



Results: October 9 North Myrtle Beach City Council Workshop at Ocean Isle Beach to Discuss Dredging

During the evolution of the City of North Myrtle Beach's Cherry Grove Canals Dredging Plan, some property owners encouraged the City to meet with Ocean Isle Beach, NC officials to learn firsthand the process the Town follows in dredging canals located within its jurisdiction. On October 9, members of the North Myrtle Beach City Council, City staff and consultants traveled to Ocean Isle Beach to meet with Mayor Debbie Smith to learn more about the Town's dredging program.

1. There are about 900 privately owned properties located along 19 canals in the Town of Ocean Isle Beach. The first 5 canals were built without bulkheads and are referred to locally as the "natural canals." Most of them now have privately installed wooden bulkheads. The next 13 canals were built with concrete bulkheads and are referred to as the "concrete canals." There is also a "header canal" that runs parallel to the Intracoastal Waterway (similar to Cherry Grove's "minor channel") and connects directly to the Waterway. The Ocean Isle Beach canals are narrower than those located in Cherry Grove.

In comparison, there are about 700 privately owned properties located along 21 canals to be dredged in the City of North Myrtle Beach, plus the minor channel that runs parallel to the shoreline and offers access to the major channel and the Atlantic Ocean.

2. Ocean Isle Beach first dredged its canals in the 1980s and continues to perform maintenance dredges, generally in five year increments. At no time has the Town contributed any money to the dredging of the canals. The Town's point of view is that only those who own property on the canals benefit from the dredging. Each property owner is assessed for each dredge. The rest of the Town's property owners are not assessed.

The Town's 2014 - 2015 Concrete Canal Dredging Maintenance project included the 13 concrete canals and some of the header canal. It cost about \$1,898,600 and removed about 56,650 cubic yards of material.

The Town employs a pipeline dredge but its designated spoils site is located close to the canals.

In comparison, the canals located in the Cherry Grove section of the City have never been dredged. The initial dredge will remove about 125,000 cubic yards of material. The City will employ a pipeline dredge but its designated spoils basin is located about four miles away from the canals, which adds significantly to the project cost. The project also requires about \$1 million in mitigation to account for impacted oyster beds and marsh area. The estimated cost for the initial dredge is \$6.5 million. The City will issue a bond for the initial dredge and it will largely be repaid through an assessment of properties located on the canals to be dredged. If a later maintenance dredge is required (at an estimated cost of \$6 million), a second bond will be issued and a second property owner assessment will be levied. The City has guaranteed property owners that their total assessment for both dredges will not exceed up to a maximum of \$2,400 per year for up to 10 years. The rest of the City's property owners will not be assessed for the project.

The City believes that the primary benefit of the dredging project is to those who own property located along the canals to be dredged. However, the City has committed \$800,000 toward the initial dredging project, and another \$800,000 to a maintenance dredge. The City has also borne staff, legal and other costs for the project. The City actively continues to search for additional money from other sources to put toward the project in hopes of reducing the amount that falls to canal property owners.

- 3. For its first dredge, the Town of Ocean Isle Beach employed a 40 foot wide box cut dredge down the center of the canals, but some bulkheads failed due to the width of the dredge cut. The Town now employs a 20 foot wide box cut dredge down the center of the canals to a depth of 4 feet at mean low tide and has not experienced any more dredging-associated bulkhead failures.**

Docks are prohibited from extending into the dredged 20 foot wide channel. Property owners are required by Town law to construct a bulkhead, and property owners must ensure that their bulkheads are in good condition prior to the start of each dredge. The Town also videotapes the canals before and after each dredge.

The City of North Myrtle Beach's project calls for employing a 24 foot wide box cut dredge down the center of the finger canals to a depth of 3 feet at mean low tide. The minor channel will be box cut dredged to a width of 34 feet and a depth of 3-1/2 feet at mean low tide.

The City does not require that bulkheads be installed for each property and it does not require that bulkheads be repaired prior to each dredging. The City will videotape the canals before and after dredging.

- 4. Most canal lots in Ocean Isle Beach offer a uniform 50 feet of frontage on the canals, and the Town's dredging assessments are levied on a per-linear foot basis that varies from dredging project to dredging project.**

The City considered a per-linear-foot assessment but, due to lot irregularities, decided instead to use a more uniform per-parcel assessment based on the number of single family and multi-family parcels located along the canals to be dredged.



One of the 13 concrete canals located in Ocean Isle Beach. The canals are narrower than those in North Myrtle Beach.



One of the five “natural” canals located in Ocean Isle Beach and featuring wooden bulkheads.



The “header” canal leading to the Intracoastal Waterway.



Council members, staff and consultants first met at Town Hall and then toured several of the canals.