



**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**3:00pm, Tuesday, October 3, 2023**  
**1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC and**  
**broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>**

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to order**

Present: Council members Hahn, Ward, Bogosian, Streetman, Anderson, Popson (via phone), Miars, Pierce, and Mayor Pounds

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Director Kerr, City Attorney McQuillin

**2. Purpose – Discussion of beach erosion along south end of the beach near Breach Inlet and consideration of alternatives for temporary erosion mitigation; presentation from Steven Traynum, Coastal Science & Engineering**

Administrator Fragoso reviewed the current status of the beach and what has been done to date to mitigate the severe erosion at the southern tip of the island from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Breach Inlet. A continuous set of king tides continues to exacerbate the situation.

She continued, “About two weeks ago, we continued the sand scraping along three properties that even after the City’s emergency berm restoration project had lost most of that dune and were within the State’s emergency threshold which is a property or a habitable structure including a pool that is within 20’ of the erosion. So we had a contractor out here, mobilized and started working along those three properties. The high tides we experienced last week exposed additional properties to more erosion, and at that point, we asked the contractor to bring in additional equipment. We submitted and requested permission from the State for us to go back and do additional scraping along the same stretch of area between 100 and 314 Ocean. We believe that what we are doing has not been very efficient or effective as we have seen a lot of that sand that has been scraped is gone. I would say 98% of the berm that we placed a couple of weeks ago is now gone, and we felt it would be appropriate for us to have a conversation about what we do above and beyond what we are currently doing which is what we are permitted to do and be in a better position to protect this area ahead of the king tides that are predicted to happen mid-to-late October.”

Staff would also like Council’s guidance about some medium-term solutions that would hopefully provide enough protection until the Army Corps of Engineers’ project begins in January 2024.

Mr. Steven Traynum of Coastal Science & Engineering provided some additional context for what has happened out on the beach in the last month. He said the entire area is not stable right

now. He's optimistic that "over the next week with the equipment that is out there now that we will be able to at least get ahead of it a little bit and start building a dune what will withstand a tide or two."

He shared some options: "You've been presented with a couple of different options. The State only allows us a couple of things that we can do. That is truck in sand, scrape sand, or put in sandbags. The scraping is what we are trying to accomplish now. It's the quickest way to move sand. The biggest benefit is it is relatively cheap, relatively quick. The biggest concern over that is you're not adding sand to the system. You're just shifting it around. What we are trying to accomplish is taking sand from the widest parts of the beach around the inlet and moving that within the bounds. So we are trying to recycle sand within the system. But you are not increasing the overall quantity. That is what the trucks and excavators are allowing us to do. That's a little different than the bulldozers just pushing it from the bottom to the top, so it is a little bit better way to do it and it's more like bringing it in from offshore than the dozer work that we were doing last week. Trucking in sand is something you've already looked at before. We had that approved. It's a relatively expensive way to get sand and it's really the most expensive way to get sand on a beach. It is a relatively slow process because a truck only holds 15 yards. So if you have 100 trucks per day, that's 1500 yards of material that's coming to the beach. So even if you intend to add 25 or 50,000 yards of material, it takes several weeks of small increments to build up that quantity, and with the erosion cycle that we are having now, I can't tell you that if you put 1500 yards out one day that much of that is going to be there the next day to build on top of or add to. It can build a beach over time, but with the weather situation that we just had, I wouldn't be optimistic that that is going to provide a wide dry sand beach like a big nourishment project. It certainly has the benefit of adding sand to the system but with any sand project right now, there is risk that that material may not be there several weeks from when it was placed."

Mr. Traynum added that it is hard to predict how much sand would be needed to sustain the beach until the start of the Army Corps of Engineers project in January. He said, "50,000 yards in an ideal scenario might buy 6 months' worth of erosion, but placing it in current conditions is not, you're likely to see that spread out faster than you would as it was (INAUIBLE) because essentially you're building a bulge out into a shoreline that doesn't want it to be there, so it is going to rapidly spread at first. So to give you kind of a guarantee, which I am not going to do, but I would say that on order of 50,000 or more could provide you months' worth of protection. But there is no guarantee with it because especially again, as you are trucking in that material it is not just going into the top part of the beach and staying there. Every tide that material is being shifted lower into the profile."

The final option presented by Mr. Traynum involved the placement of sandbags along properties experiencing the most severe erosion. He explained, "Any recommendation I have for sandbags kind of comes with a caveat that it needs to be done well because you need a continuous line of protection. If you have a gap in it, then owners adjacent to that gap are subject to flanking erosion."

