



**SURFSIDE BEACH TOWN COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES
FEBRUARY 24, 2015 AT 5:30 P.M.
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

CALL TO ORDER.

Mayor Samples called the workshop to order at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Samples, Mayor Pro Tempore Pellegrino, and Councilmembers Childs, Johnson, Mabry, Magliette, and Stevens were in attendance. A quorum was present. Others present: Administrator Fellner; Town Clerk Herrmann; Finance Director King; Planning Director Morris; Public Works Director Adair; Police Chief Keziah, Recreation Supervisor Ellis, and numerous staff members.

Mr. Stevens said there are three House Bills dealing with business licensing that, if adopted, would eliminate much of the town's revenue. He encouraged everyone to contact their House and Senate representatives to ask them to oppose the Bills. Mr. Stevens explained that he, Ms. Mabry and Mr. Johnson recently attended the Municipal Association Elected Officials Institute. A class was held about how building departments can streamline their customer service to create a one-stop shop for customers. The three of them wanted to share the information for consideration and to see if any of the suggestions could be applied to the town's department to create more efficiency and better customer service. Mr. Stevens said there would be some savings, and that no one would lose their job.

Mr. Johnson said the class was titled "The Importance of Coordinating Licensing and Permitting." All of them attended to gain insight as to how to improve the town's process. The town currently has a great system, but there may be things that could be done to improve, even small some changes.

Ms. Mabry said this workshop was scheduled so council could discuss options. Town Council understands that the Town cannot do everything, but if one or two good ideas come out of class or workshop, then everyone benefited. There was no intention of "turning Town Hall upside down." The class was on licensing and permitting, and also covered other issues regarding building departments. The desire is to get customers in and out and to be customer friendly. The goal is to avoid the "Magical Mystery Tour" around Town Hall to complete the process. Town Council gives staff the tools and support needed to make changes, if they are needed. Some issues addressed were:

- Physically bring the department together
- Make a one-stop shop
- Answer questions in a timely manner
- No "Magical Mystery Tours" going from department to department
- Business license is part of the building department; it should never be in finance
- Department should be "Building, Zoning & Economic Development"
- Make getting a permit a non-event; get in – get out
- Cross train in the department as much as possible – this is the key to good service
- Try for the shortest turn-around time possible; do not over-promise
- Be realistic, honest, and follow through
- Change the culture of the department; bring employees together to work as a team
- On-going education and meetings to share information and keep each other informed
- Evaluate problems and obstacles; go over each step from beginning to end. Develop streamlined processes
- Schedule a meeting with the customer and all departments involved during the early planning stages, which will give customers service they truly deserve. Not only does it provide good customer service, it streamlines the process to free staff time.

Ms. Mabry said that Isle of Palms combined the licensing and permitting position. She reiterated that the workshop was to explore the processes and to help create a team culture of being here to help.

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55 Mr. Pellegrino said many good points were made. He believes the building department staff is
56 strong. He personally heard good comments about the staff. There will always be dissatisfied
57 customers. The goal is to have the majority satisfied. There is room for improvement in any organization.
58 Streamlining the process is good for the customer and the town; it is cheaper to operate when it is
59 efficient.

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61 Mr. Stevens said that Jim Moore, chairman of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development
62 council plans to visit the town to evaluate business opportunities. Big businesses want efficiency in the
63 process. The goal is to make government run smoothly and efficiently.

64
65 Ms. Mabry, speaking for herself, said the employee personnel handbook was revised every five
66 years. She believed the processes used in town should also be evaluated every five years to define ways
67 to streamline and improve. Town Council wanted to give staff all the support needed to perform their
68 jobs. Not doing so was failure on council's part. Without an understanding of what was needed was
69 unfair to council and to staff, who all work together as a team to serve the Town of Surfside Beach. If
70 they learned something at the classes that might help and then failed to share that information, then
71 "shame on me; shame on this council." She hoped that staff would share their suggestions.

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73 Mr. Johnson added that Town Council agreed to hold this workshop at the last regular council
74 meeting. There was no intent to cause harm; just to improve what we have.

75
76 Mayor Samples said the Town of Surfside Beach is different; Isle of Palms is the closest in
77 comparison. The business license operation is extremely important to the town. Staff does a very, very
78 good job. Statistics show that collection rates were up substantially. The House Bills mentioned by Mr.
79 Stevens would kill the business license function and take away much of the revenue on which the town
80 operates. His saw no problems with the business license function; it should not be changed. There might
81 be unintended consequences of taking an established, successful activity and creating a one-stop shop,
82 because of federal and state laws and the Building Codes Council. A small town like Surfside Beach is
83 functionally different than other towns. Mayor Samples said that his opinion was based on almost 40-
84 years of involvement in federal, state, and local government regulations. The town's business license
85 department also collects accommodations and hospitality taxes. For example, the City of Lexington's
86 accommodations and hospitality collections did not compare proportionately with the town's
87 accommodations and hospitality collections. He agreed 100-percent that continuous improvement should
88 always be supported, and ways to improve operations should be considered.

