Minutes

Members Present:
- Kevin Davis
- Danny Forehand
- Katherine Kearney
- Jerry Olson
- Jason Samuels
- Molly Ward

Members Absent:
- Frank Belton
- Gary Bodie*
- Cheryl Marek
- Charles Randolph
- Charmaine Vassar-Bell*
- Wilson Ziegenbein*

*Mr. Bodie, Ms. Vassar-Bell, and Mr. Ziegenbein were all present electronically.

Staff Support:
- Jonathan McBride, Housing & Neighborhood Services Division Manager (facilitator)
- Bonnie Brown, Deputy City Attorney
- Mike Hayes, Planning & Zoning Division Manager
- Anna Hammond, Neighborhood Development Associate (facilitator)
- Brian Marchese, Outreach & Creative Coordinator
- Jenn Green, Assistant to the City Manager

Due to there being no quorum present, no business was transacted – including the acceptance of electronic participation. Below is a summary of the discussion that took place.

Member Reconnect

Mr. Jonathan McBride, Housing & Neighborhood Services Division Manager, introduced the agenda for the evening. Ms. Anna Hammond, Neighborhood Development Associate, led the group through an exercise to further familiarize the members with each other. She asked Task
Force members to share the very first time they found themselves on Hampton’s waterways (attachment 1).

**Presentation by Bluewater Yacht Sales**

Mr. Buddy David, an attorney for Bluewater Yacht Sales, provided a presentation for the Task Force members who were present, which included the requested renderings (attachment 2). He also indicated to those present from the neighborhood that he was willing to give them the same tour that was offered to the Task Force earlier in the evening.

He explained why Bluewater was interested in the property, noting that they were only one of seven sellers of Viking Yachts in the United States. Bluewater is no longer able to service all the yachts they sell, causing concern that their business could be lost to a competitor.

Mr. David indicated that the proposal had changed scope from their original submittal, as the company was sensitive to the concerns that had been raised by the neighborhood. By scaling back the proposal, Bluewater no longer expects to increase their workforce by 50 employees, but rather maintain their current workforce and grow organically over time.

Mr. David emphasized that the parking lot will remain a parking lot, but will be improved with paving, and that no building will be built on the parking lot. He confirmed that Bluewater is willing to accept deed restrictions related to such. He also emphasized that no sandblasting or paint spraying would take place in the parking lot, and that they would only request to park boats or equipment there on rare occasions. He also indicated that Bluewater appreciated the suggestion at a previous meeting that the parking lot could be utilized by citizens during hurricanes or special events, and would be willing to discuss the option further. Mr. David also indicated that there is currently a resident who uses the parking lot as a driveway entrance, and the company would be willing to accommodate that resident.

The proposed new travel lift will be 9’ wider and 6’6” taller than the current travel lift, which is half the size of the original proposal. This will necessitate building new piers to support the lift, which would be approved by the appropriate regulatory bodies. Bluewater would also be removing the perpendicular piers currently present to allow for the larger boats to be serviced easier access to the new lift.

Mr. David indicated that traffic would most likely decrease, as additional delivery trucks would not be necessary to service larger boats, and there would no longer be traffic from boaters. He also stated that the new boats being serviced will come by water; they generally dock at the marina until it is time for them to be serviced. It is not unusual for repairs to take three to five months on each boat.

Mr. David addressed some of the other concerns voiced by citizens to include work lighting shining into private homes, noise levels at night and on weekends, delivery trucks, property values, and misuse of the public parking lot. He stated that Bluewater adjusts their security
lights whenever a request is made and they currently have no outstanding requests; that Bluewater is not the source of noise on nights and weekends as they keep regular working hours except on rare occasions; and, that many of the issues with delivery trucks will be resolved with the reconfiguration of the site entrance. Mr. David suggested that docking multimillion-dollar boats nearby increases property values, and that Bluewater employees had not misused the lot, but rather had permits to park there. He also indicated that Sunset Creek is federally maintained because it is a commercial waterway, and if that use is discontinued, so too would the federal maintenance.

Later in the meeting, City Manager Mary Bunting indicated that she looked into the matter of permits for Bluewater to use the parking lot, as it was not something she was aware of previously. The retired Parks and Recreation Director confirmed that he had provided permits years ago, as was within his authority to do. They were placards that Bluewater employees could place in their cars when it was necessary for them to park in the public lot.

Although he admitted that it would not be appropriate to comment on potential sites for another boat ramp, as the owners of Bluewater are also owners of one of the potential sites, Mr. David indicated that they believe there is a way to utilize the potential site in a way to mitigate concerns raised by the Task Force.

Mr. David concluded by stating the “win-win” would be allowing a small business to thrive, accommodating the concerns of the neighborhood, raising the stature of Hampton, and benefiting the larger community.

