

Kill Devil Hills Town Council Retreat Notes
“Taking Stock and Moving Forward”
September 19, 2020 **9:00 AM – 4:00 PM**
Administration Building, 102 Town Hall Drive, Kill Devil Hills

Participants: Mayor Ben Sproul, Commissioners Ivy Ingram, Terry Gray, B.J. McAvoy, John Windley
 Staff: Town Manager, Debora Diaz, and Deputy Town Clerk, Michael O’Dell
 Facilitator: Margaret Henderson, The School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill

Goals:

- To generate a shared understanding of the Town’s future revenue and prioritized projects
- To consider how to continue strengthening Mayor-Council-Citizen-Staff relationships
- To discuss upcoming decisions or policy changes
- To plan for moving the work forward.

Reflecting on the events of 2020, share one action, decision, or event that generated pride about the Town of Kill Devil Hills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions related to the Meekins Field facility restoration • Special provisions for restaurants (tents, parking lot use, outside dining) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic • Engagement with businesses to problem-solve in response to pandemic • Our responsiveness to citizens (provided signs to post, masks, etc.) • Citizen-friendly and positive town services • Town Public Information Officer efforts; messaging and mask video • Proactive planning by staff • Reaching compromise to incentivize fire suppression in large homes • Rescheduling fireworks display

What were the behaviors, attitudes, or resources that enabled these good things to happen?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being willing to compromise • Being logical • Sustained attention to parks • Building stronger ties to businesses; direct outreach to businesses • Trusting staff to do good work • West-side Recreation Group process, especially outreach • Pacing the change process appropriately • Paying attention to evolving interests • Level of service provision is high and makes KDH attractive to residents and visitors • Big house development: We studied options, then created incentives for desired building design

How is it working for you?

Discuss what is working well and what needs adjustment to enable more success in terms of interactions, processes, policies, or roles. (Mayor-Council, Mayor-Council-Staff, Residents of or visitors to KDH, external partners, others)

- Agenda topics: Commissioners want time to prepare. No surprises wanted. Cut-off time is one week prior to meeting, at the preparation planning meeting.
 - Time sensitive topics are acceptable
 - Commissioners should inform others ahead of time out of courtesy when bringing up their personal agenda items of large or controversial topics
- When making inquiries of staff, keep the Manager informed. Stay professional in the interaction. Assume challenges are intended to inform and enable understanding.
- We need to encourage all to proactively explore the “ripple effects” or potential reactions to decisions.
- Live stream our meetings (Staff is working now to make that happen.)
- Staff should speak up if Commissioners ask for a response that would be resource intensive. Bring it up for discussion at the next meeting.
- When engaging with inquiries by the public, explain roles, process, expertise, source, and bring it back to the Commissioners for discussion.
- National Park Service/ Wright Brothers theme park on Prospect Avenue:
 - We need to express the Town’s interests to them.
 - Stay informed of and participate in their plans to expand.
- Pandemic planning among local governments has been strong. We have built relationships that should serve us well into the future.
- Local and regional relationships are strong.
- State and federal legislative relationships might need attention.

If you were in the local diner and overheard the people in the next booth speaking positively about KDH town government, what would you hope to hear?

This list speaks to the values KDH wants to demonstrate in all actions.

- They are professional
- They are consistent
- What a pleasure it has been to deal with everyone in KDH
- It is easy to ____ here. (start a business, build a house, etc.)
- They work together well
- Look at how beautiful KDH has become
- They care
- They were respectful
- They respect and trust each other
- They are responsive to needs (congenial, provide info, act respectfully, helpful)
- They are a productive board
- They treat everyone fairly
- They made the beaches accessible; we come here because of that
- They are willing to listen
- Their process is streamlined

Financial boundaries and opportunities

- Working in shorter term now. Flexible planning; gradual adjustments
- Financial “bumps” might disappear post-pandemic
- Uncertainty; caution
- Fund balance -> target level

