

**Open Work Session**  
**Shoreline Restoration Projects for Cove Road and Roaring Point**  
**July 20, 2021**

Mr. Steve Miller, Director of Recreation, Parks and Tourism; Mr. Chuck Russo, Deputy Director of Recreation, Parks and Tourism; and Bhaskaran Subramanian, Chief of Shoreline Conservation Services for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), came before Council.

Mr. Miller said they are here to discuss two shoreline restoration projects, one at Roaring Point and one at Cove Road Beach. He said, back in 2018, the Council approved a 0 percent loan through DNR to undertake these beach restoration projects. He said, since that time over the last three years they have been through a lengthy process in designing both of these projects and a very lengthy process with permitting, which was delayed significantly by COVID, and then they just recently completed the construction bid process. He said the end result over that period of time is that the actual costs of construction are significantly higher than what was anticipated in 2018, so it is a little more than double what was anticipated when they first got approved for the 0 percent loan.

Mr. Miller said the reason they are here today is to seek Council consensus to approach DNR to see if they would consider increasing that 0 percent interest loan amount, which would allow them to award the project and proceed. He said these beaches are eroding and they are losing these beaches, and that is why this was initiated several years ago, and their concern is, if they do not do anything, the beaches are not going to fix themselves, and eventually they are going to lose them, which are assets to the County.

Mr. Miller said there would not be a budget impact in this current fiscal year because the way the loan agreement works is that the loan repayment starts the fiscal year after the project is done. He said, in theory, if they are able to complete the project this year, their first payment would be due next July, so it would affect the FY23 budget and beyond, but there would be no impact to this current budget.

Mr. Miller concluded, that is a real quick thumbnail of why they are here. He said Mr. Russo was the project manager, so he is here, and Mr. Subramanian from DNR administers the loan program and can answer questions in that regard, so they would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Holloway said they are all in favor of saving the beach, but how can they ask the Council for a consensus on something when they cannot tell them what it will cost in the future, to which Mr. Miller responded, they have a price on the project, as they just completed the construction bid, and that is the point. He again explained, they do not have enough funding to award the project, so they are seeking a consensus from Council to go to DNR, the Governor, and the Board of Public Works to ask if they will increase the loan amount so they can award the projects and complete them. He clarified, they have a number.

Mr. Holloway said Mr. Miller said it is not going to impact the budget this year, but how about future budgets, to which Mr. Miller responded, it will. Mr. Holloway asked if he knows what that number is, to which Mr. Miller responded, roughly double annually, so he thinks it is about \$16,000 per year.

Mr. Subramanian clarified, he has the numbers, actually, and they had the numbers based on estimates, which is how they do these projects all the time. He said, as Mr. Miller mentioned, because of COVID

and other things, the numbers have actually gone up. He said all of the construction numbers have gone up, so they have done the cost estimate of what it is going to be after the project is done. He said, if both of these projects go forward, they have an estimate where instead of \$16,000 it will probably be a \$37,000 annual payment from the County. Mr. Holloway asked if that would start in 2023, to which Mr. Miller responded, if they finish the project this year.

Mr. Holloway asked for clarification about the project doubling, to which Mr. Miller responded, as Mr. Subramanian said, originally the schedule would be a FY23 \$16,000 loan repayment, but it would be \$37,000, so the annual payment would be more than double.

Mr. Dodd said that is more than double, to which Mr. Miller responded, correct. He said it is a 0 percent interest loan, but yes, that payment would increase.

Mr. Dodd asked if the restoration is going to be just shoreline or is it going to be beach replenishment like they see in Ocean City, to which Mr. Subramanian responded, he would not call it beach replenishment. He explained, the project is definitely going to enhance the beach and is probably going to go at least 50 feet into the water, so it is definitely going to be a bigger beach. He clarified, it is not going to be the next Ocean City, but it is definitely going to be a more substantial beach on both, to which Mr. Dodd responded, he gets that, but he was just wondering if they were going to put the shoreline protection up where it stands or if they are going to rebuild the beach. Mr. Subramanian responded, as he said, it is going to be 50 feet at least, and there is going to be a rock structure to actually break the wave energy because wave energy is what is causing the erosion to the greatest extent, so they will definitely have that structure there and then backfill with sand.

Mr. Dodd asked Mr. Miller to address the comments the citizen had earlier during the Public Comment portion of the Legislative meeting, to which Mr. Miller responded, quite honestly, he does not know where to start. He said they have made significant efforts out there, and they understand that there are issues related to the amount of foot traffic and vehicular traffic because those are small beaches and there is a high demand for those beaches. He said they have increased their labor out there and have made many efforts to address that, and he thinks they are moving in the right direction. He said he thinks that is how he will leave it for now.

