

TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH SOUTH CAROLINA

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, March 19, 2026

APPEARANCES

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS:

Stephen Fera, Chairman

Erika Vaughn, Commissioner

S Kathryn Allen, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

Ashley Cowen, Diamond Shores

Cheryl Pereira, Town Clerk

Titus Leaks, Town Staff

Atlantic Beach Planning Commission Meeting: Comprehensive Plan Review and Discussion

Meeting Opening

1. Meeting called to order at 1:18 p.m.
2. Roll call: Commissioner Timothy Vereen Here. Commissioner Stephen Fera, Here. Commissioner Michelle Brown Here. Commissioner Catherine.
3. Moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance.

Officer Elections

Ashley Cowen, first item in new business we need to have an election of a new chairperson.

Commissioner Timothy Vereen, I would like to nominate Steven Fera for the chairperson. Commissioner Michele Brown second. Okay, there's a motion for Steve Fera to be the Chairperson Roll call Commissioner Timothy Vereen yah, Commissioner Steve Fera, yes Commissioner Michelle Brown yes. Oh yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. I make a motion to elect a new vice chairman, I nominate Michelle Brown. Commissioner Vereen second. Roll call. Commissioner Timothy Vereen Yes. Commissioner Stephen Fera Yes. Commissioner Michelle Brown Yes. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. Item B on the agenda is the approval of the calendar year 2026 meetings. I make a motion to approve the meeting schedule.

Commissioner Stephen, I move that we approve the 2026 meeting schedule, Commissioner Timothy, I second that. Roll call. Commissioner Timothy Vereen. Yes. Commissioner Stephen Fera. Yes. Commissioner Michelle Brown. Yes. Calendar is approved. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. The next item is the approval of the meeting minutes from our last meeting, which was August 21, 2025. I make a motion to approve. Michele Brown, I move that we accept the meeting minutes as written for August 21, 2025. Commissioner Timothy Vereen, I second that. Commissioner Stephen Fera, roll call Commissioner Timothy Vereen, yes. Commissioner Stephen Fera yes, Commissioner Michelle Brown. Yes. Commissioner Stephen Fera meeting minutes are approved. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stephe Fera. Next item on the agenda is presentation and discussion about the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive Plan Presentation (Ashley Cowan, Diamond Shores)

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Ashley Cowan with Diamond Shores, I think everyone in here is already aware that Diamond Shores is under contract with Atlantic Beach. I'm going through this again just for the audience that may be watching online. Under contract with Atlantic Beach to rewrite the comprehensive plan, update the land management ordinances, and create a commercial corridor master plan for 30th and 31st. You have in front of you, and it was sent to you online, a copy of the current plan. As it's been written, it is missing a couple of sections. We'll go over that in just a second.

Hopefully you've had a chance to run through that before the meeting. If you haven't, don't worry. We're going to go over some of the highlights now and we'll dig in depth to a couple of the sections as we go. You also have in front of you Thank you. I'm not talking loud enough for it to pick me up. You also have in front of you, I've been giving this out at every meeting that I go to, a copy of where we are in the process. It is a four-phased process. Phase one is the background work. We've already completed that. Phase two is the public input. That goes throughout the entire four-phase process. Phase three is the drafting, that's where we are now. And then phase four is the adoption, that's where we will be coming into March. The last three pages of that are actually, three of those phases broken down into date format so that you can kind of track where we are in terms of meetings and public input sessions. As you can see, we are close to the end of the drafting stage here at the Planning Commission Workshop number three. That means this is the third time that I have been here with you.

The next Planning Commission workshop will be on February 19, 2026 you will see me again the fifth time we will be presenting to you at the beginning of the 30-day public input session which is a requirement of state law. Thank you. Again, this is publicly available if anybody would like to see it. You also have a copy of today's PowerPoint slides. Please make notes on it if you would like to. It is being projected up behind you in case you want to turn around and watch or follow along just in your little packet. Okay, so without further ado. I have a question before you begin. Yes, go for it. It is interactive. You can interrupt me at any point. As we are reviewing this comprehensive plan, we know there are some obstacles and residential development in the town. Uh-huh. Some of them I think are self-imposed by ordinances or past things that have gone on in the town. As we are looking and going through these things. Is there a way that we can highlight or address some of those things. Yes, you have a couple of different options on how you can go about that. If it is something that you would like to make a public statement about, you as a planning commissioner can certainly do that here in one of these meetings that we have and I can put it in the plan. That's one option.

Option number two would be shoot me an email and I can make that part of the public comment and that that would then be part of you know our documented this person made a comment we're now putting it in the plan as a result of that or give me a phone call. My number is up on the screen. I've had a number of different input sessions where people have made some comments like that. some of those comments we use to influence the way the plan is written the way that we're making recommendations in the plan the way that we will change the land management ordinances or not the same for written comments the same for comments that are given by planning commission or council and the general public so just because it said doesn't mean it ends up in the plan but it is used to influence the plan I guess from my perspective, some things that I see Dead. counterproductive I think is some of our ordinances and things that are required for building seem to be counterproductive to inviting new business or residential development.to the town. some specific things maybe like business licenses or different requirements of you know, be it, setbacks or whatever I guess as we are putting this together.

I think it's in the town's best interest to statewide this particular item is beneficial in that regard. So why is it important that we have percentage of the land be impervious surface why does a business license for somebody coming in to do landscaping in a property that's established have to pay an exorbitant fee just to be able to come here and service a resident. Things like that. There are some other bigger things that I think are presenting i mean i know uh just from a residential perspective to get water was crazy the amount that i had to pay to get a tapping fee i can imagine from a from a business perspective how much more that is. Where's all that money going to that isn't here that we're not seeing and how is that beneficial to having more people come to build in the town. I think the other thing that jumps out is You know, we talk about having residential and commercial.

