

## **Statements Made at June 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting**

My name is Tom Myers and I live at 301 OBW. I am also the president of the HBPOA.

The HBPOA solicited input from our membership and received a lot of well-thought-out responses. I hope you read them, but in case you don't, I will summarize them now.

The pier building is currently used as the office for the campground with a counter for collecting fees from people going onto the pier. There are also some arcade games, drink and ice machines.

If the desired outcome is to preserve everything "as is" that would mean staffing someone at the counter to collect money and oversee the arcade and vending machines. The café has been closed for over a year and the campground isn't being purchased by the Town.

The building was built in 1960 and is not compliant with current building codes. It also has potential environmental issues associated with a grease vat in among its septic tanks in the front yard. The tax value of the building is less than \$100k, so if you are limited to 50% of that amount for improvements, you won't be able to do much of anything, possibly not even install bathrooms.

If the plan is to have a decent restaurant, wedding venue or some other nice attraction - the buildings will need to be torn down. This would put the Town into the property development / property management business.

If the plan is to just save the pier itself, there are things you can as a town government to make that happen -without buying it. You can give incentives to private developers who will commit to keeping the pier, maintaining it and allowing public access. You can give them tax breaks, other incentives, or just give them money. Cities in NC do this all the time to attract the businesses they want to come to their town.

If the plan is for parking, there are a lot of other properties on the island that are better suited. Commercial oceanfront property is the most expensive land you can buy for parking. Block Q would provide over twice the number of parking places for less than half the cost.

If the plan is to provide beach access, then just buy the land you need for it. If the seller won't negotiate in good faith, use your power of eminent domain, condemn the property, take it and give the seller its fair market value. The threat of eminent domain condemnation is the same tactic the Town used on oceanfront property owners who refused to sign the easement for Central Reach

I think it is fair to say almost everyone would like to keep the pier. The question is: at what cost? The debt service of \$250k equates to almost 10% of property tax revenues. If you include insurance, staffing, operating and maintenance costs, and needed repairs, that amount could easily double.

If we use BPART funds, the Accommodation Tax Revenue numbers are roughly the same as property taxes, so we are again looking at obligating 20-25% of our BPART revenue just for the pier.

These expenses are not included in the 2021-22 budget that was just passed and effective starting last week, so you will need to either reduce the current budget expenses to cover these amounts or increase property taxes - 20 to 25% - or take even more out of "savings" in addition to the \$1.2M you have already appropriated.

Please don't blindly jump into this without knowing what these numbers will truly be. It would be grossly irresponsible to obligate property owners for these expenses without fully understanding the financial burden you are putting on them. You have a fiduciary duty perform your due diligence. Please take the time to do it. What's the rush? The property has been for sale for a long time. Thank you.