Mrs. Acle said, back to the citizen's comments, by increasing the beach they are going to have an increase in people visiting the beach. She then asked how this is going to look overall for the County as far as maintenance and police service? She asked if they have gone that far in the planning piece, or are they still just at the shoreline, to which Mr. Miller responded, he thinks these are two totally separate topics. He clarified, they are here to protect what they are losing every year because they continue to lose more and more beach and they want to stop that and protect what they have.

Mr. Miller said, as far as future plans and other types of expansions, obviously it is all related as there are operational considerations that would have to be undertaken, but those are all unanswered questions at this point. He said they have a project award to protect the existing shoreline, which has been an issue for a long time, and they were not able to bid them out because they do not have the funding, and that is what they are seeking through DNR with the 0 percent loan program so they can move this forward.

Mrs. Acle said she was looking back through the previous notes in 2018 and there was approval to do this at that point, to which Mr. Miller responded, yes.

Mr. McCain said his question is actually more of a technical question more out of curiosity. He then asked if there is an expectation when those stone structures are put in place that it will naturally start to build back now that they will not get the wave action to erode the shoreline? He said he knows it was stated that they would have to put the sand behind it, but do they expect to get some natural regeneration as well since it is no longer washing out, to which Mr. Subramanian responded, the way the structures have been designed is to actually help the natural accretion. He said, if someone asks if there is sand movement at both of those beaches, the answer is yes. He said, if someone is asking if these structures are actually going to help, they might because these structures are not closed, they are open structures for room to actually allow for natural accretion. He said they have done similar design projects in other places where there is a very similar situation in terms of natural sand movement, and in most of those projects they have seen accretion.

Mr. Holloway asked if there will be any expansion of the size of the beach by doing this from where it is now, to which Mr. Miller responded, for this project it would be the width. Mr. Subramanian clarified, it is going to go into the water at least 50 feet, so the beach is going to become a lot bigger.

Mr. Holloway said they are going to have a larger beach, which means a lot more people, to which Mr. Miller responded, one of the issues at both beaches is that there is limited parking for the beach they have, and every weekend in the summertime they run out of parking. He said right now they are trying to control the parking, as they have increased the manpower at both beaches for the summer, and they are experimenting and investing in additional manpower on Saturdays and Sundays, and they are trying to evaluate if that can help address the issues with parking. He said, if they can address it that way, they can better plan in the future for what kind of manpower they need there, but parking is the bigger issue at both sites. Mr. Holloway asked if they have increased the size of the parking, to which Mr. Miller responded, they have not, and there is no current plan to, but he thinks that is an open question.

Mr. Holloway said saving the beach and putting it back and making it larger is great, but if they are going to increase the problems with parking, he knows what they went through with the Civic Center where they talked about how much more parking they needed because they had more people, so it makes sense. He then asked why a plan is not in place to alleviate the parking problem? He clarified, he understands saving the beach and he is all for that, but Mr. Miller is being shortsighted by just creating more problems for the residents who live down there.

Mr. McCain said he thinks the parking issue is just more of an issue where that opportunity would just have to present itself. He clarified, that road is fairly narrow and there are people who own homes along it, but maybe somewhere in the future the opportunity might come where one of those homes become available that the County could acquire for parking, but until that opportunity presents itself, he is not sure what else they could do with that road.

Mr. Miller said he thinks their options at this point in time are limited, but it is something they have looked at, and he does not know that there is an easy solution at this point in time. He said what they are seeing is that the demand exceeds the space they have, and he thinks a lot of those questions are for another day. He said what they are trying to do is not lose two assets that they have, and they do not

want these beaches to continue to erode where they lose public access, so that is their initial concern, and he thinks these future questions are what they are trying to answer as they speak.

Mr. Holloway said he would rather not be told what days he should ask questions, Mr. Miller, but they have a problem with neighbors down there complaining about people throwing trash, parking in their driveways, and parking in their yards, and Mr. Miller is trying to expand the beach. He clarified, it is great to save a beach, and he does not want anybody to think he does not like beaches because he does, but Mr. Miller is not addressing the problem of parking. He said Mr. Miller is saying that they are going to make the beach larger, which is going to be a lot more people, so does this parking problem move from just on Cove Road out to Route 349 to where they start having parking problems out there? He said Mr. Miller is not looking at the problem fully, he is looking at one part of the problem.

Mrs. Acle said she gets what Mr. Holloway is saying, but she thinks that maybe the Council is looking for a comprehensive plan of what they are going to do with this project, and she sees this as the first step with preserving the beach. She said, before they start investing money in the beach, maybe Mr. Miller can come back and give Council more of a comprehensive plan of what the whole project is going to look like, and for what they are looking at long-term. She said that might be something that would sit better.

