



ORIENTAL ANNUAL BUDGET RETREAT  
Thursday, March 10, 2022  
507 Church Street, Oriental, NC  
Mayor Sally Belangia Officiating

6

7 The Town Board of Oriental Annual Budget Retreat was held on Thursday, March 10, 2022. Mayor Belangia  
8 initiated the Meeting at 8:15am. The meeting was open to the public. All documents for the meeting were available  
9 through the Town's website at [www.TownofOriental.com](http://www.TownofOriental.com).

10  
11 Present: Mayor Belangia, Mayor Pro Tempore White, Commissioner Overcash, Commissioner Winfrey,  
12 Commissioner Price, Commissioner Roe, Town Manager Diane Miller, Deputy Finance Director Tammy Cox,  
13 Administrative Assistant Cyndi Brann, Public Works Director/ORC Andrew Cox, Police Officers Nic Blayney and  
14 Bill Wichrowski, Volunteer Board Members and Members of the Public.

15  
16 This is an informal meeting where the Board gathers to discuss budget and other issues. By North Carolina General  
17 Statutes the Town is required to have a balanced budget to the Board by June 1 for advertisement, usually approved  
18 at the June Board meeting after a Public Hearing, put in place ready to open on July 1. Commissioner Overcash  
19 made a MOTION to move the discussion of potential new equipment to prior to the first break due to his need to  
20 leave for a Dr. Appt. Commissioner Roe seconds. Amended agenda approved 5-0.

21  
22 The meeting started with the Mayor opening the meeting and the Manager describing the purpose, ground rules, and  
23 schedule for the day. Powerpoint is attached to official minutes for reference.

24  
25 The Manager started by recapping previous budget retreats, accomplishments, challenges faced and facing, and  
26 remaining priority projects.

27  
28 Planning Board:

29  
30 Chair Julie Rahm discussed accomplishments with the Town Board, and planned activities moving forward- review  
31 of Land Use and CAMA plans. She requested the same (\$500) budget for the Board to cover reference materials,  
32 legal review, etc.

33  
34 Tree Board: Dr. Bob Miller, Chairperson – Budget request is the same as last year: \$4000.

35  
36 Manager Miller discussed overgrowth of trees on undeveloped lots and the advantage we have now with the new  
37 grant funded large tractor and attachment to remove brush from the ROW- makes the work much faster and more  
38 efficient.

39  
40 Arbor Day will be April 2 this year, and the Board approved the Arbor Day Proclamation Resolution March 1. Tree  
41 planting this week- first time in 3 years due to Covid. Also, the Tree Board had recently requested to add to their  
42 numbers due to the average age of the group and the number of trees to tend. Board approved March 1 expansion of  
43 the Tree Board.

44 Commissioner Overcash asked if they would like a Tree Board banner to erect when they are working. Dr. Bob  
45 agreed that would be good.

46  
47 Tourism Board: Marsha Papham – Things coming back to life- wrapping up this budget year by putting together a  
48 video that can be included on the website. We have also started on an upgrade to the brochure digitally with a R  
49 code that can be a more interactive version in conjunction with Matt McCotter. Can be used in Our State, YouTube,  
50 etc. Our State is doing a coastal focused version, with a heavy presence in the magazine. Upcoming year prices are

51 rising due to paper price increases. Looking in to 94.1 radio ads. Croakerfest is in the works and moving forward.  
52 Requesting \$15,000.

53  
54 Harbor Waterfronts Advisory Committee: Lisa Thompson –  
55 Whittaker Pointe complete and thriving. Acknowledged the team effort to get us there. Extra cleaning happening  
56 due to Covid. Manager notes our general visiting population has not generally been deterred from visiting. Our  
57 projections forwarded this month from NCLM will be moderated, taking into account actual trends in Town.

58  
59 Jurisdiction bill got stuck- we can certainly re-apply. County bill was approved.

60  
61 Net House project is stuck. Can't get a contractor to sign on. Did have contribution of original size lumber from  
62 Pete's Tree Service. Manager notes we cannot do time and materials- we need to do the project in sections. We  
63 would need a licensed GC to move forward at all. Looking at potentially hiring one of the contractors that does the  
64 volunteer work for ramps for seniors.

65  
66 Ms. Thompson addressed additional issues at the small boat ramp, where citizens are moving rock and causing  
67 erosion at the launch site.

68  
69 Mayor Pro Tem White wants another assessment of the pilings at Town Dock 1 for replacement estimates, so we  
70 have those numbers for budget.