Task Force members asked several questions (attachment 3), to include why the 14 Fleetwood Avenue property, already owned by Bluewater, could not be used for the new lift; if the current commercial piers would be extended; and, what materials would be used for the new parking lot. Mr. David suggested that the ground on 14 Fleetwood Avenue is not strong enough to support the travel lift; the commercial piers will not change length; and, there are no decisions made on surfacing materials for the parking lot at this time.

Questions about the economic impact of the project and how it will benefit citizens were also raised. Mr. David noted that there would be no immediate increase in economic impact as there would have been with the original proposal, but that growth would continue organically over time, and that continued operations are important to the current employees who live here, indicating that not obtaining the property could result in a decrease of business at this location. He also stated that buying and cleaning up property provides economic benefit for the City.

It was asked what role Bluewater would play in a development of a new boat ramp, and if they would be open to an exchange of property. Mr. David stated that the new boat ramp would be the City’s, but that Bluewater is committed to boating in the City and would be willing to share their knowledge. Mr. David and Ms. Bunting noted that property negotiations could not be entertained by the Task Force. Ms. Bunting stated that there has been no decision by Council to
move forward on this proposal; Council is waiting to receive the Task Force’s report and then complete a public process before making decisions.

Additional questions raised included encroachment by Bluewater into the public waterway, benefits to the neighborhood by accepting this proposal, and the current occurrence of roadway damage by large boats. Mr. David stated that Bluewater was not encroaching; the improvements to truck deliveries with the new entrance was a benefit to the neighborhood; and, that there would always be bad truck drivers occasionally, but large boats being serviced by Bluewater would be coming by water.

One Task Force member suggested that Bluewater did not need to prove the project would be beneficial, but rather that it will not be a negative impact, which they believe has been done. While they love the current ramp, they are in favor of an improved ramp. Another Task Force member indicated that taxpayers were going to have to bear the time and expense of building a better ramp.

There was a question raised about safety mitigation plans for accidental spills into the waterway. Mr. David stated that just because larger boats were being serviced, there was not an increased risk for accidental spills. Bluewater is already operating within the required standards.

There was an expressed appreciation for both the renderings provided by Bluewater and the environmental cleanup of the Fleetwood property.

**Review of Draft Final Report**

Concern was raised about reviewing the draft report when there was not a quorum. Ms. Bunting clarified that there was never an intention to vote on the report tonight, but that staff wanted to at least review the structure of the executive summary and see if it needed adjustments before the next meeting.

Mr. Mike Hayes, Planning & Zoning Division Manager, reviewed the sections of the executive summary and briefly described the content.

There was some discussion that Task Force members had thought the Ivy Home property had been removed from consideration as a viable site due to various reasons. Ms. Bunting and Mr. Hayes clarified that staff had interpreted the previous discussion as indicating that while the site was viable, there were considerations that needed to be addressed, such as how boats could launch from the site and if the cable crossing the cove was still an issue. Ms. Bunting noted that this was similar to the Shields Street property, where the Task Force had indicated there was bulkhead work that could be a hinderance, as well as the necessity to retain the boat storage aspects of the property. One Task Force member indicated that they believed the Shields property had also been eliminated. Mr. Hayes stated that if the Task Force wanted to remove any site from consideration, they just needed to let staff know.
Ms. Bunting also noted that each site would need additional engineering work before a final determination could be made on whether or not it was viable. Staff has been doing what it can legally, such as testing water depths, but cannot do other work unless and until willing sellers are found, which has been one of the issues in the past when looking for a new site for this ramp.

One Task Force member indicated that it would be okay to learn later that additional engineering work resulted in a site not being viable, but they were concerned that some sites might get left off the list that could be viable after additional engineering work. Ms. Bunting stated that it was better to identify as many sites as possible, as there are other reasons why a viable site could be removed from the list, such as Council considering another use for the property.

A question was raised as to what the next steps were after sites were identified. Ms. Bunting indicated that Bluewater's proposal tonight was new information for staff; it will need to be resubmitted as an amended or a new unsolicited proposal for staff consideration. As this information was just shared for the first time, Council has not had an opportunity to consider if they would want to pursue it further.

After the Task Force submits its report on viable sites and neighborhood considerations, Council will decide if they want to proceed further. Staff would then do a more in-depth technical analysis of sites chosen by Council; Council could decide it wants more analysis on only a few or all of the potential sites. Once a site is determined to be viable after further engineering work, negotiations with the property owner, which would not occur publicly, would begin. Budgets would be determined and the public process would begin. If there is still agreement to move forward, the property would be purchased and budgeting for building a ramp would begin. She reiterated that the City would look at every available grant to help offset the costs and that no transfer of property to Bluewater would occur until a new ramp was constructed and operational.

One Task Force member indicated that they did not believe the Task Force should discount properties that could only provide two lanes. Mr. McBride noted that the report could indicate that if it is not possible to find a site that would provide for a better ramp, Council could consider pursuing a site that would offer a similar ramp. Another Task Force member voiced objection to that consideration, noting that if this proposal moves forward, public land will be converted to commercial use forever, and as such the citizens should get a better boat ramp as a result. The first Task Force member indicated that it would only be similar in size; other improvements, such as easier access, would be attained.

