



# County of Dare

P.O. Box 1000 | Manteo, NC 27954

## Dare County Housing Task Force

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

April 16, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

Approved 4/30/24

**Present:** Robert Woodard, Sr., Robert Outten, Craig Garriss, Melody Clopton, Tess Judge, Monica Thibodeau, Jeff Schwartzenberg, Mitchell Bateman, Briggs McEwan, Carole Warnecki, Sherry Wickstrom, Ron Payne, Malcolm Fearing, Drew Haven Bob Peele, Duke Geraghty, John Windley, Ryan Lang, Donna Creef, Matt Neal, Melissa Dickerson, Andy Garmin

**Absent:** Ronnie Sloan, Mike Siers, Caroline Basnight

**Also Attending:** Dorothy Hester, Public Information Officer, Skyler Foley, Clerk, Mary Helen Goodloe-Murphy, Melissa Zehner, Chris Sawin, Breelyn Bailey, Aida Havel, Karen Tumolo, Ron Tumolo, Shelly Blackstone, Mark Jurkowitz, Katie Morgan

Chairman Woodard called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Mitchell Bateman led the meeting in a prayer.

### ITEM 1 OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Woodard stated that Task Forces have achieved success, particularly the Oregon Inlet Task Force which initially faced challenges but ultimately succeeded in establishing a private-public partnership for the dredge Miss Katie. After 40 years of the Federal Government neglecting the inlets, our inlets are now clear and fishermen can work daily thanks to the efforts of that Task Force. He further explained that the North Carolina Department of Transportation has always done an excellent job at keeping the highways open, although there was no long-term plan in place. The NC 12 Task Force was established and identified six key priorities, including building additional bridges and conducting a study to ensure the roadway remains passable during storms. Recent discussions with legislators in DC show promise for further progress. He expressed he is confident in the success of Task Forces and believes that solutions for essential workforce housing can be achieved.

### ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### MOTION

Malcolm Fearing motioned to approve the minutes from the March 19th meeting as corrected.

Donna Creef seconded the motion.

VOTE: AYES Unanimous

### ITEM 3 HOUSE BILL 259 DISCUSSION

Mr. Outten emphasized the importance of understanding the status of House Bill 259 in relation to the decisions made by the County Board of Commissioners. He clarified that the Bill pertains to the construction of buildings and infrastructures under agreements outlined in section 24.1 SL 2022-74, also known as the \$35 million grant legislation. The Bill states that the grant will be allocated to Dare County for a forgivable loan, with specific conditions applying to any agreements made between Dare County and a private partner. However, Outten informed the Task Force that currently there are no such agreements in place, as they were terminated at the last Board meeting. He mentioned that he is in communication with the State Office of Management and Budget to

return the funds. Therefore, the bill is no longer applicable unless new contracts are established, which the Board has stated they will not pursue, and once the money is returned the \$35 million will no longer exist.

Craig Garriss inquired about the process to completely remove HB 259 because he believes it should not have been enacted in the first place. Outten explained that once the money is returned, the Bill becomes irrelevant as the topics it addressed will no longer be applicable, and individuals will not be able to exercise those rights under the statute. He mentioned that the only way to exercise those rights is through contracts with the County, but currently, no such contracts are in place. Garriss expressed fear that the Bill is still in effect and insisted that it should be removed. Briggs McEwan inquired about Hatteras Island, to which Outten reiterated that HB 259 does not apply unless Dare County enters into a contract with a private partnership as specified in the statute that provided the county with \$35 million. Carol Warnecki suggested contacting the legislature for further action. Malcolm Fearing agreed with Garriss and emphasized that the county did not request the legislature to pass HB 259, rather it was initiated by individuals from the county, not elected officials. He proposed sending a unified message from the Task Force to the legislative body and the Governor expressing their dissatisfaction with the provisions of the legislature. Fearing concluded by stating that he believes the money should not be returned at this time, and Briggs concurred with his viewpoint. Duke Geraghty stated his uncertainty about removing HB 259 because it is common practice, he mentioned the Task Force's potential lack of support in Raleigh and noted the ongoing discussions on affordable housing within the legislature. John Windley proposed inviting legislators to attend Task Force meetings to provide input. Mitchell Bateman recommended that any special funds entering the county from now on should be requested by a governing body.