89
90 Mayor Samples asked Ms. Fellner and staff for comments. There were none. Mr. Childs
91 believed staff felt "put on the spot," and suggested that staff be allowed to make anonymous comments or
92 suggestions through written submissions. The workshop was not to make massive changes; it was to
93 hear about the class the three members took. Mayor Samples agreed. Council recognized that there
94 was turnover in the building department and the town took on the CRS Flood Insurance effort that
95 inordinately increased staff's workload. The good news was that building had increased over the last
96 several years. More businesses were moving into town. There were many good things going on. Any
97 business or service wants to have the best customer service around. Businesses and governments are
98 constrained by the resources that could be dedicated to ensuring that a pleasant experience occurred.

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100 Mr. Stevens agreed with Mr. Childs. It would be nice if staff submitted their comments and
101 suggestions. Sometimes the smallest suggestion had the most impact. Mr. Stevens reiterated the
102 workshop purpose and that some suggestions might be positive moves for the town. There were no
103 plans at this time to make any changes. Town Council was being open and transparent, which was what
104 government was all about.

105
106 Ms. Mabry said being number one in customer service was essential; those customers pay
107 salaries and elect the council. The customers did not care if departments were understaffed. The
108 customer says, "I want it when I want it and I want it when I need it." She understood that, and when
109 customer service was not put first, shame on us. The town needs to find ways to excel in customer
110 service. Going to classes and speaking with other municipalities are ways to learn and improve.

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111 Otherwise, the same methods used 25-years ago will stay in place. That was not effective government,
112 and not fair to staff. Some staff members work 50 to 60 hours a week, and have been doing so for a
113 year. She asked what was right about that.
114

115 Mr. Pellegrino asked if any of this information was shared with Ms. Morris. Mr. Johnson said yes.
116 Mr. Pellegrino asked if any ideas were beneficial. Ms. Mabry said she, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Stevens had
117 a short meeting with Ms. Morris during which they asked if any of the suggestions might work in the
118 department; what was needed, and how it might be more efficient. Ms. Morris did not feel it would be fair
119 to transfer an individual from business licensing at this time, because a well-trained permit technician was
120 needed who could answer questions for the customers. Cross training was also discussed, and how the
121 department staff could be physically located together so customers would not be taking a "Magical
122 Mystery Tour." Ms. Fellner, Mr. Stevens and she had discussed the department's office location, but she
123 did not know if anything would come of the discussion. Bringing those offices together would create a
124 cohesive unit to serve the customers.
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126 Mr. Johnson said the director's vision is the same as Town Council's: to provide the very best
127 customer service possible. Mayor Samples believed that should be the goal of every councilmember, the
128 administrator, department directors and staff members.
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130 Mr. Magliette asked if there were any specific recommendations to bring forward. Mr. Johnson
131 said there were none at this time. Ms. Mabry said Ms. Morris like the seminar information, and was very
132 forthcoming about economic development. Mr. Pellegrino asked what the next step should be. Ms.
133 Morris suggested upgrading the permit technician salary might draw more qualified candidates. Mayor
134 Samples said that discussion should be held in executive session.
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136 **ADJOURNMENT.**

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138 There was no other discussion. Mayor Samples closed the workshop at 6:15 p.m.
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140 Prepared and submitted by,

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142 _____
143 Debra E. Herrmann, CMC, Town Clerk

144 Approved: March 10, 2015

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147 Douglas F. Samples, Mayor

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150 David L. Pellegrino, Mayor Pro Tempore

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150 Robert F. Childs, Town Council

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153 Mark L. Johnson, Town Council

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153 Mary Beth Mabry, Town Council

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156 Ralph J. Magliette, Town Council

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156 Randle M. Stevens, Town Council

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158 Clerk's Note: This document constitutes summary minutes of the meeting that was digitally recorded.
159 Appointments to hear recordings may be scheduled with the town clerk, or you may bring a flash drive to
160 obtain a copy of the audio recording. In accordance with FOIA, meeting notice and the agenda were
161 distributed to local media and interested parties. The agenda was posted on the town website, the entry
162 door at Town Council Chambers, and in the Town Hall reception area. Meeting notice was also posted
163 on the Town marquee.