

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

**Thursday, September 24, 2020**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City held a Special meeting on Thursday, September 24, 2020, in the Municipal Chambers located at 202 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting was to consider adoption of Resolution 2020-R-47, endorsing the NC East Sports/Offshore Powerboat Association World Championships event scheduled for October 23-25, 2020 in Morehead City. This was handled during a special meeting due to the late notice of the event and the need to provide the event planners with a decision so that they can plan appropriately.

This meeting was partially conducted utilizing Zoom Video Communication Inc. software due to the COVID-19 crisis and Governor Cooper's Executive Order 141 imposing the requirement to maintain six-foot (6') distancing. Those in attendance were: Planning Administrative Assistant Annie Bunnell and Code Enforcement Officer Barb Lynch and City Clerk Cathy Campbell.

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmembers George Ballou, David Horton, Keri V. McCann, William Taylor and Diane C. Warrender.

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Ryan Eggleston; Fire Chief Jamie Fulk, Police Chief Bernette Morris, Planning Director Sandi Watkins, Public Services Director Daniel Williams, Code Enforcement Officer Barb Lynch, Planning Administrative Assistant Annie Bunnell, and City Clerk Cathy Campbell.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jeff Garner of the Sanitary Restaurant, and Robert Purifoy of Olympus Dive Center.

**STAFF PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM:** Finance Director Jewel Lasater, and Human Resources Director Susan Nixon.

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM:** Carol Campbell of the NC Seafood Festival, Charles Robinson of Governmental Sales LLC, Lee Hinson and Lisa Rueh of Downtown Morehead City Inc. and David Jones.

Mayor Jones called the special meeting of the Morehead City Town Council to order at 9:04 a.m. with a quorum present.

City Manager Ryan Eggleston presented Resolution 2020-R-47 for consideration stating that the request was submitted by event organizers, Jeff and Keri McCann. Mayor Jones then invited public comments.

**Jeff Garner, Sanitary Restaurant:** Mr. Garner stated that he was present to represent Ruddy Duck Restaurant, Dee Gee's, Silverline 1 and 2, Lorelei's Attic, Beagle Charters, Yellowfin

Charters, Yellowfin Pub, Cape Lookout Adventures, Beaufort Morehair Salon, Wine & Design, Sea Paws, and the North Carolina Seafood Festival, most of which he said were participating via Zoom due to COVID restrictions.

He spoke in favor of local events including the NC East Sports (NCES)/Offshore Powerboat Association's World Championships, and stated that such events and businesses can co-exist successfully with adequate notice and planning. However, given the short notice of this event, he asked for the following accommodations be made in support the local businesses:

- 1) That 5<sup>th</sup> Street remain closed, but that it be kept free of boats, trailers, and vendors in order to facilitate access to the parking lot entrance, and asked that NC East Sports provide monitors to provide parking directions for business patrons as this should not be the responsibility of the businesses.
- 2) Leave storefronts with "FDC" hookups clear in case of emergencies.
- 3) Make arrangements for trash to be emptied regularly and to keep streets clean.

**Robert Purifoy, Olympus Dive Center:** Mr. Purifoy also spoke in favor of the boat race, requested accommodation for his patrons who depend on the gravel parking lot on South 8<sup>th</sup> Street next to the Town of Morehead City Municipal Building. He stated that when given adequate notice, he can alter his trip dates and times to accommodate special events. However, that was not the case this time. Mr. Purifoy reminded Council that Olympus Dive Center includes a repair shop and a full retail store as well as the dive charters. He explained that often patrons are notified weeks in advance when equipment is ready for pickup and it reflects badly on everyone when they drive in from out of town to find parking and access impossible. In response to a question, Mr. Purifoy stated that during the Seafood Festival he cancels all charters and opens only the retail store with minimal staff.

**Councilmember McCann, NC East Sports:** Councilmember McCann apologized for the lack of communication with regard to this event. She stated that communication is typically her responsibility and that she had been absent from the planning due to recent illness.

She shared that accommodations were made yesterday to provide access to parking lots and there are no plans to put boats in these areas. She stated that NCES would like to provide individuals to monitor the parking lots; however, they are unable to do so due to being short of volunteers.

Councilmember McCann agreed to take responsibility for planning how racers enter and exit the event area. NCES is trying to plan the event with businesses in mind, and will do everything possible to facilitate patrons. She added that the size of the boats makes this challenging. NCES is also contacting property owners in hopes of moving some of the boats off the street and into empty lots and larger parking areas. Boats will only be parked on one side of the street in order to facilitate emergency vehicles if needed.

## **Discussion:**

Councilmember Warrender stated that most of the complaints she heard were in regards to the campers parked along the roadway and the 10<sup>th</sup> street boat ramp parking lot being filled with boats and trailers so that the general public was unable to use it. It was pointed out that the campers are utilized as rolling toolboxes and need to be in close proximity to the boats. They are also kept close for security purposes. In regard to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street parking lot, NCES did not reserve that area and was not aware of the problem. She hopes signage will help eliminate the problem.

Regarding garbage, Public Services Director Daniel Williams stated that his on-duty crew will keep an eye on it, but they may not be able to keep up with the volume without adding extra staff, which will create a cost to the City. Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs agreed to have his on-duty staff help with emptying the trash containers.

Councilmember Taylor suggested using the parking lot at Katherine Davis Park for parking the boats. Councilmember McCann loved the suggestion, but opted to leave it available for charter boat patrons. Again, she is hoping that improve signage and directions will help to prevent some of the issues that arose during the last race.

Councilmember Ballou recommended that NCES place attendants at each parking area and at the entrances of blocked roadways to give directions in order to prevent the flow of traffic from becoming a major problem. As an added measure to help with parking, the resolution was amended to include a provision for the temporary suspension of the two (2) hour parking limitations in the event area.

Councilmember McCann shared that NCES raises money through sponsorships to support the events and provide funds for the charity. The NCES made approximately \$25,000 from the previous Grand Prix race. It is possible that some of the funds could be used for security; however, this was not previously considered due to cost and the desire to give as much as possible to the charity.

Councilmember Ballou asked City Manager Eggleston if he had any concerns from the City's standpoint. Mr. Eggleston stated that staff is supportive of the event and changes made yesterday should help address the concerns mentioned today. He advised that the resolution map is correct; however, the resolution presented today does not include the changes made today to accommodate the parking lots and extend the event area to include Shepard Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street, but will be amended following this meeting. The resolution should reflect the request to temporarily close 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Evans Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, Shepard Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, and portions of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. Parking lots on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets will be made available to the public.

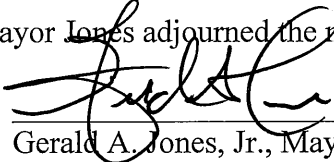
Councilmember Ballou pointed out that the resolution states that the event organizers are responsible for notifying businesses and property owners in the area, and should be responsible for doing so. It should not be the City's responsibility. After some discussion, the decision was made to leave this provision in the event resolutions so that organizers will communicate specific

details that may affect businesses in the area, but that City staff will provide the initial notice of upcoming events, which should include contact information for the event coordinators.

Councilmember Ballou made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-47 endorsing the NC East Sports/Offshore Powerboat Association’s World Championships, and authorizing action necessary for the event to be held October 23-25, 2020 in Morehead City. Councilmember Taylor seconded and the motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business to discuss, Mayor Jones adjourned the meeting 10:14 a.m.

  
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Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:   
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Cathy Campbell, City Clerk

