



**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**LAND USE & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL**

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

Committee met at 8:30AM, this date, at Town Hall (2056 Middle Street), all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been met. Present were Committee members Councilmember Chauncey Clark (Chair), Mayor Pat O'Neil and Councilmember Kaye Smith; Staff: Administrator Benke; Director of Planning and Zoning Henderson; Asst. to Administrator Darrow; Building Official Robinson; Fire Chief Stith and Battalion Chief Hawver.

**1. Call to Order.** Chair Clark called the meeting to order, stated the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, and all members were present; no media and approximately twenty-six (26) audience members present (including Council members Church, Reese and B. Smith).

**2. Meeting Agenda – Accepted as published**

**3. Discussion of team selection for review of the Accreted Land Management Plan for consideration at the October 7, 2019 Council Workshop**

Chair Clark advised that today the Committee will make recommendations for team candidates to provide environmental/coastal consulting services for the Island. He noted that any recommendations will move forward to Council for its discussion at the October 7, 2019 Council Workshop. Thereafter, Chair Clark opened the floor for public comments.

**Public Comments**

**Bachmann Smith (2211 I'On Avenue), Council member,**

- Requested the names of other firms/consultants that the Committee vetted before establishing the published short-list of firms/consultants.
- Questioned the sense of urgency with this project request, noting comments made by fellow Councilmembers at the September 17, 2019 Council meeting in support of this project:
  - Councilmember Clark wanted 'views and breezes'
  - Councilmember Reese, in answer to Councilmember Church's query, said the project request 'is about the trees.'
- Stormwater issues are a higher priority for the Town's focus and funding than dunes formation. The Town should address stormwater issues as a first priority.
  - Council knows that storm weather events happen annually, or bi-annually, inundating the Island with flooding and stormwater.
  - When sea levels do rise, it will approach from the back end of the Island. Three (3') feet of sea level rise has water coming across Middle Street and will not breach the existing beach dunes in place, according to the studies that the Committee has already been examining.

Reiterated earlier queries: why the sense of urgency and who else has Committee considered for this project besides the published short-list?

**Julia Khoury (1728 I'On Avenue)** wants Committee, in its list of potential consultants, to expressly focus on including barrier island ecology experts as opposed to landscape experts.

**Kim Brown (2118 Pettigrew Street)** supports an island-wide plan to bolster resiliency in the face of climate change and regular storms that have threatened the Island.

**Sarah Church (1655 Atlantic Avenue), Council member,**

- This is the second study Council has approved that was not in the FY2020 budget. Town Council just approved the FY2020 budget in June. The budget was approved after a multi-phase public review/approval process. The process included a public hearing and multiple opportunities for Council and the public to identify project priorities and funding for the same. So far Council is not doing a good job of adhering the Town's fiscal plan.
- Process is backwards: Committee and thereafter Council should not look at consultant team members when Council has not discussed whether it is going to address the Accreted Land Management Plan (ALMP). If the ALMP will be addressed, Council needs to discuss and agree upon methodology and scope of work. Until the aforementioned items have been discussed and agreed upon by Council, it is very premature for the LUNR Committee, and Council, to discuss project team candidates.

**Susan Middaugh (2420 Raven Drive)** noted that work is only beginning on the Transition Zone within the Accreted Land. She supports allowing completion of work in the transition zone test area and Council evaluation of the impact of that work on the Accreted Land. It is premature for Council to decide to extend work throughout the Accreted Land without evaluating the test area. Submits this project is being rushed through in 2-3 Council or Committee meetings without much public advertisement and/or opportunity for public input.

**Karen Byko (2901 Jasper Boulevard)** reiterated Councilmember Church's comments. Why hire people to implement a plan that is not clearly defined? She recalled Councilmember Clark stating, at the September Council meeting, that his project objective was 'views and breezes'. Submitted that if the goal is 'views and breezes,' then Council should clearly state that is the goal and hire experts to accomplish this. Town should select and hire consultant support based upon a clear scope of work and project goals.

**Cindy Ewing (2514 I'On Avenue)** concurs with comments made by Councilmembers B. Smith and Church and Ms. Brown. Submits the Town has already accommodated the 77 front beach owners within the current draft Accreted Land Management Plan, addressing concerns regarding fire breaks, mosquitoes, etc. Recalled former Town consultant, Tim Kana of CSE, repeatedly stating that the removal of any vegetation in the Accreted Land increases the risk, and causes harm, to structures and homeowners.

**Greg Hammond, Council member (written statement read by Mayor O'Neil, October 1, 2019 email to Mayor O'Neil and Courtney Liles, Town Clerk)**

"The accreted land is a highly divisive topic on this island, this is clear. There are many people here today who have come to express deep and personal beliefs and opinions on this issue, and I thank them for being part of the conversation. It is our job as elected officials in this town to hear all sides of an issue, and to take measured action that incorporates concerns from, and addresses the desires of all of our island residents. We must not simply ignore a group of citizens because our opinions and beliefs may be at odds. We also must not cater solely to a group of citizens because they are simply louder and more vocal. We must discharge our duties as elected officials without prejudice. We must diligently perform our duties thoughtfully, yet with decisiveness and action."

