

CITY OF NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH MYRTLE BEACH CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Minutes

1. ROLL CALL: 1:32 PM

Marilyn Hatley called the workshop to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Marilyn Hatley

JO Baldwin, Absent

Bubba Collins

Fred Coyne, Absent for roll call only

Nicole Fontana

Trey Skidmore

Hank Thomas

2. DISCUSSION:

Mike Mahaney, City Manager, stated they had met with many interested parties in order to put together a presentation they believed would work within the 53rd Avenue North Cherry Grove Park and Boat Ramp. Manager Mahaney highlighted some of the recommendations in the presentation. He stated this may have to be tried in the summer and tweaked afterward.

John Bullard, Director of Parks and Recreation, stated the staff had heard the concerns of the residents, kayak owners, and boat owners. They conducted extensive research and looked at other cities and parks to see what they were doing. Based on their research, he presented to the Council recommendations on how to lessen the congestion at the boat ramp by separating the different users within the area. The recommendations included expanding and paving an overflow parking area, which would be a paid-to-park area. The parking would be free for residents and property owners that had their license plates registered. The area would also contain extensive signage to separate the commercial from recreational kayakers, as well as signage for rules and regulations. Director Bullard recommended to create a commercial kayak launch on the west end of the bulkhead and a dredging ramp to be used by recreational kayakers when not in use by dredging operations. He explained an extensive list of rules and regulations for the maximum number of 6 Commercial Tour Companies. There were 6 legally licensed kayak companies that operated last year. The companies would be required to pay a fee of 7% of gross revenue generated from tours and equipment rentals operating out of the 53rd Boat Ramp. Mayor Hatley stated she thought 7% was too low and recommended to charge 10% due to the costs the city would incur for these recommendations. Director Bullard explained an illustrative map to give the Council an idea of the how the congestion and confusion would be resolved. The Council and staff discussed the signage issue and where they would be placed. Mayor Hatley stated she liked the plan and could tell they put a lot of hard work into the presentation. She reiterated the fee was too low and would like to see at least 10%. The Council and staff continued to discuss the fee and some of the details of the recommendations. The Council was in agreement with the 10% operator's fee.

Mayor Hatley opened the floor for public comment.

Wyatt Todd, 1152 Forest Drive, North Myrtle Beach, stated he ran one of the kayak companies at the boat ramp. He stated that 10% was a lot more of their net income. They could not make up the prices. They would not be able to raise prices because it was based on the market. Other people had lower prices. Mr. Todd stated they did have the ability to take money out of the overhead. But they did not have the ability to take money out of the overhead like people on the beach did. They did not have sole ownership

of the boat ramp. They were sharing it with 5 other companies. They were paying the same percentage as a smaller company for the same amount of space. They would be paying more for the same amount of space. They would be limited, too. A larger company would be affected more. The smaller companies would have more room to grow. This would affect the people that were there first. He stated he had been operating tours there for 10 years. Mr. Todd stated they did not run their business down at the boat ramp. They were members of the public and going kayaking at that point. They got in the water and went kayaking. They were not taking money, exchanging money, soliciting, or promoting it. They were not able to do business there. Mr. Todd stated unless the Council would like to change those regulations and then charge them a percentage. But if they were going to charge, then they needed to limit the companies that were not past the limit already. He had taken out groups of 30-40 at a time. Now he would be limited to 12. He would have to send his extra 20 people over to another company that only had 5 people. They were not very fair regulations. They were going to push bigger companies to be smaller. It was not the same as being on the beach as the sole company. They were sharing that spot with 6 other companies. They were not allowed to advertise on Google or take money at the location. This was different than other businesses in the area and should not be treated the same.

Cheryl Kilday, Destination North Myrtle Beach, stated they has done a survey of the kayak outfitters to understand the scope and scale. She wanted to talk about the impact on visitation. She stated they promoted kayak tours all day long. A lot of people came out of town for the tours. If they started to limit the tours, those people may go somewhere else and then not stay here. She wanted the Council to think about their whole spending and not just for the kayak tour.

Kathryn Arisole, Myrtle Beach, stated she worked at J & L Kayaking in Little River. She thanked them for the recommendations. She stated they may seem they were on opposing sides, but they really were not. There was a lot of congestion and they were excited about freeing it up. She did want to address the congestion due to the popularity of it. A lot of it came from natural growth. She gave an example of someone going to Wal-Mart to buy a kayak for \$150.00. It had become incredibly popular, which was great for people to get outdoors and do fun things with their family. She wanted to thank them for working with them on it. They were excited for the future. Her boss, Justin Summerall, would like to negotiate the increase of the 10%. It was rather high and would be hard for them to manage and maintain. She asked them to leave it up for discussion and be open minded with the number. Manager Mahaney stated they considered it and another city close to them was charging \$100 a trip for a kayak tour. Some individuals had indicated to him that some people were charging \$40 a trip and some \$25. They were trying to balance it all and address all of the concerns. Mayor Hatley suggested all the companies needed to discuss pricing with each other. Councilman Thomas stated it was a matter of supply and demand. They could raise the prices, but not gouge them.

Babs Johnson, 409 2nd Avenue South, North Myrtle Beach, stated she had a fishing kayak and they did not go out on the weekends, because it was too busy. She stated she objected with Destination North Myrtle Beach's argument. They needed to limit it. It was too much on the marshes. They did not have the same amount of marshes as the people south or north of them had. They needed to protect what they had now, especially with the amount of boats that were on the marsh. Ms. Johnson stated it would be another 10 years for oysters to be healthy again. They needed to protect what they had. She thought they did an excellent job on this. She stated the kayak ramps got very slick. Director Bullard stated they would be taking care of the ramps.

Darlene Goolsby, 3714 Old Pointe Circle, North Myrtle Beach, stated she and her husband were longtime residents of North Myrtle Beach and were very avid kayakers. Her husband was also a flounder fisherman. She thanked them for the work they had done on it. She had previous conversations with several of them on it and expressed her concerns as a residential kayaker using the launch. She stated separating the launches was an answer to everyone's concerns. She stated they had 8 kayaks because they have grandchildren and they like to kayak as a family. This would make parking and launching much easier.

She stated that this would help the commercial kayakers, too. Some of the revenues may suffer in the beginning. She applauded them all and stated as a citizen, she appreciated it. She also had concerns over oysters coming back, the traffic, and flounder fishermen that came from North Carolina because of the restrictions that we do not have. The North Carolina fishers used our waters to take out our flounder. She again applauded what they had done and thanked them. Her concerns were answered in the presentation.

Mayor Hatley closed the floor for public comment. She stated this was a great beginning and it may need to be tweaked later in the season. Manager Mahaney encouraged everyone to go to the Park and Sports Complex this weekend to watch the soccer, softball, and ultimate Frisbee games. Teams were coming from bigger colleges and universities. Having no further comment from the Council or the public, Mayor Hatley adjourned the workshop at 2:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Galbreath, Clerk to Council

MARILYN HATLEY, MAYOR

Minutes approved and adopted this 7th day of March 2022