71  
72 Parks and Recreation Committee: Bonnie Crosser – Discussed progress since last fiscal year, noting improvements  
73 at Rec Park- including drainage issues moving forward by contract, swing set installation (including an ADA  
74 swing), and sand/reject from Nutrien for dig pit. Lupton looks really good- Town Staff and Rec committee have  
75 worked hard on this park. Removal around the big pine was effective and now is under control. Manager thanks the  
76 Board for all the work. Lou Mac upgrade- brought in colorful table and moved the old out to the Rec park. Good  
77 feedback on the colorful chairs and tables. Beach- not touching- due to drainage project. Requests for this year-  
78 funds to complete design of baseball area-(\$5,000) family sized pavilion with tennis/pickleball courts. Signage and  
79 storage box for shark tooth pit. Star for pavilion- electric there, wiring star up on pavilion. Move forward with  
80 walking trail around park (\$10,000). Grill cost- twice the purchase price currently for freight- looking for other  
81 options. Suggestion to move the Lupton grill to Rec Park, but PW Director concerned that it will not survive the  
82 move. Some Christmas lights need replacing. One broken chair to be replaced by polywood chair. Dog park- repair  
83 of fence (\$1200) and bag orders. Flowers to continue at Lupton. Volleyball net/badminton at tennis courts. Not as  
84 much vandalism since we're cleaning it up better.

85  
86 Break scheduled, but agenda adjusted to discuss equipment acquisition. PW needs- mini excavator. PW has been  
87 asking for this piece of equipment for years, purchased large replacement tractor on the grant because it was the  
88 more expensive need of the two. County will still be cutting grass and maintaining the road at Rec Park.

89  
90 Sheet for Public Works- drainage maintenance- we budgeted less, need more. Cost of gas has changed  
91 tremendously- others are budgeting 100% increase. COLA, gas increase, take home cars, paying employees mileage,  
92 people working from home, gas use reduction- mowing less often, less idling, using smaller vehicles. Fluctuation in  
93 prices is the only increases shown.

94  
95 Another set of sheets to display drainage and equipment costs. \$61,000 spent in last 3 years, equipment costs  
96 \$66,000. Some costs remain- disposal of whatever we pull from ditches. Reduces burning and throwing waste in  
97 ditches. Tractor repair \$12,000 when tractor broke down on Ragan. After that, we replaced that tractor with larger  
98 model for brush removal. Even though the excavator had been requested, we replaced the more expensive piece in  
99 anticipation of larger scale needs. One person piece of equipment- can get into smaller/tighter spaces. The transport

100 is by trailer- that we're already working on. Also- new versions are few and far between with long distance retrieval  
101 or yearlong wait for brand new. PW Director notes this is not just for ditchwork, but also for water pipe repair,  
102 smaller buckets for grabbing in tighter places. Commissioner Overcash in favor of purchase. Mayor Pro Tem White  
103 notes we do not have the remainder returned to unrestricted unreserved from last year. People are our priority- we  
104 need to take care of employees first so we can keep a full crew. Last year we purchased Police Car and Dump Truck.  
105 Manager notes that we have approximately \$742,000 in unrestricted unreserved. Commissioner Roe notes we do  
106 need to protect the fund balance and take care of our people in this time of historical cost increases. Recommends  
107 waiting until we hear from the auditor. We may have more money because large projects taken on in-house. Allen  
108 Price agrees. Manager notes we usually turn \$60-\$70,000 back into the reserve. Auditors were racked with Covid,  
109 so it is still running behind. Ms. Crosser voices objection to acquisition and believes contracted work is more  
110 financially prudent.

111  
112 BREAK until 10:50.

113  
114 Projects underway – Priorities from 2021: Rod Repair and Drainage plus Water Plant projects. Stated with Neuse  
115 Dr- 160pg bid out for repair. Stops before repaving- different bid for that. Hodges St new issue arose following the  
116 enactment of the budget- now progressing through USDA. Maritime Dr done with Whittaker Pointe. Vandemere  
117 issues will be alleviated with Neuse drainage. Red arrows on sheet are the estimates we are awaiting from  
118 contractor to see how far we can go.

119  
120 South Water St was also identified, but requires engineering and curb and gutter work- we may be able to  
121 accomplish some of that in-house- avoiding the ponding water. Rod is not crowned correctly to drain in the proper  
122 direction.

123  
124 Needs/priorities 21-22 and 22-23: Staffing – paid and volunteer, speed limits, trailer adjustments for Public Works,  
125 Repairs/sealant to WTP, streetlights/LED/solar options/contracted terms, Softener for Water Plant (underway).