What is business friendly to a residential area. How do we define that, and you know, is that defined and are the are the regulations that go along with being a residential friendly business. Are they... friendly to whoever is coming in here, or do we make them so outrageous that nobody's ever going to meet those things so I think those are things that should be called out in this plan. And if we're requiring certain things, we need to say how they are beneficial because a lot of this stuff I see right now is not. appreciate those comments and I hope for some of the explanation that I give today you will see some of the backstory of So... The public input that's been given provides a framework and some rationale for how the plan has been written and that will then provide some of the background and framework for how the land management ordinances will be amended or rewritten. that will address some of those things that you spoke about because what the comprehensive plan really is not only just a long-term vision but it is it's like the roadmap for development so as you'll see through as I go through each of

these sections and what each of these sections highlight and what people have said in relation to each of those sections is the way that the land management ordinance will hopefully be amended to reflect what people have said that they want and the priorities that people have said that they want in terms of growth and management of growth and of existing properties in terms of business friendly to residential and residential friendly to business, that is definitely a question that continues to be grappled with not only from your group, but council and in this plan. And that is definitely something that we'll come back to talk about in the next meeting, because those are really the, and this, idea of how do you bring more business in, how do you bring more people in, how do you bring more of the residents and tourists that Atlantic Beach is specifically targeting. That'll come along with the economic development, the priority investment section, the land use section, and those beginning changes to the land management ordinance. So I'm hoping that through this presentation you'll get a couple of those answers and then in our next meeting you'll get more of those answers.

I have written down all of those comments to make sure that I can address them as we go and that the plan and land management ordinances also can reflect those requests. - Good, thank you. - Yeah. And... Just like Steven did, if you guys have any other questions, please interrupt as we go so that I can address them. The vision was prepared through a series of input sessions and then voted on at one of our focus groups. The vision statement is actually kind of what guides the overall goals for the plan. It says Atlantic Beach aspires to preserve its historic small town charm and cultural identity while promoting inclusive community life, responsible growth, environmental stewardship, and a resilient local economy using transparent governance, and enhanced destination appeal to strengthen its public image and ensure a high quality of life for all. The sections you have in front of you today are section one, the introduction. and I'll go through each of these sections. Section two, the population section. Section three, housing. Section six, natural resources. Section seven, resilience. That's a new section required by state law, so that's not a section that you've had before. SECTION 8, cultural resources, and you have a partial section 12, goals and strategies. that's a 26-page section, so it's not all the way done yet. and really goals and strategies is the section that guides policies and ordinances and resolutions for council later on. it also could guide your future changes to any other land management changes or things further into the future than what's immediately being done.

Upcoming sections that you will be reviewing at our next meeting, the community facilities section, transportation, economic development, priority investment, land use, and then the commercial corridor master plan. Now that master plan is not a requirement of state law, but it is something that Atlantic Beach has asked Diamond Shores to create for them, specifically for 30th and 31st Avenue. We'll also be presenting recommended changes to the land management ordinance. That may be at

your next meeting or maybe at the one after. So here we are February 19th, we're giving you the comprehensive plan, or January 19th, we're giving you some preliminary draft of the comprehensive plans, some of the sections. February 19th, we'll give you the remaining sections. March 19th, we'll give you the master plan, the land management ordinance, and begin the 30-day public hearing and then in April, we will give you a resolution to approve the land management ordinance, the comprehensive plan, and hopefully from there we'll move on to council. Now, those are all tentative. Things can change and move if you need to make some adjustments to the plan.

At this point in time, you know, a lot of it is in your hands as we do some feedback back and forth. and with staff and counselors as we continue to negotiate some language and such. But that 30-day public hearing is a requirement of state law so without further ado, I will get into section 1. And you do have the plan in front of you. I did tab it. Thank you. So that you can find the appropriate section.

The sections are numbered with a one or a two. That is the section number, dash the page number of the section. So if you flip through and you're like, I already saw page three. What is this? I've got another page three. Well, you've got to look at the section number before that. So 1-2, 2-3. Okay, just want to clarify that so the introduction highlights a lot of our public engagement. Originally we were going to put the public engagement in a totally separate document that would serve as an appendix or an appendices to the plan. As we went through the process and realized just how important the public engagement was to this process and how really interactive Atlantic Beach was with the comprehensive plan we kind of came to the realization that it really needed to be the forefront you know the first chapter of the document and to really highlight how engaged everyone was and how the opinions of the Atlantic Beach residents and property owners really drove the plan So as you all know, we did a lot of public engagement.

Just to highlight a few things, the one-on-one interviews, I'll get into the survey in just a minute. We did hold four focus groups, got a lot of information from those focus groups. The Facebook page has been fairly popular, has been shared a lot, so the introduction section does have a section on the Facebook page and our engagement with that. Of course now we're also holding planning commission meetings and council meetings. The introduction section also has a good synopsis of the past planning efforts, which also includes that 2007 master plan and an analysis of why that master plan maybe doesn't fit moving into the future so I'd like to give you a little, a little, of the survey results. because that really did highlight a lot of the input we had gathered throughout the rest of the process. It solidified some of the Some of the answers we had gotten anecdotally through our engagement in the festivals, in the seminar, and some of the

other more non-qualitative or quantitative input sessions. We have 50 respondents, which for a population of Atlantic Beaches size, 50 respondents is pretty good.

You only have 407 parcels, give or take, depending on what's being collected. consolidated or split. So again, 50 respondents is pretty good. 44% were non-residents. 44% were non-resident property owners, meaning they owned a property but did not live here. 18% were not residents at all. 34% were year-round residents. And 4% were part-time residents, so it's actually a pretty good split and it actually does reflect fairly well the general demographic of ownership versus non-ownership versus who lives here and who doesn't, so we feel like we got a pretty good split on who answered the survey. In terms of demographics, most of the respondents were black and over the age of 35. Again, that does also match the demographics of Atlantic Beach. These are broken out on page 1-8 if you wanted to follow along in the plan. One of the real meat and potato portions of the survey that help us later on when we're doing the land use and priority investment and economic development and even the master plan is the visual aspect of the survey that we had.

We asked respondents to pick their preferred uses. and their preferred visual preference of specific types of housing, specific types of commercial, specific types of tourism related development. And Some of it was interesting and other of it was predictable. It did largely reflect what we were hearing from people on the street. Um... largely people want single family or raised beach homes. We knew that just from anecdotally talking to people. We also found though that people do want duplexes in town homes.

They also want residential with commercial. But there was a geographically based thought process of where people want these things. Now, was that stated in the survey. No, we got that information from talking to people. They generally want single family homes around the perimeter of Atlantic Beach, around that area where there already is single family homes. They generally want beachfront or beach, raised beachfront housing along the beachfront. And they talk about wanting those more denser type duplexes, town homes on the west side or closer to where that commercial area is going to be. And then of course that residential mixed with commercial in the commercial corridor where we already have kind of some commercial mixed areas so while they say, yes, we want duplexes, yes, we want town homes, yes, we want residential mixed with commercial, they're not necessarily saying everywhere in Atlantic Beach. They are specifically saying in specific portions, so residents were um stating that they preferred residential types, like the existing homes that already exist, but they also recognize the need for Atlantic Beach to move into the future and expand their type of housing that's offered here. In terms of commercial uses, like I said with the residential, commercial mixed with residential. They also like the idea of a downtown

Main Street. And they liked the idea of specialty uses. Now specialty uses was not an option, but people wrote it in. People liked the idea of small gourmet grocers. You know, little grocery shops where you could get specialty breads. Maybe muffins, cupcake shops, little coffee shops, places where they could get professional services, you know like a little lawyer's office or a realtor's office or something like that. They liked the idea of cultural and historic centers, maybe an art studio, or multi-story commercial buildings that had entertainment and dining options on the bottom floor. What's really interesting about this is that those commercial mixed with residential and those downtown market and those specialty uses are not possible on all the lots.

There is a recognition that this can't happen everywhere. And from the majority of people we spoke with everyone seems to understand and recognize and be okay with that they understand and recognize that it's okay to intermix the juices. People seem to be okay with a house on one lot, a business on another lot, a house on the next lot down, then a couple of businesses next to those houses and people seem to recognize those deed restrictions help guide that and there seems to be a good consensus as to the intermixing of commercial and residential is okay, actually one thing as I am looking through this and I think about the survey as we got so from a commercial perspective. The one thing we think about is 30 and 31st. Is there thought to the commercial that we already have on 17th because we have a lot of vacant areas on 17 for some of these more maybe not residential friendly businesses.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. Is there anything in the survey that addressed anything like that.

Ashley Cowen. There was some. We did ask a question in the survey about are there any commercial uses you don't like or don't want to see, there was a fairly consistent series of answers about people not liking adult style businesses, people not liking businesses that do not bring in tax revenue, non-profit style, unfortunately, churches, Those were mentioned multiple times. Now are those are nonprofits and churches good for community building. Absolutely. Are they good for tax-based building. not necessarily, but can you combine the two to say hey if you have a strong community do you then have a good strong tax base. Yes. so take that with a grain of salt. I think some of those things, like the churches and whatnot, may be residential friend Whereas adult-oriented businesses are not residential or community friendly at all however from a town perspective, I would think that's the biggest revenue base that we have. So you're Cutting off your funding to support your community values which but again, there's a place for if you're going have that on the main highway as opposed to down in the residential area where we have things going. So, you know, the businesses and where they're located could make a difference too. Yeah, well and also You get into the same conversation about this downtown Main Street and whether or not there could be bars in

the downtown Main Street through the land management ordinance, you can regulate how would those types of businesses get approved and whether or not they would have to go through the zoning board of appeals to get a special exemption in order to become allowed in those districts so for example, in Horry County, in order to have a bar, you actually have to get a special exemption to serve the alcohol and you have to be approved by the zoning board of appeals. If you want to have outdoor music at your restaurant and serve outdoors, you have to go to get a special exemption in front of the zoning board of appeals and that involves a public hearing. so publicly advertised on the parcel in which it would be,

People from the community could come out and say, "Hey, I like the idea of having the bar right here. There's no residences around it." or, "I like the idea of having outdoor music at this restaurant." And yes, it would serve alcohol on its outdoor patio while it's serving with outdoor music. So going through the process of having something like a special exemption, would be something that we would recommend for those uses that may be closer to a residential area. So those sorts of things could be in the land management ordinance.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. I do have one question, just vocabulary, so what is the term that means one structure has commercial and residential as opposed to residential, just being in a neighboring lot to commercial. Vertically mixed use. Vertically mixed use.

Ashley Cowen. It's vertically mixed use to have commercial on the bottom and residential on top versus just mixed use district. Okay. And you could have commercial and residential next to each other.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. I just wonder, I'm sure this will be covered, but I think somewhere that needs to be clear. Okay. I think that's a point of confusion. When I think, when I read it twice, I wasn't sure if it meant one building commercial on top, I'm sorry, residential on top, commercial at the bottom, or they could just be next door to each other, meaning lot A can be zone four commercial, Lot B can be zoned for. Residential, because I think in fact, mixed use means commercial. I mean the use is mixed use, but the zoning would be commercial.

Ashley Cowen. You technically have both. You have one where you can have residential and one where you may not and that is something that we will cover in the next meeting with the Future Land Use Map. Because in the Future Land Use Map, you can actually make it so that mixed use can be either vertical or horizontal. In which case, residential may be allowed to be next to commercial or horizontal. commercial may be allowed underneath. Now you're zoning. Again, we're changing the land use management ordinance. We can change the zoning along with it so we can make those adjustments

so that mixed use can be what we want it to be. So if we want a mixed use district to be horizontally mixed use, or vertically mixed use or both we can do that yeah I mean like to just put on the record that is an action to ensure that in the language of the zoning we do make those demarcations it's mixed use of course on length or vertically yeah because I do think that's important to prevent ambiguity in the future I think the other consideration with that is the difference restrictions if there are height restrictions for if you have a commercial building it could be X number of feet high. Or if you have a residential building, it can only be, you know, 45 feet. I think in those mixed use areas where we've had some concern, they should be the same. I think those are both excellent points.

Ashley Cowen. Those will help as Our team continues to draft land. And see, I'd be thinking the height would be the same. So like you have a four-story condo and a four-story house. Take the beach thing. Nobody wanted to see it. 20-story building on the beach. So right away we said, okay, we're going to make that residential because we know residential can only be 45 feet or 55 feet, whatever it is. But I don't know that there's anything wrong with having a 45 foot tall residential friendly business on the beach that's going to be appealing and fit in with the look that we talked about. And that's where I think, you know, that mixed-use change needs to come in where, okay, everything has to be this high, there has to be this much space so that people can get through and see to the beach, and as long as it meets that, whether it's residential or business, it's okay to develop that way. The top three tourism related uses were raised beach homes, bed and breakfast, and Airbnbs. I think that's a fairly predicted response that we've seen across the board. And a lot of that is because those types of homes would fit with the historic uses that have been throughout Atlantic Beach. That's again, those homes that already exist. The motels that exist already, the department complexes that exist already, reuse of existing historic structures could be bed and breakfasts, and then of course, raised beach homes could be very easy, Airbnbs. Open space, again. Atlantic Beach loves a good festival and a good event. People really, really wanted to see that continue. They wanted to see like a town sponsored type festival and event space. Like the idea of plazas and small pocket parks and definitely wanted to see that public art and murals continued. The idea that it added to the character and aesthetic appeal in Atlantic Beach was something we saw over and over again. In the survey, people did have some preferred facility improvements. This is on page 1-11 if you're following along. People wanted basically improvements that would make Atlantic Beach more livable, meaning that they wouldn't have to leave if they didn't want to leave. They could do all of their daily things. Here in Atlantic Beach, they could enjoy their leisure time, they could enjoy their work at home time, they could enjoy their small scale chores. Like if they wanted to go to a grocer, they could do it here. If they wanted to get small type chores done like a lawyer, you know, whatever they could do that here. They preferred facility improvements such as sidewalks fixed, drainage

improvements, underground utilities, public safety and lighting improvements. Getting this community center done up a little bit, making sure that this would actually become the hub for government here in Atlantic Beach. Updating the parks, providing some business support and beautification to the town and then of course enforcing the zoning regulations and completing this long-term planning investment that they've already had. Section two is the population section.

There's a lot of stats and statistics I could go into for the population section. I will not belabor it by telling you every single stat and statistic. What I will say is that in the 80s and 90s, Atlantic Beach was fairly on par with the other small jurisdictions in Horry County. Conway, Aynor, Loris, they all went down when Atlantic Beach went up, but Briarcliff, right next to us, they actually went down at the same time Atlantic Beach went down in terms of population growth. That being said, Briarcliff has mostly stabilized. They've completely built out, unlike Atlantic Beach. Briarcliff is right around \$499. You guys are right around \$450 to \$475. So you do have the ability, depending on how growth goes, to surpass Briarcliff with acres in terms of your population how is the size compared. Yes. However, they went one direction in terms of their growth. They are single family, large lot. in and of their entirety. That's not possible here. You've got small lots. However, you could have homes that are of the same value and what's the name of the neighborhood,

Commissioner Stephen Fera, what's the name Briarcliff acre.

Ashley Cowen, it is right up the road.

Commissioner Stephen Fera, okay. I'll try to pass there,

Ashley Cowen. In terms of demographics, Atlantic Beach in 2000 was 82% black. In 2010, 55. You guys have moved up again to 64.7 so it's a slight fluctuation, however you're still keeping that historic African American black population. population. Ironically or strangely, you are 57.2% male and 42.8% female. That is very unique. Most of the jurisdictions are right around 50/50 or slightly more female. than they are male. A lot of your population decline happened more in the 2010 to 2020 range, which is right around when you lost all of that multifamily housing so you can see that as a reason why. Now your median age is 42. That's actually younger than the neighboring jurisdictions could be because you don't have quite as many retirees here as the neighboring jurisdictions. Could also just be a percentage of children to seniors, a lot of your population is actually 35 to 55. Is this for permanent residents or also not, it is according to the American Community Survey. Okay, so you do also have to take that with a grain of salt. who typically responds to government survey so great to solve that so you do end up leaving out on a large population of Hispanic and sometimes international populations when you go off those numbers. By any chance, does any of your metrics do you track growth,

meaning, so like in 20, let's say 2015. how the number of properties has changed between then and now. Because it seems to me. Yes, we'll get to that in the next section. Perfect. Yes. Okay. One of the interesting things about population, and we're always talking about the new housing that's coming in, and this was brought up in a couple of the one-on-one interviews and in a couple of the discussions I had at some of our festivals that we went to is income and poverty and per capita or what people make here in Atlantic Beach. You do have a high in comparison to other jurisdictions poverty rate here in Atlantic Beach and a rather low per capita or low median. Would that be for various reasons. Yes. Could that be because of the ratio of seniors and children to the rest of the population. Yes. But it is definitely something to take into account when we talk about continuing to grow the town because those people under the poverty line, those people who do not make as much income, will continue to need services or they will either not live here anymore, which is an option, or they will be forced from the homes that are no longer here.

Does that make any amount of sense, so I think that's a good idea and maybe with some context to it. is the range. from low-end, from high income what is that and where did those numbers come from again are we looking at survey results so we're looking at the American Community Survey which is the census so you know you have to look at that with a little grain of salt grain of salt too because I don't know who. would be if you looked at the difference between Atlantic Beach IN 2015 AND 2025, it looks like there's a lot more building in the income maybe not so much of a full-time residence, but of property owners, may be different. So, you know, I'm not sure what that statistic really tells anybody.

It is normal and natural to see an evolution of income in a community this small. in the middle of a metropolitan area. It's normal and natural. the point of highlighting it is to recognize that There are multi-million dollar properties and there are properties where the rent is lower than the neighboring jurisdictions. There are people in Atlantic Beach that make rather high incomes and there are also people in Atlantic Beach that make rather low incomes. And recognizing that keeps us at a balanced level point where we can say, okay, we do have a wide variety of people on a socioeconomic and that we can't forget the other half of the people.