Mr. Dodd said the issue on hand right now is talking about moving forward with the beach restoration, and he thinks everybody here agrees with that.

Mr. Dodd asked if Mr. Miller is willing to come back for another Work Session because Mr. Holloway and Mrs. Acle brought up some good points, and he thinks sooner rather than later if Mr. Miller is willing to come back forward, to which Mr. Miller responded, absolutely.

Mr. Cannon said obviously the beach has to be expanded, so they have to do this, and Council recognizes the fact that the citizens of Wicomico County find these beaches very valuable. He said it is a completely different subject as far as parking, and he does not know if they could limit attendance, but he thinks without question they need to move forward and get this beach expanded. He said he does not want to micromanage what they are doing because they recognize the problem and are here to try to solve that problem, so he is in favor.

Mr. Subramanian said he is here is because the loan has increased and they have the money to actually increase the loan, but he has to take it to the Board of Public Works, the Governor, Comptroller, and the Treasurer and ask them to actually increase the loan. He said he is trying to see if this is something the County wants to do because he does not want to actually go to the Governor and say that the County wants the money, but then the Council does not agree on it because that is going to put him in a really bad spot. Mr. Dodd said that is why they are trying to get a consensus now.

Mrs. Acle said, when she talks about a comprehensive plan, she thinks back to West Metro where the County bought property and paid for an engineer study, and then nothing happened. She said she just does not want to get into another situation like that where they are restoring the beach and investing money in that, but then they do not take it to the next level and those problems still exist. She said, as long as Mr. Miller is open to coming up with something strategically to attack that, she appreciates him doing that.

Mr. Russo said he thinks there is a misconception that the entire beach at Roaring Point is going to be expanded by 50 feet. He clarified, this is a protection program to protect the shoreline and it is really only the 350 feet that they come on to Roaring Point, so they are not really expanding infrastructure or parking at all that is going to be impacted. He said that is where the nor'easters and hurricanes have wrapped around and really did damage to that property.

Mr. Russo said, at Cove Road Beach, already at a high tide level there really is not a beach and people are forced off the beach at high tide. He said there are probably four or five feet of beach, so this is protecting and restoring that property, so they really should not have parking issues and the things Mr. Holloway mentioned, this is getting it back to a state where it is protected and usable by the citizens. He said at some point these are not going to be usable properties in those areas, but it is not a full restoration of Roaring Point.

Mr. Holloway responded, he knows that because he has been there and has seen how it is, and Mr. Russo says they should not have parking issues, but there are already parking issues. He said it was said that they have had to call the police there, so there are already parking issues.

Mr. Miller added, there are a number of spinoffs, but when they lose the beach at high tide they might have 10 feet or less of beach, and one of the results of that is that people then end up migrating down the beach, which is on private property, and then to get back to the parking lot they are trespassing on private property, so then they are dealing with other issues. He said, with having more beach and being able to control the parking, they feel like over the last few weeks they have taken significant steps in improving the conditions down there, and, again, they are evaluating that as they speak. He said, at the end of the summer they want to evaluate and get feedback from the neighbors, so it is not an easy fix, but they feel like this is an important project.

Mr. Holloway said, on Assateague they have the on-sand vehicle permits and they limit how many people can go on and off the beach. He then asked if they have every explored that, to which Mr. Miller responded, not in a serious way. He said they have talked about a lot of potential options, and they have those types of things that would take manpower or some type of automated fence or gate type of thing. He said there are places that do paid parking, so there are a lot of different ways they can deal with that. He said, again, the current plan right now is that this summer they have increased the manpower and they are trying to see if they can control it better through manpower, evaluate that, and then see where they go from there.

Mr. Dodd said, as far as the parking, he does not like this idea, but Accomack County has required all of their residents to have a parking permit if they park in these parking spaces.

Mr. Mitchell said the loans look like they are two different numbers of years. He then asked if the Council is aware of how long it runs out and when or if it diminishes when the one is paid off.

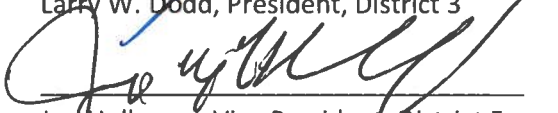
Mr. Subramanian responded, Roaring Point is a 20-year loan and Cove Beach is a 15-year loan and 0 interest.

Mr. Dodd asked if it is two different loans, to which Mr. McCain responded, yes, it is in their Brief Books.

Mr. Dodd asked if Council wants to move forward with this, to which there was a unanimous consensus.


Mr. Dodd said they will set up another Work Session to talk about the future. There was no further discussion.

  
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Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

  
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Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5

  
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John T. Cannon, At-Large

  
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William R. McCain, At-Large

  
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Nicole Acle, District 2

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Josh Hastings, District 4

  
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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator