



Minutes  
**KITTY HAWK TOWN COUNCIL**  
Monday, March 25, 2025  
5200 North Croatan Highway/859 West Kitty Hawk Road  
9:00 AM

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Kitty Hawk Town Council Members toured the new Police Department construction**
3. **The meeting reconvened at 10 am at Kitty Hawk Fire Department located at 859 West Kitty Hawk Road.**

**Town Manager Melody Clopton** welcomed Council members and Town staff to the first budget workshop. The theme of the workshop was detailed as Defining the Path Forward. Clopton recognized that budget discussions may be difficult at times, but dialogue is necessary. All were encouraged to focus on understanding, to remain open to addressing concerns, and remaining solution driven. Clopton stated that the Town of Kitty Hawk goals set forth in the mission and vision are efficiency, maintaining expected services, sustainability, and continued growth. The next part of the workshop will be presentations by each department head.

**Chief Palkovics** was the first presenter with the Police Department's budget. Palkovics stated that the budget presentation was the result of a collaborative effort with the Police Department's leadership team. This team included Lieutenant Jimmy Helms, Lieutenant Jeff Gard, Lieutenant Jason Rigler, and Administrative Records Technician Amy Corle. Palkovics noted the photo of the staff in the beginning of the presentation represented a full complement which had not occurred since 2014/2015.

**Councilman David Hines** asked if all officers have now completed Basic Law Enforcement Training.

**Chief Palkovics** explained that 3 individuals are still in BLET training and will be graduating in May 2025. Palkovics then presented the crime statistics for the Town. Of the crimes listed, it was noted that fraud has been the most marked increase over the past year, traffic crashes have increased, and efforts to improve data collection are underway. Current data collection does not include multiple citations, and less enforcement was noted due to lower staffing levels during the year. Palkovics noted that the three most crucial goals of the department are education, engagement, and enforcement. Expanding skills of the staff and engaging the public in person as well as through social media are important factors for the department. Palkovics stated that more enforcement increases engagement and educational opportunities, especially with the many visitors who travel through Kitty Hawk.

During the budget presentation, several items were highlighted during the review of the financials. Replacing aging technology, adding 2 sworn officers to the complement, health and wellness, and employee engagement were priorities in this budget. The total budget is \$750,000 which includes equipment and onboarding for 2 additional sworn officers.

**Councilman David Hines** asked what was included in the department's Capital Outlay.

**Palkovics** stated that the Capital Outlay included (4) patrol vehicles, (1) trip vehicle for the Evidence and Logistics Technician, upfitting of vehicles, computers, and radar equipment.



**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked how many vehicles there are in the department including trucks.

**Chief Palkovics** stated there are (22) vehicles with (16) officers, (1) civilian, and (1) additional incoming civilian as the Evidence and Logistics Technician. There are currently (11) marked vehicles.

**Councilman Dylan Tillett** asked what is defined as an unmarked vehicle.

**Chief Palkovics** stated that an unmarked vehicle has lights but no cage, administrative vehicles have no police package.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked how the old trucks are different.

**Lieutenant Jimmy Helms** stated that the field trucks are government contract vehicles.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** mentioned that people might ask why those trucks aren't in use and why the Town is getting new vehicles while those sit unused. Pruitt then asked if there is a vehicle maintenance contract and if so, who is the department using and if they can get discounts.

**Lieutenant Jimmy Helms** stated that there is a contract for tires. Oil changes and brakes are required much more frequently for in service vehicles.

**Councilman David Hines** asked what services are included in the Maintenance Contract line item in the Police Department budget.

**Chief Palkovics** said that line items include Motorola Flex, Axon for tasers, DCIN, OBX Car Wash, Traffic Logic, and scheduling software. These are recurring costs.

**Councilman David Hines** asked why the Ford Mustang was not in use.

**Chief Palkovics** stated that the Officer of the Quarter uses that vehicle, and that Officer is currently riding with a trainee.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** mentioned that training should go down once the new officers complete BLET.

**Chief Palkovics** replied that hotel costs and per diem continue to increase. Training overall will continue to increase.

**Lieutenant Jason Rigler** stated that the department makes efforts to send officers and staff to state training with free lodging when possible.

**Councilman David Hines** asked how much is left in the training budget and if it goes into the Capital Outlay if there are any funds left over.

**Chief Palkovics** replied that any remaining funds go back into the General Fund.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked to see the original budget, year-to-date, and all revisions.

**Councilman David Hines** asked if it made sense to do a Powertrain warranty on the vehicles.

**Public Works Director Willie Midgett** stated that it would be a \$7,000 cost per vehicle.

**Chief Palkovics** stated that upfitting can be subject to change with tariffs, DJI (drone manufacturer) may be banned as Chinese product.

**Councilman David Hines** mentioned that the drone purchase had been approved for years.

**Town Manager Melody Clopton** stated that the drone purchase was approved in the current fiscal year budget.

**Chief Palkovics** replied that training would be a crucial element for the drone purchase.



**Chief Talley** presented the Fire/Ocean Rescue Budget Work Session. The Capital Outlay budget includes bunker gear, fire trucks, vehicles and side-by-side purchase for Ocean Rescue.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked if water rescue hazmat suits were purchased.

**Chief Talley** stated that only waders were purchased.

**Councilman David Hines** asked for the ensemble cost increase.

**Chief Talley** stated that in 2018 the full ensemble cost \$2,800 and the latest quote amount is \$4,600. Dry suits are \$2,200. Talley stated that these are the highlights, PPE as needed, comprehensive evaluation of \$200,000 compressor, vehicles including the Chevrolet 1500 with 110,000 miles and 10 years old. The new fire engine is on order, this is a 25-year replacement, and the current engine will be 27 years old at replacement due to lead time. Ladder 13 is a 2030 replacement with a \$2 million dollar cost.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked what the liability with waiting would be to replace the ladder. Would it change the department's rating?

**Chief Talley** replied that absolutely would change the rating and the department's certification. That would impact ISO and operations. Service contracts are different, quality is going downhill and keeping vehicles for 30 years is not good practice.

**Town Manager Melody Clopton** stated that there had been a discussion about proposing a merger with Southern Shores and Kitty Hawk fire departments to share costs.

**Councilman David Hines** stated that he did not like that idea.

**Mayor Craig Garriss** stated that he did not like that idea either.

**Councilwomen Charlotte Walker** asked why they did not like that idea.

**Councilman David Hines** said because it is Southern Shores, not Kitty Hawk.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** stated that many items are outdated, and we can't get behind again or we'll be paying for things from ten years ago.

**Councilwomen Charlotte Walker** asked if once items are ordered, if the price is guaranteed.

**Chief Talley** stated that the vendor tried to add items to the contract but there could be some changes related to EPA requirements.

**Councilwomen Charlotte Walker** asked if we buy now and don't have to pay yet, then we can plan to get there before everything goes up.

**Councilman David Hines** asked if we would receive funds if the prices were to decrease.

**Chief Talley** stated that prices are not going to decrease. The side-by-side and ATVs are not listed here because they are currently leased.

**Councilman David Hines** asked for the cost difference between lease and purchase.

**Chief Talley** stated \$4,800 versus \$1,900.

**Councilman Dylan Tillett** asked why we would keep ATVs if the side-by-side performs better for Ocean Rescue.

**Chief Talley** replied that it would be due to prohibitive costs, the side-by-side is a supervisor vehicle. The side-by-side can be used for EMS transport.



**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** stated that the ATVs are seasonal, and the side-by-side is year-round.

**Chief Talley** stated that in defining a path forward, the group needed to discuss service expectations for Ocean Rescue. Lifeguard stands are not dictated by the US Lifeguard Association, there are no guidelines on coverage. The governing body of the municipality needs to make that determination. Throughout the Town, there is a four-mile stretch of beach. Kill Devil Hills is an outlier; their model is line-of-sight from stand to stand. I do not want to propose, I want to get information from Council. There is more population on the beach with added parking. Eckner Street to Lillian Street is 1.2 miles.

**Councilman David Hines** stated that a lifeguard stand could be added in the middle, and another at Black Pelican.

**Councilwomen Charlotte Walker** stated that adding parking was a good thing and now we need to add coverage.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** asked how many roving patrols there are.

**Chief Talley** stated there are (2) roving patrols and that what we need to do is decide on a response model.

**Councilman David Hines** stated that I think the empty stretch highlighted in green needs a stand, but we need 2 more.

**Councilman Jeff Pruitt** stated that there will soon be a hotel in the highlighted green area and there is responsibility from the Town to provide Ocean Rescue service there.

**Chief Talley** mentioned that White Street access could become relevant based on the outcome of upcoming discussions.

**Town Manager Melody Clopton** replied that Town Attorney Casey Varnell will be giving a presentation on White Street at the April 7<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting.

**Chief Talley** mentioned that the cost for a lifeguard stand for the season is \$20,000.

**Tillett** asked the frequency of the roving patrols.

**Talley** replied that Ocean Rescue is currently working on a policy since there have been challenges with coverage during breaks.

**Tillett** asked Talley, as the subject matter expert, what is the recommendation for coverage?

**Talley** responded that his recommendation is (2) new stands over a (2) year period, one at Bleriot Street and another at Wilkins Street as well as (3) ATVs with more overlap on patrols.

**Pruitt** stated that he would like to hear all department requests and see the financials of each.

**Hines** stated that considering only full-time residents does not give the most accurate picture of the beach going population in Town.

#### **Public Works Department Presentation**

**Willie Midgett** Public Works had a successful summer season. The Byrd and Lillian Street walk overs are complete. Beach walkway lighting has been installed at (12) accesses. Routine Public Works items are in progress including clearing 24 miles of Town right-of-way and 5 miles of multi-use paths. A new Custodian was hired earlier this year. Public Works staff have been assisting with some of the new Police Department tasks.

**Hines** asked if the way the ramp at Lillian Street was constructed will make the sand pile up.



**Midgett** replied that the new design will improve the sand issues, and the original structure was built prior to beach nourishment.

**Pruitt** asked if Public Works does the landscaping.

**Midgett** replied that they do not, landscaping is a contracted service. Capital items this year include roof replacement at the medical center.

**Hines** asked if the ambulance bay roof at the medical center is asphalt.

**Midgett** replied that it is metal.

**Tillett** asked what equipment would be replaced at the playground.

**Midgett** explained that it is the main apparatus which costs \$50,000.

#### **Planning and Inspection Department Presentation**

**Director of Planning and Inspections Rob Testerman** stated that there are no major changes in the fiscal year's budget with no new proposals. Software platform ForeRunner will have new functions including elevation certificates and integration of CAMA setbacks. Community Rating System requires accurate elevation certificates, track substantial improvements, and compliance with the National Flood Program. These are CRS activities that ForeRunner can help organize and get the Town to Class 5 which would allow a 25% discount on flood insurance. Currently, legislative, administrative and quasi-judicial items are currently not aligned with statutes. During the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, a proposal will be submitted to move the special use permit process to the way it should be functioning.

**Pruitt** asked if a special use permit is the same as a conditional use permit.

**Testerman** said yes, now they are called special use permits. There should be one decision-making body. It's the responsibility of the applicant saying that there is no harm to adjacent property owners or any environmental concerns, the applicant must bring a qualified professional. They need to submit evidence if there's something that does not meet the ordinance. The burden of proof would be on the applicant.

**Hines** stated that David Lewis will be retiring. Can we bring him back on a contract basis to inspect the new Police Department.

**Clopton** replied that Mr. Lewis has indicated that he would be amenable to inspecting the new Police Department.

#### **Human Resources Presentation**

**Administrative Services Director Laura Walker** stated that 2024-2025 was a challenging time for hiring. During the current fiscal year, the Town has added (5) police officers, Administrative Records Technician Amy Corle, an Evidence and Logistics Technician. Public Works added Greg and Dave. The Fire Department added Henry Hardison. Ocean Rescue has (6) returning guards. The Town has processed 400 applications. For salary planning, the Town requests a 3% increase and 1 step, 2% merit increase. The current consumer price index is 2.9%. Currently, there are no renewal numbers for health benefits yet, but an increase is anticipated and included in the proposed budget.

#### **Pruitt**

**Laura Walker** contributions are made to each Health Savings Account in the amount of \$142 per month. Preventive care is covered at 100% for the employee, dependent coverage ranges between 50 to 60%. A 10% increase to healthcare has been included in the proposed budget. The Town is looking into a state plan with a larger risk pool.



**Clopton** added that there is an increased cost share with a larger number of participants.

**Laura Walker** added that dental has a budgeted 5% increase and vision has a 5% budgeted increase.

**Charlotte Walker** asked if the small business cut off was 50 employees.

**Laura Walker** stated the other items in this budget are employee engagement, employee wellness event, and the annual holiday party. A new venue for the holiday party was selected for savings. For Asset Management, there are no major changes anticipated.

**Hines** asked for an overview of the general hiring process.

**Laura Walker** stated a panel is formed based on the position following a general pre-screen, the panel rates the applicant based on a rating system, the panel team for the interview is always multi-departmental.

**Pruitt** asked if there is health coverage for part-time employees.

**Laura Walker** stated the Town does not offer coverage for part-time employees.

**Tillett** asked if there are any plans to request additional staff.

**Midgett** stated (1) for Public Works.

**Finance Director Liliana Noble** stated (1) for Finance.

**Chief Palkovics** stated (2) in 2 years for Police.

**Testerman** stated (1) for Planning/Inspections.

**Chief Talley** stated there are hiring challenges due to travel/commute but would like (2) per shift.

**Laura Walker** suggested possibly a summer intern, but the need is not critical.

**Pruitt** asked if the (2) for Police are in addition to the (2) for this budget.

**Chief Palkovics** confirmed that those (2) in the future would be in addition to the (2) requested in the proposed budget. Amy Heckhaus is a temporary over hire, this would (2) more positions.