Does that make sense. No. So with our population knowledge of all of the statistics, we can make some projections. Now, Aspire 2036 makes three different projections, a high growth scenario, a moderate growth scenario, and a low growth scenario. We heard from the public input that people want to stay close to 1,000 to 1,500 people in the future. This is page 2-5. that people want to stay close to 1,000 to 1,500 people. which is roughly 8% growth rate. And we think that that is doable with the type of growth that y'all want with the single family homes and the and the moderate level of commercial in

the commercial corridor. So what that means is with a moderate growth scenario that is a mid-level commercial and mid-level residential growth that's continuing to do infill development, that is giving development incentives, And the rest of Aspire 2036 will be to meet those goals in the recommendations and in the changes that are made to the land management ordinance; so that is versus like a high growth scenario, which would encourage more dense infill, higher density growth like multifamily units, loosening up regulations a significant amount to encourage more growth, aggressive infill and then a lower growth scenario would be very limited changes finding ways to limit the amount of growth or limiting height or limiting the square footage people could use on their lots. It would be predicting a great amount of market variability and what people could do with the properties. With those projections, the things that are relevant Both. and I would expect in the future are So how does that growth effect tax rate to residents today and maybe operating income for the town from today in that projection, we're saying in 10 years,

We're getting these additional people and this additional business or whatever, Today, our tax base is this. Residents are paying this doing this our town is limited with this tax base that we have now. How does this growth happen? impact those things in the future. Because that is an excellent question. I'm not sure I'm qualified to answer the effect they would have on your tax rate. What I will say is a lot of this will be in your priority investment section. As the town continues to grow, they will need to predict when roads will need to be improved. Windstorm water will need to be upgraded. when the electrical system will need to be taken care of. um when the town as a whole needs to hire more employees to take care of the growing base of people that live here and it'll be a balancing act of how much do we get in tax revenue, how much do we spend in tax revenue, and what goes out to provide those services. That's every jurisdiction's balancing act, it's a balancing act and council will have to grapple with those as they continue to decide which services to provide, which services to upgrade, which to leave alone and whether or not the revenue from residential and commercial needs that growing demand.

Now this plan will make recommendations as to what the priority projects and priority investments are for the town and make some baseline predictions as to what those will cost. But again, that's a 10-year plan. It may take longer. And we will make recommendations as to grants that they can use to fund that, because that won't be all on the tax burden. I guess that's the challenge with any of these plans. I mean, of course, everybody wants to see improvement and growth and whatnot, but at what expense, so I hope as we are important to use, we're seeing what the cost is going to be. At the end of the day, there could be no benefit to the average There's also no benefit in sitting still. I'm not saying sitting still is the goal, but I'm saying you could do all this growth and everybody could... not be better off. That's a possibility, but you have to

account for that in how you go like you said, it's the balancing act. You could grow and have all this other income that comes in from the tax base and it could all go to something that nobody wants and that's where the balance is and that's where I hope we're identifying these priority spending things and that we can stick to those things. So now we'll get into housing section, that's section three. Basically, this section was an analysis of your existing housing and recommendation on some future housing. So according to 2023, you had 283 units. Of course, we know that that's not existingly true. There has been quite a few new units put in since then. So we're willing to adjust those numbers if there's permit data that the town can provide to us. Technically, as of 2023, there was a 59% vacancy rate.

Usually that is seasonally occupied renters that are causing that vacancy rate. 71% of the occupied housing was renter occupied. So that does tell you how many renters there are here in the town. You do have an eclectic housing style all over town, which is truly very cool. It speaks to the style of housing. I don't have a page number for you. That's okay. It does speak to the nature of how housing has grown and changed over time. In Atlantic Beach, you have housing from all different decades back to, I think, the '40s is the earliest one according to your historic district document. I will make note though that housing neighborhood stability is largely correlated between ownership and whether or not owners occupy their homes. And that is largely because someone who actually lives in their home becomes more engaged in the community that they live in. They sit on planning commission, they come to council meetings, they say hello to their neighbor and they know their neighbor by face and by name. This is just an overview of the whole section. I will draw your attention to a couple of the maps. This is the map on page 3-6.

This is your historic district contribution. These are all of the homes that are called out in your historic district application as either contributing or non-contributing, so if the town were to want to seek ways of protecting the historic properties, they could utilize this map and the information that I put into GIS to do that. I know that they're doing the historic markers, but if they wanted to codify, ah, Okay. Let's see what technical difficulties are found. Well, she's doing that, Titus. She did say on... page 3.1 and there's a couple other stats on page 3-2 that if she had the latest permit data she could have accurate counting of the growth. How do we make a request to get her to update the numbers. because hers just goes to 2023. Okay, and just for the record I'll restate my question.

My name is Commissioner Michelle Brown. I was just recommending that the town disclose the number of permits issued through current so that the report can be accurate. Right now it's about three years, data is about three years old. Wrong one. Thank you. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, here we go another question I have, Ashley,

and I don't know if it's in here someplace and I am just referring to the chart on page 3, 2 or 2-1, either one is fine, so as an example, it says from between the period 2017 to 2020, there were 70 additional units which is a big number and then it says just 6 through 2023, 6 additional, I know that's going to be updated. I wonder, do you account for renovations anywhere? Because I notice when I drive up and down the street, yes, a lot of houses have been built, but several have been updated. Is that accounted for any place in this. I just think that's an interesting data point.

Ashley Cowen, that is a wonderful question. This data is from the American Community Survey. It's from the survey, not current. Yeah, I didn't actually go out and gather. You've said that several times. Yeah. Yeah. This is interesting. I don't know if there's space for that, but okay I can dig further into the American community survey or maybe if we can get the permit data, I could say these permits are renovations and these permits are incremental. Right, I just think that the period of growth that Tammy's experienced over the past, you know, 10 years, really can, this is what we've done, we want to do more of that I think it really influences what we're seeing. the growth, there are three growth options on page. 2.5 and I was curious to see what we have done if it aligns that moderate growth scenario. I'll send Titus an email to make that request formally a good news story we should have in the future. It was off tonight.