He continued, "I don't think our company has ever recommended sandbags before, but in a situation like this where we know that there is a long-term solution, I'll call that the Corps

project, coming very soon, that there is kind of a clear end date, to me, that is a good option to try to hold the line know that if we did just supplement sand, that with the next king tide or nor'easter event, we may not have any protection and be right back in the situation we are in today. So it is not a recommendation that I would take lightly, but in this particular situation, if owners, that is for you all to decide, but elected to do sandbags, that is certainly a viable option and you could supplement that with some dune restoration and scraping. You would want to try to put the sandbags as far seaward as possible. Everything with this project, you want to keep as landward as possible to try to help yourself until this Corps project is put in place.”

When asked if some of each option could be done, Mr. Traynum said, “I think you can. Once the bags are in place, OCRM will not let you scrape sand in front of those anymore. So you could do some effort where you’re trying to restore some type of minimal dune or some kind of fix the shoreline at least back to a relatively straight shoreline and then put bags in front of that.”

Director Kerr explained the sandbags would be placed on private property at the toe of the escarpment but within OCRM’s jurisdiction.

Mr. Traynum said, “My recommendation as far as just adding sand would be let’s try to remove as much off the spit as we can because that is the most efficient way to do it. If we felt like we needed more, and the first sign that any properties may be affected or that the high tide beach may be affected, we would stop doing that. And that is probably best done by a dollar amount rather than a volume. It is going to be very difficult to track the volumes in those situations with the beach constantly eroding.”

Council Member Bogosian said he would like the City to remove the restriction that currently prohibits homeowners to put sandbags to the setback line. He agreed a combination of efforts would be best to protect the beach.

Mr. Traynum said sand scraping efforts would continue this week while sandbags are being filled and prepared. 50-100 sandbags can be installed each day. He predicts it would take 1-2 weeks to install the necessary sandbags. Administrator Fragoso noted that the cost to install the bags is approximately \$30,000 per property and does not include the cost of removing them prior to the Corps project.

Director Kerr reviewed OCRM and City jurisdictional lines and the City’s ordinance regarding erosion control devices. Staff suggests Council consider allowing the use of 1-cubic-yard sandbags be placed within the City’s jurisdiction by residents at their expense. Changing the City code that would allow sandbags placement requires two readings, a public hearing, and review by the Planning Commission. An emergency ordinance could be drafted by staff and be ready for a vote next week ahead of the City Council Workshop. By State law, the emergency ordinance can only be in effect for 60 days and would need to be renewed by City Council until the start of the Army Corps of Engineers’ project. Administrator Fragoso said the City code could be permanently amended through the longer process.

A brief discussion ensued about the proper placement of the sandbags.

**MOTION:** Mayor Pounds made a motion directing staff to draft an emergency ordinance relaxing the current prohibition on the placement of sandbags landward of the OCRM jurisdictional lines with the sandbags to be removed upon completion of the Army Corps of Engineers' project. Council Member Pierce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrator Fragoso stated that some homeowners have begun the permitting process with OCRM to allow for sandbag placement.

**MOTION:** Council Member Pierce made a motion to approve an amount not to exceed \$250,000 to allow for the placement of sandbags on those properties that meet the emergency threshold. Council Member Anderson seconded the motion.

Mr. Traynum said they would attempt to place as much sand as possible in front of the berm prior to the sandbags being laid. Administrator Fragoso added that once the sandbags are in place the City is not authorized to place more sand in front of them. The City will be responsible for maintaining and removing the sandbags.

**VOTE:** A vote was taken with all in favor.

Possible funding sources for parts of these expenses were discussed. Administrator Fragoso said, "Just for the record for you all, when Council approved the trucking project and we did obtain \$150,000 from the State to cover 50% of the construction costs for that project, we pivoted and went through an emergency order, emergency scraping. That work will be reimbursable by FEMA because it was declared disaster. So we still have not used or even received any of the funding from the original project as it had been anticipated at the time. I believe that it is in the City's best interest to get reimbursement from FEMA at a 75/25% share for the emergency work, and then go back to the State with a revised application for our new effort and get additional funds and potentially up to 50% of matching."

**MOTION:** Council Member Bogosian made a motion to approve an amount not to exceed \$1,250,000 for a combination of scraping and trucking in sand with a target of placing 50,000 cubic yards of sand in the project area and apply for State matching funds. Council Member Pierce seconded the motion.

Administrator Fragoso clarified that the \$250,000 for the sandbagging project is in addition to this motion approving a \$1,250,000 expenditure. Monies for these projects will come from the City's Beach Renourishment Fund which currently has a balance of \$8.9 million.

**VOTE:** A vote was taken with all in favor.

Mayor Pounds asked Mr. Traynum to speak to the fortifications on the Sullivan's Island side of Breach Inlet. Mr. Traynum said no new seawalls have been allowed since the Beachfront Management Act passed in the 1980s.

Council Member Bogosian said he would like to discuss rechanneling Breach Inlet at the October workshop. Mayor Pounds said a discussion about Beachwood East also needs to happen in the near future.

3.     **Adjournment**

Council Member Ward made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Anderson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane  
City Clerk