

3/4/2020

Report on the Town of Sunset Beach meeting with the USACE to answer questions posed by the USACE. The face to face meeting was requested by the USACE.

Attending

Sunset Beach

Hiram J Marziano II, Town Administrator

Jan Harris, Councilwoman, Liaison for the Dredging Project

Tom Bormann, Councilman, Liaison for the Dredging Project

Moffat & Nichol (M&N)

Robert Neal, P.E., Project Consultant

Dawn York, Environmental Scientist

United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Scott McLendon, Chief of Regulatory

Mickey Sugg, Regulatory

Tyler Crumbley, Regulatory

Greg Currey, Regulatory

Report

The meeting began with the USACE informing us that the current application has been withdrawn due to changes in the project, such as where to place the beach compatible sand and to clarify other questions that the USACE had asked about in their last letter to M&N. They felt it would be better for the Town to have the application withdrawn than to have the USACE rule on the application as it stood.

Main points discussed:

- The USACE said that they had questions relating to the stated purpose and need of the dredging project; that being to improve navigation in the waterways covered by the permit.
- They asked for a clearer understanding on why we applied to dredge the finger and feeder canals, S Jinks Creek and the bay area to -7 MLW (more on that) while the access points to ICW and ocean were at -2 MLW. We explained that there was originally a plan to also include N Jinks Creek to ensure access at -5 MLW, but N Jinks Creek was removed from the project due to objections from residents, comments from State agencies and the Town's desire to have minimal impact on the surrounding area. We also explained that including N Jinks Creek would be desirable but we compromised to satisfy some residents and it was withdrawn from the scope of the project. Not a perfect solution but the best we can do now.
- On the -7 MLW there was some misunderstanding by the USACE that the requested dredge depth had changed from -5 MLW to the -7 MLW. We clarified that we are not seeking a -7 MLW but only -5 MLW.
- Other questions focused on what alternatives were considered to the current plan. They explained that their protocols require that possible alternatives are considered and that there be explanations as to why some alternatives are not possible or as desirable as others.

- Did we consider dredging to a shallower depth? We explained that dredging less would require more frequent maintenance which would end up being more costly as we only have the grant for the original dredging project. They asked us to estimate what that increased cost would be and what we would anticipate the maintenance frequency would be.
- They asked about dredging only the “hot spots”, i.e. the areas at the mouth of the feeder canal and S Jinks Creek. They acknowledged that only doing “hot spots” would not offer the longer term benefit we were asking for.
- They asked about the finger canals and why they needed dredging. We explained that storm water was carrying sediment into the canals. They asked how we will address the root cause of the problem and we explained the Town’s recent adoption of a long-term storm water plan to address these issues.
- They asked about the modeling that M&N did to look at possible changes to the tidal prism and water velocities. They asked to have the data submitted as a part of the application so that their USACE experts could look at the data and confirm the modeling results. M&N said they would supply the data.
- Finally, they asked about the sand placement issue. We did say what sites are being considered as possibilities. We also commented on the concerns some of the beachfront residents have on placing the sand on the oceanfront. We did ask again about the possibility of using the USACE islands and they said that they don’t have anything to do with that aspect of USACE business. They would send us the contact information of those in charge of the property operations.

I would say that the meeting was helpful for all parties. The USACE said that their interest was in understanding our position, need and plans and that they had to follow their own regulations. To me they were fairly clear in what they are asking for and that the meeting was well received. In the end the main issues for the Town are:

- Where to place the beach compatible sand?
- Submit a new application answering the USACE stated questions including the data asked for and with an answer to where the sand will be placed.

Prepared by Councilman Tom Bormann
 Assisted by Councilwoman Jan Harris and Hiram Marziano