Another map I'd like to draw your attention to is 3-8. These are your structure types. it's the one that's got a bunch of multi-colors in it. That's actually the value one, it's pretty cool too. That's tax value. There's a little red So the structure type is actually rather interesting because if you were to in the future develop architectural standards or design review board or something along those lines you could utilize this information which was actually gathered for your historic district application you could use that to determine your design review criteria and it does again speak to the eclectic styles of architecture that are existing in Atlantic Beach already. and where just from the map you can see that there's a large vacant portion of in 30th and somewhat 31st and then the other map I wanted to call your attention to was 3-3 is actually the structure map. It's the one you're looking at right now, Michelle. It looks like a bunch of rainbow colors. That is the map of when structures existed on the properties so if you can see a color on the map, that structure no longer exists so the current structures are that darker, darker gray color. If the structure is a pink color, then that means that structure existed in 2017, but it no longer exists today. If it's a purple color, it existed in 2014, but no longer exists today. If it is that darker blue, it existed in 2010, but no longer exists today. today. And I'll call out that 2010 blue color because those are the majority of those housing developments from the Housing Authority. Those multi-family homes that no longer exist on those Housing Authority properties. So that is a significant amount of the population change that happened between 2010 and 2014. And then this map actually goes all the way back to 1998, which you can see between 1998 and 2008, there was quite a bit

more development on those two oceanfront sections of lots that no longer exist today. Let me just repeat what I think you said. If it's this black color where it says current structures, those are the ones that are here now. Everything else is gone, Yes. Wow. Okay. Well, so the North Myrtle Beach and Horry County ones are that lighter color gray. Yes, but within the boundary. Within the boundary of the town, yeah. Wow, I wonder what happened here. All that yellow. Demolition, hurricane. The next section There are no questions about those maps because I see people still studying them. I just think it's really interesting. It is an interesting map. That's what I wanted to know, like things that are there today, if there was anything there before that. The data only exists 1998 and this is data that I gathered from Horry County's GIS data set so I could go back to aerial images. I think I can get all the way back to 38, 36 but everything gets really grainy when you go that far back. Now there's pretty good imagery in 85. It's really varied between the 80s and the 60s as to how good the aerial imagery is. You really can't tell lot by lot whether or not there was something there. You can tell big structures. You can tell structures that are lonely in the middle of vacant parcels but in terms of the level of detail. I was just lucky that the county had it mapped, certainly cannot get back to the heyday of the 80s.

This is very interesting. The next section is natural resources. Section 6. This section really focuses on adaptability and the protection of natural resources. It also focuses on Atlantic Beach's need to update outdated infrastructure and suggests proactive development practices. So here we're starting to get into what could Atlantic Beach do to address future development. Now, we've addressed that in the other sections, but largely population growth just tells us how much development needs to happen. Housing tells us, hey, you guys could do this into the future to address what housing looks like, and housing can influence land use section. But in terms of natural resources, we can actually make suggestions for changes to land management ordinance to reflect a greater pride in natural resources so in this section, we specifically start talking about septic suitability because there are some homes on the west side of 17 that are still on septic tanks and septic fields. So that's discussed in this section. It may be something that is a priority of the town to address that into the future. Or we can put into the land management ordinance that any home or any commercial entity that builds in that section may have to connect to town water or city water since you guys are on North Beach water if they were to develop. We also talk about surface water quality and deep water outfalls as a large investment that is something that the town could look into if that becomes a priority. Surfside is talking about it right now. North Myrtle Beach has already made it one of their priorities to look into those deep water outfalls. Certainly if The beach is the prime reason people live here and come to visit here. Having those outfalls daylighted on the beach may end up becoming an issue later on. We talk about urban forestry and the desire the community has for tree preservation. If trees are not preserved, what is the alternative solution. This plan

makes the suggestion that if the trees are not going to be preserved, then perhaps having stricter landscaping regulations in the land management ordinance may be what is desired so if people need to clear their lot in order to build their home, perhaps the town needs to consider a number of trees required to plant back in their place. Or a landscaping requirement of you need to have this many bushes and this many trees on your property if you're a new build. Or maybe it's certain size tree you have to preserve and you have to cover for the zoning board of appeals if you need to want if you need to cut that down I'm sorry, can I interrupt. Can we go back to page 6.5 for deep water. I was just trying to understand what this is. Deep water outfalls on page 6.5 at the bottom. Basically this says Atlantic Beach allows its stormwater to be poured directly into the ocean, whereas North Myrtle Beach. Does it say it takes it further out into the ocean, it's a deep water outfall, so basically those pipes that end right on the beach, that is the drainage from your roadways right on the beach here. And everybody else does the same thing, they just go further out. They go further out. Yeah, and this is something that's typically covered in the, like who governs the placement of this so what North Myrtle Beach has done very recently, they've gotten a significant amount of money to move those outfalls, is what the end of the pipes are called, further out into the ocean and that is, like I said, Surfside is actually looking at that right now, but North Myrtle Beach had more problems with flooding and stuff like that. Sometimes there's not a problem with it. Sometimes it's just an aesthetic. If you don't have a lot of pollution in the outfall, it's not a problem. However, there are signs that say do not play any outfall. because there's a higher risk of all the papers that live in the outflow. So when we think about back in the earlier section on population growth, this would have to be a consideration because maybe now is not an issue because we have a small number of and relative to the size of the ocean that we're intersecting with, maybe is not a big deal, but if we double, triple, quadruple that, as more and more potential pollution goes into the infrastructure, it could cause a problem later on. Also, the more and more water that goes into it, the more chance of erosion at the actual outfall could happen, which could then lead to more and more need for your beach to be re-nourished right there at those sections. and you don't actually take care of your own beach renourishment.