**Next Steps**

Mr. Hayes asked that all comments related to changes in the draft executive summary be sent to Ms. Jenn Green, Assistant to the City Manager, Mr. Terry O’Neill, Community Development Director, and himself by noon on Monday, March 29. Ms. Green indicated that she would send
the appropriate contact information out to the group. Any comments received would be disseminated to the group to help facilitate discussion at the next meeting.

A concern was raised that the next Task Force meeting was anticipated for April 6, which is Spring Break for the school system. Ms. Green stated that she would ask for the Task Force’s availability in April to determine the best date for meeting as soon as possible.
Attachment 1:
Member Reconnect
SBARTE RECONNECT

- Tiny boat w/ hole on side, fishing had to stop to bail boat
- 1994 - Buckroe Beach - calming
- Rock fishing in Ches Bay, Seagulls
- 5 yo w/skiff & motor, riding around creek
- 1985 (originally from mountains) learned to fish & crab from "Lovette's School of Fishing"

LD Resp: To be determined

LD Resp: Sustain a local biz, long-term employee increase
Attachment 2:
Bluewater Yacht Sales Renderings
Attachment 3: Bluewater Proposal Discussion
BLUEWATER PROPOSAL

DISCUSSION

- Potential to shift the proposed boat ramp to adjacent green area?
  - Response: Won't support the structure of a boat ramp & operation.

- Are the piers (main 3) longer?
  - Resp: No, stay same.

- Parking surface material?
  - Resp: To be determined.

- Econ impact of new proposal?
  - Resp: Sustain a local biz, long-term employee increase.

LD RESP: SUSTAIN A LOCAL BIZ
LD TURNS FROM PUBLIC KAMP USE
LD DESIGNED & BUILT
LD RESP: TO BE DETERMINED
LD RESP: NO, STAY SAME
B.W. Proposal Discussion

- What role would B.W. play in new ramp?
  - Resp.: Would be City ramp committed to increasing boating access in Hampton. Provide parking for special access.

- Potential of Ivy Home Rd.
  - Resp.: Potential to locate ramp in accessible location.

- Interest in exchange of prop.
  - Resp.: Can't neg. in this setting.

- Previous discussion of viability & surrounding ownership/access.

- Access of channel, particularly before storm.

- Community benefits of relocating ramp.
  - Torns from public ramp use.
  - Delivery, limited traffic.
B.W. Proposal Discussion

- Proposal should not be a negative impact compared to current.
- Doesn't appear negative if new ramp is created.
- Taxpayer cost & timeline are impacts.
- Safety engagement plan.

Resp: Risk remains same no matter size of boats & scope of work.
Site Visit Summary

Members Present:
Gary Bodie  Katherine Kearney
Kevin Davis  Jason Samuels
Danny Forehand  Molly Ward

Staff Present:
Mary Bunting, City Manager
Jimmy Gray, Vice Mayor
Eleanor Weston Brown, Councilmember
Bonnie Brown, Deputy City Attorney
Mike Hayes, Planning & Zoning Division Manager
Jenn Green, Assistant to the City Manager

Also Present:
Earle Hall, Bluewater Yacht Sales
Buddy David, Attorney
2 Citizens

Summary:
Task Force members, City staff, and several citizens walked along the boat ramp and received the following information from Mr. Buddy David, attorney for Bluewater Yacht Sales, and Mr. Earle Hall, Co-Owner of Bluewater Yacht Sales:

- The parking lot will remain a parking lot, but will be paved for employee parking and very occasionally boats. No work would be done in the parking lots. Bluewater is willing to accept deed restrictions to that effect.
- At any one time, there are $50 million worth of boats present at Bluewater’s current site.
• The current fence will come down to make an extended boat yard.
• The current boat lift will be sold and a new lift will be purchased that is 9’ wider and 6’6” wider; it will be moved over to the current ramp site.
• The current piers would be removed and replaced with new piers that could support the lift. They do not anticipate they will be extended by any more than 10’.
• The downsized proposal will not result in the new jobs instantly as anticipated by the original proposal, but rather organically over time.
• Upon further consideration, it did not appear that the larger, 300-ton lift be profitable in an acceptable timeline to the owners.
• Bluewater is currently unable to service the boats they sell because their current travel lift is inadequate.
• There is a struggle to remain relevant at the Hampton location, as the weather makes operating the service business 365 days a year impossible; however, Bluewater’s reputation is good, and people will travel up from Florida to have their boats serviced in Hampton. The owners want to keep the business here, because it is their home.
• There would not be a lot of dredging necessary to make the area accessible to the larger boats; however, the perpendicular piers would be removed.
• The boats being serviced would be larger, but not as large as originally anticipated.
• Bluewater also wants a better boat ramp for public access to boating in Hampton.