave a brief background of their process. Their plan was to build on top of the Draft Management Plan from 2011, rather than to recreate it. The team agreed on a number of important take-aways for the plan. Those include: benefits the entire island, embrace the dynamic nature of the barrier island and maritime habitat, resiliency is critical for the future (plan for the long-term) and management actions must be financially and socially sustainable.

The Management Plan that Biohabitats, Inc. developed comprises of six (6) management zones. Each zone's recommendations could work independently, but the sum is greater than the parts. The management zone boundaries are conceptual- exact boundaries will require field verification. The Plan relies on adaptive management to monitor, assess and adjust specifications. It also requires administration by a professional- 'Town Naturalist'.

A map showing Management Zones A-F are attached (Attachment 1).

Management Zone A- Maritime Forest Conservation: The team recommends protecting and conserving the maritime forest in the areas shown. The Town Naturalist would actively manage the wildlife habitat, invasive species and storm recovery. The Town would promote active stewardship and community engagement.

Management Zone B- Backdune Ridge Trail: The team recommends a 12 to 16' elevation of an uninterrupted dune with side trail along the entire length of the island would dramatically improve resiliency from storm surge events. The Town could build off the existing high ridges to minimize disturbance and revegetate with native grasses/herbaceous plants. The public and emergency access paths would have to be realigned to go up and over the Backdune Ridge.

Management Zone C- Managed Maritime Woodland: This zone is from the beachfront property owners line out to the Backdune Ridge Trail. The team recommends this zone be optional based on the homeowner preference. The homeowners would be working with the Town Naturalist. There would be a 60% minimum canopy/shrub cover. Within the 60% cover, trees may be limbed-up and pruned to facilitate view/breeze ways; shrubs may be pruned or thinned but not topped, all at the homeowners' expense. Outside of the 60% cover, trees and shrubs may be removed, thinned or topped. The homeowner is responsible for invasive species management and storm recovery costs if they exercise this option.

Management Zone D- Maritime Dunes: The management actions are performed at the discretion of the Town Naturalist. There would be a 75% minimum canopy/shrub cover. Within the 75% cover, trees may be limbed-up and pruned to facilitate view/breeze ways; shrubs may be pruned or thinned but not topped. Outside of the 75% cover, trees and shrubs may be removed, thinned or topped.

Management Zone E- Maritime Interdunal Wetlands and Ponds: The team recommends (re)connecting isolated maritime interdunal depressions and open water ponds to enhance circulation, stormwater storage and habitat diversity. Where feasible, redirect stormwater from nearby streets into the interconnected interdunal wetlands to provide stormwater quality and quantity management for the community. The plan is to reconnect interdunal wetlands by raising beach access paths (or providing pipes under the path).

Management Zone F- Beach Access Paths: The team recommends raising the beach access paths to safely cross over the Backdune Ridge. The plan is to modify beach access paths to facilitate connections between isolated maritime depressions, interdunal wetlands and open water ponds.

Mr. Bowers explained what the next steps would be. After discussion by Council and public input, Council would have to consider amendments and adopt a Final Plan. The following would also need to be completed: Proof of Concept (DHEC, USACE, Land Trust, NPS, SCDOT, etc.),

refinement of management boundaries and adaptive management plan, implementation and operations and management cost estimates, identify grant funding opportunities and commit to retain/hire full-time Town Naturalist.

Questions from Town Council:

Councilmember Greg Hammond asked a question regarding the Backdune Ridge Trail. He asked if mechanical manipulation or sand fences would be involved to implement. Mr. Bowers answered it would most likely require using small equipment such as skid-steer bobcats or backhoes and they can use sand from areas of accretion. Councilmember Hammond asked if Mr. Bowers could speak about the wetlands and ponds vis-à-vis mosquitos. Mr. Bowers stated that semi-permanent standing water that has a lot of vegetation in it is great for biodiversity but is also great for mosquitos. The open water areas that has fish and other predators as well as wind that produces currents has a lot less breeding of mosquitos. Mr. Bowers stated that the island would see a mix of both standing water and open water areas because vegetation is an important ecological component but can be interspersed with the open water areas to reduce the number of mosquitos.