North Myrtle Beach is taking care of your renourishment and you would, I assume, stay on the same schedule as them, but if they have outfalls further out, they won't need renourishment as often as you would so it could cause issues for you to be different than them in terms of your outfalls in your re-nourishment schedule. And If we're talking about the aesthetic, people may just think, "Oh, these are weird. These are ugly. These are gross and they may say, "Hey, I could stay three blocks up and not have these weird, gross outfalls." I mean, I don't want to make it sound weird like that, but if you're a tourist and you're choosing a destination to stay, that is definitely something to consider for the future of Atlantic Beach for economic development reasons and that those outfalls, there's federal and state grant money available for those that we should be

looking at from a town perspective to keep in line with what has happened with North Myrtle Beach. I will say one of the priority investment, one of the objectives of the priority investment section will be to say, here's all the things that you need funding for. Here's all the different types of funds that you can seek grants for. and if you need 15 different high priority, big expense grants that the town can never afford on their own, and here's five that could actually meet those funding sources, Well, maybe year one you do these, maybe year two you do these, year three you do these, and over a ten year time frame you can hit them all. That's part of what that priority investment section does because you also have transportation, you also have stormwater.

I think one of the that we had from the Property Owners Association is historically Atlantic Beach was not included when the federal government was giving these grants out to North Myrtle Beach and Myrtle Beach that money is still available and should have been allocated to Atlantic Beach so the likelihood if we apply for these grants is high that we're going to get them. I took a note to say maybe this might be a project for the intern this summer to investigate how you, because I think it's just the mind share to know what's there. Because I've been to the beach a million times. I always wonder what those little what that was for, I never really understood. I never, you know, I never knew what it was and so it's really interesting.

I'm just sure it was just like an oversight. It's like we didn't, people were engaged in the deep word outfall process. It's funny because before I moved here I just lived up in North Myrtle, like at 17th Street. When we went to the beach, we had one of those outfalls right there. And I always see little kids. Oh, the parents, the parents are like, oh, it's a small little part of water. They're there. But you're right, they go out. And you don't know, it picks up all the gas. That water has to go somewhere. And that's the thing with impervious surfaces. It runs off. If you have a Like you see all these new residential places that are being built out of way. those places they have to have those retention ponds and stuff. Yeah. I mean... We don't have property to get a retention pond that the city would own that would take care of filtering out all that water. And on that topic, I will direct you to page 6-11 of the plan because it actually discusses-- Before you go on, if you don't mind, I was trying to figure out what on page 6.8, what are these diagrams attempting to show. Okay, so only three out of all of those are up to date. I have to pop in the other one so these are actually conceptual diagrams that show the trees in Atlantic Beach over time. I have ones going all the way back to the 30s. I see. Okay. I just have them popped to me. Okay. Basically, if you look at that 2010, 2017, and 2025, that dark green, you can see where the trees were in Atlantic Beach. and then how it's changed from 2010, 2017, and 2025. The red lines are of course the major transportation route. So 30th and 17th. And then the yellow lines are the other rows. So as we go back in time, you'll see how those have changed once I get the other graph. And I'll of course put it. Okay, for sure. Thank you for explaining and I think those pages

are actually numbered so this is like you were mentioning you don't have large neighborhoods here where you can put a stormwater retention pond to filter those potential pollutants out but what we can do is start integrating low impact design, low impact development practices, and nature based solutions into designs here in Atlantic Beach. We can encourage those in the land management ordinance. Surfside has had some good success with requiring low impact design solutions on single family lots. Things like rain gardens, things like permeable paving. Instead of every lot having a concrete driveway, perhaps permeable paving, maybe that would help us meet that impermeable surface ratio that may or may not be enforced right now. Things like bioretention swales between properties. If you happen to know your neighbor, maybe that could happen.

Things like sand fencing and re-nourishing those dunes, which I know the town is already doing, but maybe people can do that on their own property if a portion of the dune is on their property.

There's lots of practices that the town can go ahead and start implementing and having required in their land management ordinance in terms of the storm water infiltration. I think that's definitely, I know just talking to neighbors, There's some drainage issues with neighbors that I know people are working through right now. But I do want to insert this here. I do think as we revise the master plan and therefore the implications on the LMO. I know I sent this to you by email, but I do think it's worthy, good to note that for the commercial district, this is what you were getting to earlier, Steven. Stormwater is one of the points of being out of parity with the neighbors so as an example for North Myrtle Beach, if you have 0.5 acres or larger, I'm sorry for all of Horry County, 0.5 acres or larger, you have to have a formal stormwater plan by a credentialed engineer, which imposes a very large amount, I think \$100,000 on your project. But if you're under a .5 acre you're exempt but you would do something like this, like more pervious services. That is a huge, I think, issue in the ordinance for commercial. Because right now it says if you're 5,000 square feet or bigger, which 5,000 square feet is about Most people's lot is 7,500 square feet, so it's smaller than .17 acres, so it's probably more like .1 acre, which is everybody. that you have to have is really complex stormwater plan for a very small lot, So I think the recommendation would be to have heresy for stormwater with Horry County. Just kind of do what everybody else is doing. So nothing less but be the same. Right now it's so much more strict. it imposes a huge financial burden and maintenance burden, by the way, because once you do stormwater, you have to have it inspected and redone every single year. so not only is it a huge burden at construction, but it's a recurring cost. so i do think incorporating something like this for everyone, everyone does a little bit, then it will eliminate some of the drainage issues. Also, I don't know if this is a role of the ordinance or where this lives, but it's very clear if you drive down the streets people just are ignoring the impervious requirements because there's

concrete everywhere i was frankly shocked now that I am building I was frankly shocked at how many people have so much concrete in the front and the back and the sides. All the trees are gone. I don't know where it fits but something around compliance and having clear consequence for lack of compliance because we're already starting to see a problem with drainage and so just making sure that's worked in as a to give you know the town manager a tool to enforce versus saying I hope you do it but I have no recourse if you don't. Having clear consequences for being out of compliance. Compliance and it's pretty. Okay. I will draw your attention to a couple of maps in this section. Page 6-9 is the flood zone map. We do have a couple of sections of Atlantic Beach that are in the flood zone. Of course, this is the beach side section. And of course, those properties do have to be raised to meet your base flood elevation, at least the livable bottom floor.