**Kyle Schmidt (1512 Poe Avenue)** noted he is a new Town resident and coastal geologist. He commented on the economical taxing foundation for a maritime forest. Noted that one of the reasons he chose to live on Sullivan's Island is due to the Accreted Land, a deed protected land.

**Joe Church (1655 Atlantic Avenue)** noted he is a SC licensed professional civil engineer. He has studied coastal erosion and the impact of storms on the coast for his entire professional career (30+ years). Expressed concern about the lack of transparency with this process, to date, specifically noting Council members soliciting bids without an open scope of work. Submits the process to obtain the consultant short-list before the Committee is outside the SC procurement ordinances and certainly outside the Town's procurement ordinance. Urged Council to slow down this process, increase transparency and allow the public access to, and input on, the same. Echoed comments by Councilmember Hammond that treatment of the accreted land is controversial and divisive and, as such, the process and procedures should be clearly laid out for the public, particularly before committing taxpayer dollars to a project.

Chair Clark, seeing and hearing no other comments, closed the public comment period (approximately 8:44AM).

**MOTION: Chair Clark made a motion to specify a team of professionals to workshop for discussion and consideration on October 7, 2019, who will review the Accreted Land Management Plan, Final Draft 3A, reports, GIS maps, aerials, and vegetation surveys as needed to be provided by Town staff. The intent is to look at key elements of resiliency, storm protection, mosquito control and others. This scope should include a review of the entire island boundary including foreshore, backshore, and inlet/harbor elements. The goal will be a document summarizing the team findings, recommendations, that become a menu of elements of future management follow-up in order to be effective stewards of our natural resources. The team would be: Keith Bowers of Biohabitats, team leader; Mark Permar of Permar, Inc., Dr. Tim Kana of Coastal Sciences, Bart Sabin of Sabin and Waters, Dr. Nicole Elko of Elko Consulting, Inc., and Scott Parker of Design Works, LLC and to have staff to negotiate contracts and engage with such professionals in accordance with the Town's procurement policy.  
Seconded by Councilmember Smith.**

### **Discussion:**

Mayor O'Neil noted the motion was lengthy and, since he did not have a copy of the printed motion Chair Clark had, acknowledged it was hard to follow the recommendations. That being said, he expressed the following concerns: the pace and order of proceedings. Submitted that until Town Council has a clear idea of what the project scope will/should be, it is premature to consider individual consultants, however well qualified the members may be in their respective fields. The question is what areas of expertise are needed, and that question cannot be answered until Town Council identifies the project goals.

As to public transparency, mentioned by residents today, the agenda identifies discussion of the Accreted Land. Today's discussion and motion before the Committee addresses a much broader topic and project scope/project area, that was not advertised to the public.

Councilmember Smith submitted that the proposed project seeks to return to the original intent and scope of the Accreted Land Management Plan, and read page 4 of the draft Accreted Land Management Plan v3A (**attached as Exhibit A**). The proposed motion identifies scope of work that would include a review of entire Island with resiliency being a key goal. She submitted that resiliency, a high priority item, was the impetus for this plan.

Chair Clark noted that the recommendation seeks to develop a menu of items to consider. The Town management plan 3A begins to address these issues and this proposed team would carry that discussion forward to the next level. Asked Councilmember Smith to provide an overview of the project team.

Councilmember Smith introduced list of proposed team members and their respective Curriculum Vitae, reading from prepared comments (**attached as Exhibit B**). She concluded the introductions by commenting that four (4) of the six (6) scientists and experts have done work on, and are familiar with, the Island. As such, it will save the Town money to have them work on an updated plan instead of starting from the beginning. Climate resilience planning should be the Town's #1 goal and this recommendation would work toward the goal of the Town becoming more resilient and safer.

Chair Clark called the meeting back to order, advised public that this phase of discussion was reserved for the Committee and asked Mayor O'Neil if he had any comments.

Mayor O'Neil advised he continues to stand by his earlier comments: it is very premature to select a team of people to perform work for the Town when Council does not have a very clear idea of what it wants the team to do.

Chair Clark asked that consideration of the motion move forward and the scope of work could be further discussed at the October 7, 2019 Council Workshop.

**Call for the question: MOTION PASSED 2-1 (Mayor O'Neil dissenting)**

Administrator Benke asked for clarification regarding action items for staff in advance of next week's Council Workshop. Chair Clark clarified there was no additional work requested of staff before the October 7, 2019 Workshop.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:01AM (Councilmember Smith motioned; Mayor O'Neil seconded; unanimously passed)

Respectfully submitted,  
Chauncey Clark, Chair  
Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

To be approved at the October \_\_\_\_, 2019 Council \_\_\_\_\_