Chairman Woodard reiterated and emphasized that the Dare County Board of Commissioners does not support HB 259. He mentioned that the Task Force's wishes will be followed, but the BOC does not intend to keep the money. Sherry Wickstrom noted the importance of receiving the funding without any conditions. Chairman Woodard explained that even if the money is kept and a different developer is hired, the same issues of not in my backyard would still arise. Wickstrom highlighted the unique nature of each town and the importance of collaborating on affordable housing initiatives. She expressed concerns about traffic and the limits of land development, and emphasized on planning for the future. Windley agreed with Wickstrom and suggested that the Task Force schedules times for each entity to give presentations of what they are working on and what can be done in their communities. Tess Judge discussed Greensboro, NC and how they are working to preserve and build affordable housing, and that she used to live in Guilford County and they are working with non-profits and for-profit developers. She expressed that the Task Force should look into other areas and see what we can do and not send that money back immediately.

Mr. Outten announced that he recently had a discussion with the lobbyist for the NC Association of County Commissioners Association and he stated that this issue statewide. It was noted that this is not a unique problem to our community, as other areas are facing similar challenges. He also attended a meeting where the Mayor of Chapel Hill shared their community's struggles with housing and the shared goal of finding solutions. He referenced Buncombe County and said their issues are parallel to Dare County's but they have more solutions because they have more land.

Ron Payne agreed on the option of having the legislators partake in the meetings to listen to what the Task Force has to say. Outten said he will contact them and ask. Bob Peele expressed that there is a timing issue, keeping the \$35 million is a good idea, but feels that it is going to be a harder lift than they are all anticipating. Warnecki asked if the Task Force was conflating two issues, HB 259 came along in the past session, repealing HB 259 is a good thing, but can that be separate from the \$35 million? Mr. Outten responded yes. Fearing emphasized the importance of listening to constituents, suggesting to halt the return of funds and instead seek advice.

### **MOTION**

Matt Neal made a motion that the Task Force seeks the repeal of HB 259.

Sherry Wickstrom seconded the motion.

VOTE: Ayes unanimous

#### **ITEM 4 NEXT STEPS**

Outten discussed multiple Task Forces and how they have become successful within the county. He noted that housing is an issue in all communities and they have all different ways to address it. He emphasized his attempt to facilitate the discussion, although he may not have the same level of insight on everyone's towns and communities. He suggested the idea of transitioning into a more community-led group that is not bound by Dare County's agenda. This new group could be named by the committee members, who would then select their own Chairman and committee. This way, information and decisions would come from the community members themselves, creating a more bottom-up approach rather than top-down. He noted that the county would still participate and contribute. Windley and Jeff Schwartzenberg both indicated their agreement. Geraghty provided an example of a two-day event on affordable housing that was organized by the Chamber of Commerce 20 years ago. More than 200 people attended, and he pointed out that the common factor among all the groups was the CDC. He emphasized that the CDC has a deep understanding of the regulations, valuable connections, and extensive experience, making it a potential facilitator if we choose to utilize its services. Judge explained that everyone comes from different communities and each community needs to be represented. Bateman emphasized on that fact that the communities need to be proactive instead of reactive and each town needs to demonstrate what their municipalities and communities will accept. Mr. Outten answered that its part of what this committee will be doing, he then referenced multiple ideas that are out there including how years ago Kill Devil Hills established a Density Bonus. Bateman noted that looking at what other areas and communities are doing will not always work, Outten responded that it has to be community driven.

Fearing inquired if we Outten was suggesting electing a new Chair at this time. Outten responded that we will take a break and come back to this topic at the next meeting, and the Task Force will then seek guidance from everyone and select leadership and membership.

#### **ITEM 5 OTHER BUSINESS & MEMBER COMMENTS**

Briggs inquired if temporary power to trailers has been looked into on Hatteras Island with the possibility of him doing it on his own land. Outten responded that the county received complaints every day of people living in trailers on a lot. He stated that it is possible to have an ordinance to do that, but if it is good for the community, he does not know. Melissa Dickerson said that would create a conflict with your flood damage prevention ordinance. Outten further explained that a trailer park or campground ordinance would be required and that would require a rezoning of the land and you cannot spot zone. Creef emphasized that once people begin to reside in RV's they do not move.

Fearing closed by stating "Today I will remain open to listening to and embracing others."

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Breeyn Bailey expressed thankfulness in the progress that the Task Force has made and emphasized that housing is an issue and if Dare County sends the \$35 million back somebody else will receive that money.

Aida Havel inquired about Dare County's Lobbyist and recommended engaging with them to have the legislation amended so that the \$35 million could be used and then asked if builders have been invited to the meetings, for example SAGA, to see what they are willing to do. Mr. Outten responded that they have been asked. She concluded by recommending a Community Land Trust.

#### **MOTION**

Malcolm Fearing motioned to adjourn the Housing Task Force Meeting.

Ron Payne seconded the motion.

VOTE: Ayes Unanimous

*There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10:24a.m.*