



November 16, 2022

Ms. Renee Cahoon, Chair  
NC Coastal Resources Commission

VIA Email

RE: Proposed Inlet Hazard Amendments

Dear Madam Chair,

The Town of Ocean Isle Beach has previously submitted comments on these proposed rule amendments and now has further concerns on how these amendments may affect current and future properties in Ocean Isle Beach. Our concerns include the following:

- **Erosion Rates.** Erosion rates adjacent to Shallotte Inlet since 2015 have decreased from 6.5' to 5' per year. With this area now subject to inclusion in the IHA, the erosion rates will increase to 10.5', 13', and 14'. The location of this area adjacent to Shallotte Inlet has not changed. The Town would like to request an explanation into the reasoning for such a large increase, when in fact the erosion rates decreased in this same area in 2020. If the erosion rates were at that extent, then it would have been visibly apparent year after year.
- **Grandfathering Provision.** The Town is aware of the proposed new amendment under 7H .0309(b) to allow exceptions to lots created after the effective date of the proposed rules. We applaud staff for recommending this amendment.
- **Fiscal Analysis.** The 2019 Fiscal Analysis states the following, *"Within the context of these rule amendments, it is not anticipated that the \$1M impact threshold would be exceeded primarily because these amendments do not prevent development from occurring within the IHA."* IHA rules prohibit new structures larger than 5,000 sf. The increased setbacks would reduce the buildability of some lots to the 2,000 sf exception, a reduction of 3,000 sf of floor area. Current building prices in Ocean Isle Beach range from \$300 to \$400 per square foot. A conservative construction estimate of \$250/sf would mean a potential reduction of \$750,000 investment per lot. This needs to be taken into consideration with respect to the Fiscal Analysis statement. While the rules do not prevent development, they substantially limit what can be constructed on some lots within The Point OIB development which had a Major CAMA Permit issued and subsequently extended during the IHA review process.
- **Lot Size Requirements.** IHA rules require lots to be a minimum of 15,000 sf. The majority of beach lots are 50' in width, so they must also be 300' in depth to meet the square footage

requirement. The proposed erosion rates adjacent to Shallotte Inlet far exceed the lot requirements for IHA areas. This also substantially limits development within the proposed IHA.

- **Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project.** The IHA at Shallotte Inlet is proposed to be increased by 152 acres and in 2019 included 110 structures. Most of these structures are in the proposed IHA area which is within the Town's Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation project area. We want to ensure that this federal project was considered in the methodology that was used. The Town currently holds a Static Line Exemption approved by the Coastal Resources Commission. One of the requirements in obtaining that exemption is to show that the Town is financially able to maintain the project in case of non-participation by the state or federal government.
- **Dune Creation.** The creation of new dunes should be encouraged. New dunes are created artificially with the use of sand fencing and beach planting. Creating new dunes helps the ecosystem of the barrier islands as well as nesting habitats for sea turtles and various bird species. Rule 07H .0308(b) proposes that dunes are allowed to be restored within the IHA. However, no *new* dunes shall be created. Current rules already regulate the sand compatibility that can be placed on the beach. The rule needs to be clear and there should not be any room for interpretation between restoring dunes and creating new dunes.
- **Terminal Groin Effects.** The Town recently finished construction of a 750' terminal groin and associated beach fill adjacent to Shallotte Inlet. We would ask that consideration be given for this project and the benefits it has already and will continue to provide, before making such drastic changes to the erosion rates in the area.

Thank you for your time and dedication in creating rules and policies that will help shape our future while also protecting what we currently have in place.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss any of these items in more detail. We realize every beach and inlet is different and setting rules to apply to each as a whole is very difficult.

Respectfully,



Debbie S. Smith

Mayor

Town of Ocean Isle Beach

cc: Daisy Ivey, Town Administrator  
Justin Whiteside, Asst. Town Administrator  
CRC Members  
CRAC Members  
Braxton Davis, Director, Division of Coastal Management