**Charlotte Walker** asked if the Evidence and Logistics Technician position was new.

**Laura Walker** explained that the Evidence and Logistics Technician is not a new position, it had already been approved.

**Hines** asked what the technician would be processing.

**Chief Palkovics** stated that this position processes all departmental logistics as well as managing evidence and inventory.

### **Community Engagement Presentation**

**Lauren Garrett** stated that the current fiscal year budget is the first year a Community Engagement budget line item was included in the Administrative budget. The first year was important to establish a baseline for costs as well as gather information to help plan community events in subsequent years and identify gaps in communication processes and resources. There are three main objectives for this budget: outreach and communication, event and program support, and promoting volunteerism and engagement. Garrett stated that the budget funding request is the same as the current fiscal year at \$10,000. The main community events proposed are the outdoor movie nights, trash clean ups, Santa's Motorcade, and an open house for the Police Department. The budget will be allocated for print materials, communications including software applications, supplies, and vendor payments.



## TOWN OF KITTY HAWK

**Hines** asked if the Town incurs fees for credit card transactions.

**Liliana Noble** replied that the fees are transferred to the customer.

### **Finance Department Presentation**

**Finance Director Liliana Noble** reported the financial audit passed with no findings. A \$10,000 line item for technology upgrades is requested in the proposed budget. Continued assistance is needed in the Finance Department, currently addition staffing needs are mitigated by assistance from Stacy Bowman from the Fire Department.

**Pruitt** asked how long we need to allocate for technology upgrades.

**Noble** explained that from 2018-2023 there was an increase of 22% in revenue due to high occupancy which generated interest earnings. Town shared revenues have decreased from 4.34% to 4.23%, which is a \$213,000 decrease. During the recent revaluation, values increased from \$1.5 billion to \$2.4 billion. The neutral tax rate is 19 cents, and the municipal service district is 6 cents. Using the neutral tax rate of 19 cents, the proposed budget would be short \$746,000 in revenue. The current tax rate is 30 cents town wide. One cent generates \$248,000 in revenue. Historically, the Town has had a 3% expense increase which has been consistent for 11 years.

**Hines** asked if there are any grant opportunities.

**Noble** replied that each department is actively seeking grant opportunities.

**Midgett** stated that there are several grant applications currently in process.

**Pruitt** stated that the neutral tax rate is 19 cents, the Town is currently at 30 cents, and staff is requesting a rate of 22 cents.

**Hines** stated that the amount of taxes paid will still go up.

**Clopton** stated that 1.8 million from the unassigned fund balance had been used previously to make up budget deficits.

**Tillett** asked if the shortage with neutral tax is \$746,000.

**Noble** stated that Tillett is correct. Unassigned fund balance was used (6) times from 2014 to 2021 but that does not fix shortages in revenue. Currently, the unassigned fund balance is \$3,107,858. The emergency fund, which is separate, is \$3,500,000. If the rate is increased, shared participation will also increase.

**Pruitt** stated that he did not want to run out seniors because it's hard on people with fixed incomes.

**Tillett** asked if the proposed budget includes funds for the ladder truck.

**Noble** stated that the proposed budget does not include funds to replace the ladder truck.

**Clopton** stated that in conclusion, Town staff is asking for needs without extravagant extras. The Town needs to update ordinances and record retention policies. Kitty Hawk has the second smallest Planning Department in the County which leads to missed opportunities. The Fire Department does not meet standards and Ocean Rescue leaves the beach unprotected, the Finance Department needs support, and the Town has the lowest paid lead team in the County and 401K contributions are not competitive. Town Manager Melody Clopton thanked the Council for their feedback. The budget aligns with the current Town values and leadership of the Council is greatly appreciated.



## TOWN OF KITTY HAWK

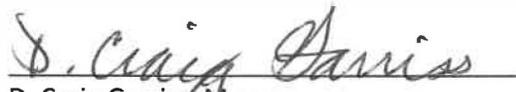
**Garriss** asked for a motion to recess until 9 am Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at Town Hall for the second Budget Workshop.

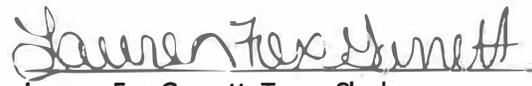
**Pruitt** seconded the motion.

**Recess to April 1, 2025. Budget Workshop, 9 am Town Hall.**

Recessed at 3:03 pm.

The Minutes of the March 25, 2025, Kitty Hawk Town Council Meeting are approved at the May 5, 2025, Kitty Hawk Town Council Meeting.

  
D. Craig Garriss, Mayor

  
Lauren Fox Garrett, Town Clerk