126  
127 Noted all of the facilities that we maintain- significant additions in the current Manager's tenure. Generator- new  
128 generator on well 2, pavilions re-roofed, new public restrooms, dog park, town dock pilings, dinghy dock re-  
129 platformed following Florence, small boat ramp experiencing erosion, kayak racks , pumpout (and its repairs), fish  
130 cleaning station, fountains, green waste dumpsters- less burning, less debris in ditches, more effort from PW staff.  
131 Fence to replace wax myrtles removed at water plant, maintenance schedules for pumps and valves.

132  
133 Water plant is barely covering its costs. "My Water bill is high!"- but it's not- its water, sewer trash and recycling.  
134 We charge a little to qualify for grants. We charge a dollar less per thousand than the County.

135  
136 Communications: we talked about the possibility of a sign at Town Hall- the overhead banners are effective. What  
137 do we do that works?

138 Need to adjust our adjustment policy- put in place for a few thousand gallons of leak- not 200,000 gallon leaks- that  
139 empties our tower.

140  
141 Roads: 2020 Pavement Condition Assessment from J.M. Teague Engineering & Planning awaiting estimates to see  
142 how far through the list we can go.

143  
144 Speed Limits: Hwy 55, Ordinance required to change speed limits on Town roads. Speed checks by Police, speed  
145 limit electronic radar display. Officer Wichrowski – they try to maintain a balance between addressing complaints  
146 about speeding and being too aggressive with speeding/tickets. Manager Miller – Crosswalks: (particularly near  
147 Churches) DOT will consider crosswalks at intersections, but not in the middle of the road.

148

149 Admin Priorities: added Archive Social last year. Replaced 4 tablets. We will likely have to replace the copier in  
150 23-24.  
151  
152 Commissioner Overcash departs 11:15AM.  
153  
154 Water Plant Inspection: recent- passed all requirements.  
155  
156 Commissioner Roe asks about water rates. We did it in 2015-16- consolidated rates to remove summer/winter, in  
157 town/out of town. State recommends tiered usage- more you use, more you pay. When we revised, the rates  
158 became more equitable- where those who used least and could afford least, were paying least.  
159  
160 Water ORC Andrew Cox has saved us a fortune as we sent him to several schools to be able to pull more duties in-  
161 house. Huge savings in outsourced costs. Cross-training has helped also.  
162  
163 This year we paid the last on our lead abatement on the smaller tank, then our maintenance on tanks reduces.  
164 Commissioner Price asks about Bay River costs. We have not heard from BRMSD. Tipping on trash can only  
165 increase by 2% by contract. They voted down increase, but we should expect a significant raise in 23-24.  
166 Recycling- we still save money by recycling because we do not tip on it. Once we let it go, we cannot get  
167 that contract back. It is currently in our favor to retain. Once we let it go, everything goes into trash and we pay  
168 tipping on all of it. Commissioner Roe confirms that we do subsidize the trash costs from the General fund- that also  
169 includes the green waste.  
170 Mayor Pro Tempore White notes that several large projects are being accomplished that we would not have been  
171 able to afford. Generator on well 2, softener, chlorine alarm, premium pay.  
172  
173 Water Plant needs: separate spreadsheet listing all. Hopefully, we'll be able to save some in salt costs following  
174 softener revision.- Maintenance budget. Chlorine going up, salt is up- but may be adjusted. Maint contract goes down  
175 this year because of paying off the tank abatement. Dropped off a monthly test to once monthly instead of twice.  
176 Commissioner Price asks if we are putting money aside for future large costs- no we are not. In order to go in and  
177 start replacing the lines we know are past life expectancy, we would need that equipment asked for previously or  
178 contract it out.  
179 We have a power issue where the plant has less tolerance to surges than Duke's threshold, so we are experiencing  
180 things frying on surge. We're working on a solution from Duke.  
181  
182 Mayor Pro Tempore White asks about Impact Fees. We were justified for the fees we had charged- for  
183 improvements in the system. We discussed last year adding a capital improvement fee on the water bill to establish  
184 a capital fund for large projects.  
185  
186 ORC Cox explains the softener rehab. Question from the audience about silicate- we can't do anything about it.  
187 Break for lunch- return at 12:30PM.  
188  
189 Police Department: Nic Blayney, Bill Wichrowski – Officer Blayney: Wichrowski made contact for new radios  
190 donated saved us about \$7,000. Updating software systems to be more compatible with County and better contact.  
191 Radar classes have been cancelled with Covid- trying to get rescheduled.  
192  
193 Rumble strips are suggested for Hodges- Manager notes LE and DOT recommends those for parallel to the road,  
194 ALSO- those are grooves cut into the road which we don't want to do at waterfront. Switched Police and Public  
195 Works to ATT Firstnet- prioritized during emergencies. Keeping Charger has worked as deterrent- also available as  
196 backup vehicle.  
197