Potential projects to include in the budget

- Add position in Streets
 - Continue cross-training staff
 - Commissioners want to make the commercial district look better
- 3rd Street. (Consider the same for Martin Street, too)
 - Communicate timeline of planned changes to the public
 - Clean up the area
 - Improve the lighting
 - Expect some resistance; use low lights?
 - Sidewalk improvement plan is of primary importance
- Street lighting
 - Ask public if/where they want more lights
 - Manager to ask Nags Head about their lighting for crosswalks
 - Consider a pilot project for additional lighting for crosswalks
- Multi-use path
 - Complete the connection to other paths (Landing to Colington)
 - Long-term study: How to upgrade or create more multi-use paths. What would it cost?
- Beach access
 - Parking lots stay full
 - Boardwalks require constant maintenance
 - Schedule the maintenance more frequently?
 - Improve lighting
 - Incentivize “adopt a beach access.”
 - Use Community Appearance Commission to manage.
 - Add funding for more maintenance on weekends.
 - Currently use temporary labor, which presents challenges to keep staffed. (½ Public Services / ½ Buildings & Grounds)
- Town-owned properties
 - Bring updated inventory back to commissioners
 - Staff will start preparing
 - Include properties that might be available to acquire
 - 8th St. property; have received an inquiry to buy it from Town
 - First piece of property coming into town
 - Would another property give more value to KDH?
 - Use the revenue from sale to buy additional property?
 - No current strategic reason for the Town to keep the property.

- Commissioners expressed concerns about attractiveness of use if property is sold.
 - Purchase property with Dare County for EMS / public safety
- The Manager was instructed to initiate processes to explore selling 8th St. property and purchase other property. The Commissioners are not committing to completing either transaction but want to understand what the potential transactions might involve.
- Commissioners are interested in communicating to the public the nature of benefits from buying or selling properties.
- Fresh Pond (shared ownership with Nags Head)
 - Consider opening it up to minor recreation
 - Passive activity, such as a walking path
 - The two Mayors will talk to explore mutual interests, then return to staff to explore the possibilities
- The Manager expressed thanks for the Commissioners' willingness to ensure staff have the right equipment and facilities to accomplish their work efficiently.

The Board of Commissioners' Legacy:

Reflecting on today's discussion, what does this Board need to do to ensure you are setting up Kill Devil Hills to thrive in the future?

- Plant live oak trees along US 158. (Ask DOT in December about feasibility.)
- More focused interactions with sub-populations within KDH
- More work force housing and long-term rentals
 - Regional approach in coordination with the Dare County study
 - Explore the possibility of creating a Land Trust?
 - Ask for research on options for buildings with ground level businesses and upper floor apartments (mixed use developments)
 - Explore partnerships with builders. Ask what they need to create affordable housing here (Ordinances?)
 - Revisit J-1 housing concept via discussion with the Mayors of KDH and Nags Head.
 - Staff to initiate background research.
- Consider change to allow multi-family housing in residential zone.
- Careful stewardship of financial / environmental resources:
 - How does this apply to the Town's power needs?
 - Consider demonstration project
 - Build these concepts into our consciousness by incorporating them into evaluation of options, etc.
- West Side Recreational Plan: Fund and finish it. Fresh Pond: work out agreement with the Nature Conservancy.
- Cottage courts vs. large houses. Evaluate success of concept after the initial cottage courts projects are completed

Review of the Town's mission and vision statements

Notes are to be given to staff for a final draft to be returned to the Board of Commissioners

The Mission Statement (2012)

The Town of Kill Devil Hills is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all citizens, businesses, and property owners by providing the maximum level of service in the most effective and efficient manner while exercising sound fiscal responsibility.

We value citizen participation, honesty and integrity, unity and teamwork, fairness and equity and our unique natural environment.

Vision Statement:

Our desire is for Kill Devil Hills to be recognized as a wonderful place to live, where our citizens, businesses, and property owners receive high quality services; our employees work in an atmosphere of respect and support; and our leadership stimulates cooperation and innovation in our community.

The Vision Statement (1996)

Cause continuous improvement of the quality of life of our citizens by balancing expectations with fiscal responsibility.

Evaluation of the day: What went well

- The timing worked out with the delay from the original March date, especially for the newer Commissioners
- Multi-colored markers on flip chart pages
- Good food
- Room and facilities
- Facilitation; facilitator's expertise
- Informal discussion among Commissioners

Evaluation of the day: What to do differently next time

- Allow more time for discussions, especially if we want to dive deeply into a topic.
- Consider breaking up the retreat over two days.