The next one is 6/2, so backwards in the plant. And this is your digital elevation model. This map is actually, so backwards, it's the bright colored one. This one is really, clear and illustrating that the highest point in Atlantic Beach is actually in the middle. And then you fall downhill as you go west of 17, and then again downhill as you go towards the ocean which we did hear anecdotally in a lot of the public input that west of 17 was lower than the peak where the town hall is and that is why there is some more localized flooding issues on the west side of town versus on the east side of town. Is there any context? I mean, because to me it's very clear the people who should have the most stormwater requirements are the ones who are the highest. And so doing it sort of by district doesn't make sense. It should be by elevation. That would be one recommendation I would say we need to impose. Who would have thought it's like a A normal curse interesting.

Typically storm water requirements are across the board or based on commercial or residential. Right now it's just commercial there's none for residential or commercial. That's the Horry County importance and to be on a state requirement.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. Is it by size though.

Ashley Cowen. Yes, yes, yes. There's also proximity to the ocean which is part of the state requirement which all of the town has and that's just in the ordinance it specifically says you're exempt if you're residential. Yes, so I think that's sort of the gap. And then on the other end it says you must have if you're 5,000 if you're commercial so I kind of feel like you should be. We'll bring all that up. I've heard that from a lot of people that causes some confusion. The next section is the resilience section and I will just a little bit touch on this. This is that new section that's required by state law. The really good thing about this section is that the town just went through the process of working with Horry County. Actually, Officer Valentine was the representative from the town on this so I got a chance to talk to him before he left. But he was the representative for the Horry

County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, which Atlantic Beach has participated in since, I think, 2015 if I'm remembering right off the top of my head. In plain words, I'm sorry, before we get into this.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. Can you explain to me, what is resilience

Ashley Cowen. The ability to recover, like from a storm - post storm or post disaster so it could be hurricanes, it could be a tornado, it could be an ice storm, it could be a flood, it could be. Disaster. Any kind of disaster. Yeah, it's like a spring, you're living about that and it's also planning to bounce back. - Which one do you do with your waste - Do which waste? Got it. And maybe that's why some of the map that we saw earlier, why some of the structures maybe disappeared because there wasn't a proper resilience. Yeah. Now I will say there's a difference between mitigation and resilience. Mitigation is coming back afterwards and mitigating the disaster or fixing the disaster so it doesn't necessarily talk about how do you fix it. So thankfully the town is already a part of the big planning effort, which most of the jurisdictions in Horry County are a part of. So that plan is already in place. You guys already have a lot of state and local cooperative efforts in place. You're part of an evacuation zone. There are evacuation routes. You already have excellent dunes. You have plans for the dune restorations. You have plans for the beachfront restorations, which puts you in a great place. It's sea level rise continues to happen. Multi-jurisdictional all hazard mitigation plan addresses a lot of the potential disasters that could happen in Atlantic Beach and the fact that you have that connection already with Horry County really does help you with all of those things with the resilience section. So really the key here is the economic resilience. How would Atlantic Beach come back if there was a disaster and how would you plan in advance for having an infrastructure that is resilient, having a government that is resilient in the face of a disaster. How would that happen and basically this plan says that that plan needs to continue to evolve.

The cooperation between governments needs to continue to evolve and that's pretty much what this section is. Section eight is the cultural resources section. It gives a brief history and overview of Atlantic Beach's historical and regional significance, an overview of festivals and events, and talks about the need for preservation of the significance of Atlantic Beach. It goes into the historic designation and the historic marker program that you have. It talks about how Atlantic Beach is using murals to tell a cultural story. And that again, we will bring that into the economic development section, of how the murals are going to drive some economic development and bring people here for tourism. It also goes into events of significance such as the annual Black Pearl and Cultural Heritage Bike Festival, the Juneteenth celebration, and the Gullah Yuchi Festival. We've also had a request to add in the 100 year celebration or event to bring attention to the fact that this plan will cover that timeframe for 2034 so I definitely recommend perusing

that section at some point because it really is highlighting why Atlantic Beach is special and important historically and culturally. And then section 12. If you see anything you want to add to Section 8, please feel free to email me. I'm happy to add more to it.

Section 12 is your goals and strategies. We may have gone over this at your last meeting, but this is actually some of the same goals and strategies that we were throwing up on those boards I will not go over all eight of them but what I will draw your attention to is how we are dealing with creating those into an actionable list of goals that can be acted on and strategies to achieve those goals so what we've done is created those overarching goals, an objective or multiple objectives to reach those goals, and then individual strategies that the town can use to meet those objectives and the goals. I'll give you an example.

A strategy would be to encourage residential and commercial development in appropriate areas that align with the town's small character and historic charm that would be under the objective of promote balanced residential and commercial development and that's under the overarching goal of preserve Atlantic Beach's small town historic charm and then it also gives implementation timelines of specific things that the town should do, for example, in the immediate timeframe, which is something that we're doing right this second, update land use policies, design standards, and zoning districts. Short term, which would be one to three years from now, partner with developers to bring context-sensitive projects. And then ongoing, which would be things that they should do over the next 10 years on a continual basis.

Ongoing refinement of regulations and project review so if they find things that are just not working or things that maybe they want to tweak a little bit, they should be doing that on a continual basis. The chart also gives a list of coordinating partners, people who should be doing this with them, people that they need to outreach to. And then a list of potential funding sources if the town were to need additional funds in order to accomplish these strategies and implementation. and goals so you'll see that's 26 pages. We're only part of the way through getting that goals and strategies section done, but I would definitely recommend going through that if you have specific things you'd like to add to it or like to see changed. My email is on the next slide. and you guys should also have it. I've got my cards. I highly encourage you to provide feedback on any of the sections that I've given you so far. Ask questions when you call.

The digital document that I sent you is also commentable. You have the authority to comment on that document, and I will use those comments as part of the... the changes that I make to you, so... Any other comments, questions? Thank you, that was very informative lots of little actions, but we're definitely going in the right direction.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. The next item on the agenda is public input. I don't think we got anything for public input.

Commissioner Stephen Fera. Is there a motion for adjournment. I make a motion that we adjourn. Commissioner Timothy Vereen second. Roll Call. Commissioner Stephen Fera. yes. Commissioner Timothy Vereen, yes. Commissioner Michele Brown, yes.

Meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.