Councilmember Tim Reese asked a question regarding the Maritime Forest Conservation. He asked what the intention of that area is. Mr. Bowers answered removing invasive species is the main objective but there may be other ways of managing the area more diversely. Councilmember Reese asked Mr. Bowers what the team's philosophy was on dead vegetation that is currently in the maritime forest due to storm surges from the last number of storms. Mr. Bowers stated that dead wood in any ecosystem is valuable for insects and critters and adding carbon back into the soil. However, he stated that a mass of woody debris can suffocate anything below it and prevent any kind of vegetation from growing up and would recommend removing some of it.

Councilmember Kaye Smith asked a question regarding the Backdune Ridge Trail. She asked what the current height of the dunes on the island were. Mr. Bowers answered they are between 8-12' in some areas.

Councilmember Bachman Smith, IV asked if tree topping is an ecological or biological sound practice. Mr. Bowers answered that what the team is trying to do is find a compromise to making sure they provide ecological benefit to the forest but also create views/breeze ways. He added thinning or topping trees is a way to find that compromise.

Councilmember Sarah Church asked questions regarding the Backdune Ridge Trail. She asked if building the large dune will prevent storm water from ebbing and flowing in the wetland areas or

will it just move the water around. Mr. Bowers answered in some cases where the wetlands are on the backside of the Backdunes Ridge Trail, pipes would be necessary to help drain the water.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clark asked if there was a plan for having differentiating parts of the forest in terms of openness or thickness. Mr. Bowers answered no, the team suggests the zones be managed by the Town Naturalist in the community's best interest.

Mayor O'Neil thanked Keith Bowers and his team for their hard work. He asked a question regarding the Backdune Ridge Trail. He asked if the Town is using sand from the front of the beach, what was the reason for not building the dune closer to the beach where the sand is. Mr. Bowers answered because it is more susceptible to storm surge right away and the more that the storm surge has an opportunity to go over the primary and secondary dunes before it gets to the Backdune, the less impact it will have.

Public Comments:

Keil Schmid, 1512 Poe Avenue- asked if the team saw changes in shoreline trends, would it impact the recommended management zones. Mr. Bowers stated the beach is slowly accreting but it would not change the recommended management zones.

Eddie Fava, 2424 Myrtle Avenue- asked if there was any thought to reduce storm surge on the back side of the island. Mr. Bowers stated that during the team's charette process, the back side of the island was discussed at length. Although it was not included in the plan that was presented, it is something that needs to be addressed. Mr. Bowers added that the Town Naturalist could address the issues on the back side of the island.

Rhonda Sanders, 1411 Thompson Avenue- asked Mr. Bowers how many times he has walked the maritime forest. Mr. Bowers answered a dozen.

Larry Kobrovsky, 402 Seabreeze Lane- asked how much it will cost to manipulate and manage the forest. Mr. Bowers answered hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Kobrovsky asked if the dunes will affect the integrity of the forest. Mr. Bowers answered the plan is to supplement the current dunes rather than create new ones to strategically minimize the disturbance of the forest.

Barbara Spell, 1702 Atlantic Avenue- expressed concerns regarding safety to front beach homeowners along the Backdune Ridge Trail.

Susan Middaugh, 2420 Raven Drive- asked how wide the dunes would be along the Backdune Ridge Trail. Mr. Bowers answered approximately 6' wide at the top.

Cyndy Ewing, 2514 I'On Avenue- expressed concerns regarding the cost of building dunes.

Pat Votava, 2214 Jasper Boulevard- asked a question regarding obtaining grant funds.

Mark Howard, 1820 Central Avenue- asked if zone C or D provided a higher ecological value. Mr. Bowers answered zone C provides a higher social and cultural value and zone D provides a higher ecological value.

Pete Budko, 2061 Pettigrew Street- expressed concerns regarding dunes and storm events.

Following this presentation, Biohabitats, Inc. will be finalizing their report. Town Council and Staff will receive it within the next two (2) weeks and it will be available to the public on the Town's website.

Motion: Action: Adjourn Meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Moved by Mayor Pro-Tem Clark, Seconded by Councilmember Bachman Smith, IV.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Courtney Liles