

CCA Meeting Minutes 02/27/23

1) Call to order at 6:00 PM

2) Pledge of allegiance

4) Approval of minutes 1/26/2023 – unanimous

5) Introduction of board by Barb Marzetti, President, Ben Watson, Vice President Wayne Evans, Scott Quigley. Secretary Tony Cerri was absent.

6) Introduction of Richard Shortway, Chief of Corolla Fire and Rescue Fire Department

Fire Department responded to 482 calls in 2022. That's up 50 calls from previous year and the most calls ever.

2022 was the 6th year having paid employees responsible for taking out the first engine during a call. All other positions are volunteer: platform engine, brush engine, tanker, etc. There are currently 42 volunteers in the department. The combination of paid staff and volunteers is enough for all equipment and working fire calls. 26 members responded to a 10/22 cabana fire in Ocean Hill

2023 is the 40th anniversary of the Corolla Fire Department.

NC will be inspecting the Corolla Fire Department in April as part of normally scheduled Insurance Services Office (ISO) inspection. Rating scale is 1 – 10 with 1 being the best. Corolla is currently a 5. Carova is currently a 10. Many things influence rating. Time to respond is a key one. Corolla average response time is 5 minutes. Ocean Hill is the longest response time for Corolla, averaging 8 minutes. Carova is 15 – 30 minutes. It is hard driving on beach and members have to get to the station first and then get the equipment to the fire. Waterflow is another factor. Corolla has 321 hydrants. Carova has none.

Chief Shortway's goal is a 2 rating for Corolla. This would drop insurance rates. Getting from a 5 to a 4 would still yield an insurance premium reduction but not as significant.

Largest fire in 2022 was in the condominiums behind Ace on July 29th. Would have probably lost the entire structure if it hadn't been for paid firefighters being early on the scene as they saw the smoke when returning from another call. Units from Corolla, Kitty Hawk, Southern Shores and Duck responded to the fire.

Fire department has grown in number. Building a training center behind the Pine Island fire station. Will be non-burning structure, three stories high and 1,900 Sq Ft. The Corolla Fire and Rescue Foundation provided the funds for this project.

15 people are in a training class. They will rappel off the Currituck Beach Lighthouse in April.

Currituck County is establishing a 'flying squad' to respond to fires on the mainland. Will be stationed in Water Lilly. Budget has been established for a fire engine for this squad. Will take 2.5 years to have engine delivered. If the squad is not operating by the time the engine arrives, it will go to the station with the highest need.

There is an important mutual aid agreement between fire departments on the Outer Banks. Duck, Southern Shores and Kitty Hawk will all respond to Corolla fires if necessary. Corolla will return the aid as needed.

Corolla Fire Department is expecting a new fire engine in 18 months. It is purchased by Currituck but leased to Corolla.

Currituck pays the budget for Corolla Fire Department and Chief Melton is the fire chief for Currituck. Chief Shortway submits annual budget requests. His top priority request for past 3 years is apparatus replacement for the firefighters.

Question from the floor: How long after the ISO inspection might Corolla see the rating? Answer – four or five months; July/Aug.

Question from the floor: Can you explain the false alarm ordinance? Answer – 2 false alarms within 3 days = \$250 fine. There were 232 false alarms last year. No one was fined. Chief Shortway is advocating for Currituck County to start fining people. Most false alarms came from maintenance problems on fire/smoke detection equipment. Smoke alarms should be changed every 10 years and smoke alarm batteries should be changed 2X a year.

Question from floor: What are common causes of actual fires? Answer: Electrical. Especially a problem with outlets exposed to salt air or water. Clearly more of a problem the closer to the ocean. Same conditions cause transformers to spark.

Question from the floor: What about elevators? Answer: The law has been changed such that door build-out or padding must be present to prevent a person standing in the 4 – 5 inch gap between the doors and the elevator gate.

Question from the floor: Any determination made about cause of the Monterey Pines fire? Answer: Officially undetermined. Probably cigarettes or grill on 3rd floor deck.

Question from the floor: Can you tell us about the anniversary celebration? Answer: 3:00 to 7:00 PM, October 7 in Whalehead Park. Food trucks, fire trucks/equipment, games, etc. There will be a laser show afterwards. No charge for entrance but fees for things that are purchased; e.g food.

Old Business

Response to Beach Week news release has been good. Picked up papers and TV stations. Local response has also been good.

Lawsuit is now at point where the ruling by the NC appeals court is next. If it is a unanimous ruling, it is up to the NC Supreme Court whether they will hear the case. If it is a split ruling, the NC Supreme Court must take the case. Regardless of the outcome, CCA and the community will need to decide whether to continue.

Question from the floor: Was the CCA satisfied with the lawyers? Answer: a little disappointed with the oral presentation but remember that briefs and documents have been filed that should be the justification for the ruling.

Worker Housing has been a topic of research by the CCA and discussed at previous meetings, along with subsidized long-term rentals. Currituck County is not interested in pursuing the subsidy and doesn't appear interested in approaching the worker housing issues at all. Board members met with Clark Twiddy after he published an article advocating for a regional approach. Mr. Twiddy will be the speaker at the March meeting. Somewhat related is CCA approaching Outer Banks Community Foundation with Mr. Shearwater making the introduction and Ms. Marzetti conducting the face-to-face coordination to educate the Foundation about Corolla. The Foundation is seeking to make investments in Corolla. Mr. Shearwater recommended Corolla non-profits contact the Foundation if they haven't already done so. Nursing scholarships are also something the Foundation is looking to do so interested people should contact them.

New Business

The CCA requests assistance getting in front of Homeowner Associations.

General Discussion

Question from the floor: What about the playground that was supposed to be opened before the season started. Answer: delayed.

County has leased approx. 14 acres for 30 years from the state Wildlife Resource Commission. The land stretches from the Wildlife Education Center to the North side of the public beach access at the Lighthouse. No firm plans have been announced. Ms. Marzetti ensured our commissioner knew that Corolla would like input to the decision.

Mr. White is tentatively scheduled as speaker for the CCA April meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded and passed unanimously.