

## **NORTH TOPSAIL BEACH TOWN MANAGER RECRUITMENT**

The Town of North Topsail Beach, North Carolina is seeking a qualified professional to serve as its Town Manager. It is an opportunity for the right individual to assume a key leadership role in a small, progressive beach community with a municipal organization dedicated to public service and citizen satisfaction in a great coastal environment.

### **HISTORY**

The Town of North Topsail Beach was incorporated in 1990. It derives its name from its location at the northern end of Topsail Island, North Carolina. It is located on a coastal barrier island that is split by two North Carolina Counties (Onslow and Pender). All of the Town of North Topsail Beach is located within Onslow County. Onslow County is the home of USMC Camp LeJeune and New River Air Station.

### **COMMUNITY, GEOGRAPHY and DEMOGRAPHICS**

Being a coastal barrier island, the community is completely surrounded by water. The Atlantic Ocean, New River, Inter Coastal Waterway and New Topsail Inlet comprise the waters bordering the Island. Two other communities, the Towns of Surf City and Topsail also are located on the same barrier island. The three towns share many similarities and cooperate on a number of differing issues to the benefit of all.

The Town of North Topsail Beach is roughly 10.6 square miles in size with a land area of approximately 6.4 square miles, the rest being water or wetlands mostly covered by water at high tide. It is truly a beach community. Primarily residential and resort in nature with limited commercial facilities.

There are roughly 500 households with an estimated permanent residential population of 843. There are in excess of 2100 housing units within the town. Many are investment properties used for summer rentals along with extended rentals in support of some military staff and contractors associated with USMC facilities in the area.

The island attracts beach goers, retirees desiring to live at the beach and investors seeking income producing real estate. Housing prices are at the upper end of the area's market. However, like most other regions of the United States, recent declines in real estate values have slowed property sales and prices have flattened and/or declined from prior years. These transitions slowed new construction, but the average price of new housing depending upon views and access to the beaches or waterways still remains very strong.

The area's biggest economic threat is its location and the potential for tropical storms to impact upon its infrastructure and tax base.

Water utility services are provided by a separate public utility authority and sewer services are provided by a private utility under state regulatory authority.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Elected officials are comprised of a separately elected mayor and a board of five aldermen. Terms are staggered and four years in length. Elections are held in odd numbered years. The Board of Aldermen meets regularly on the first Thursday of each month in the evening and holds a morning work session on the Tuesday before the regularly scheduled meeting each month.

Since the community's population is limited, full time residents remain actively involved in several volunteer committees and serve as support for the Board of Aldermen as they pursue community goals and objectives.

Town staffing is limited to Administration, Public Works, Police, Fire, Planning and Inspections. There are roughly 35 full and part time positions with some overlapping responsibilities among key staff. Key staff members include the Town Manager, Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Police Chief, Fire Marshall, Public Works Supervisor, Code Enforcement Officer, and Planning Director. All positions fall under the direct authority and oversight of the Town Manager except for a separately Board appointed Town Attorney that works under contract to the town.

As a resort community, summer population increases place heavy demands upon staffing and some activities are supplemented by part time support. Onslow County Government operates some public beach access points and supporting facilities.

## **PRIMARY ISSUES**

Citizen services are a major focus of town government and officials. North Topsail Beach has a limited permanent population. Many of its citizens have led successful careers in other locations and see the island as their home and primary investment. Meetings of the Board of Aldermen take on at "town – hall" meeting atmosphere where informal discussions may lead the Board to consider policy changes based upon input from those in attendance at a particular meeting(s). There is some tendency to view issues from two differing perspectives; that of permanent residents and that of investor-owners not living on the island full-time. Balancing those demands and issues can be challenging but not impossible.

Communications with residents is primarily through individual members of the Board of Aldermen and Mayor via one-on-one contacts, group meetings and social functions. Limited local media exposure provides opportunities for more direct interactions between the town and its citizens, investor-owners, and visitors. Opportunities exist for the next manager to improve upon that interaction via several alternatives. (Visit the Town's website: [www.north-topsail-beach.org](http://www.north-topsail-beach.org) for a better perspective.)

Being a coastal community presents unique challenges. The maintenance of town infrastructure can be severely impacted by unplanned events (tides, storms, winds, etc.) and must be an underlying emphasis. The nature of a beach community environment brings many 'outsiders' into the community during the summer impacting town services and staffing.

A beach community's primary asset is its beach. North Topsail Beach has an on-going interest in the preservation of its coastal environment. That preservation effort comes at a substantial cost. Interaction by the Town with its neighbors (Surf City and Top Sail) involve federal and state lobbying efforts to achieve greater recognition and financial assistance in coastal inlet maintenance dredging along with restoration of beach sand loss due to natural erosion, inlet migration and large storms. The greatest challenges associated with these issues are how to fund the high cost of these efforts and equitably assess those costs in an appropriate manner. An extensive study effort is nearing completion. Developing a 'politically' acceptable and 'financially' affordable solution will be a primary task to be addressed by the next town manager.

The organizational structure and position staffing for the town has been created from shifting responsibilities among available employees, a limited long-term perspective with regards to service delivery methods or demands, along with reoccurring vacancies in the Town Manager's position. Current town staff appears open to change and the adjustments that may be required to enhance professionalism and individual recognition. Leadership by the Town Manager will be a key element to future successes. The new Town Manager will have flexibility to address these issues with the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in a comprehensive manner going forward as the town matures and grows.

The town general fund budget (2008-09) is \$3,906,594. Property taxes represent roughly 50% of the revenue support along with local sales tax revenues of \$1,200,000 (distributed by county government). The town also has a local accommodations tax (3%) that generates roughly \$615,000 annually dedicated to funding beach environmental projects. One cent of the Town's fourteen cent property tax rate was dedicated this fiscal year to beach nourishment as well.

### **THE NEXT TOWN MANAGER**

The town is looking for someone with strong ethics, experience and leadership qualities. The Board desires that the town manager be capable of creating a community vision through the coordinated input of elected leaders, residents and owner-investors that recognizes the special qualities and circumstances that sustain North Topsail Beach as a unique residential and resort destination.

Demonstrated organizational and communication skills, technology awareness along with the flexibility to address the various perspectives associated with the environment a coastal beachfront community represents will be primary considerations desired of town manager applicants. A minimum of a Bachelor's Degree is required. Advanced degrees are a plus. People skills are important. The nature of the community and organization requires an ability to be more "hands-on" and "face-to-face" in dealings with the public, staff, elected officials (local, state, federal) and the business community. Experience in a coastal environment is a plus. Experience in North Carolina is desirable but not a requirement.

### **COMPENSATION**

The adopted pay range for the position of town manager is currently \$70,362 - \$113,305 plus associated benefits. The town will consider supplemental housing assistance and/or other

benefits based upon the qualifications of the candidate selected and mutual commitments made through negotiated final terms of any agreement reached.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Applicants may submit a cover letter and resume to the attention of Colin Baenziger & Associates via email at: [RecruitFive@cb-asso.com](mailto:RecruitFive@cb-asso.com) . Questions regarding the position may be directed to the NTB Interim Town Manager (non-applicant) at 910-328-1349.

### **TIMING**

Applications will be received through October 10th, 2008. Initial screening will occur through October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008. The Mayor and Board of Aldermen will select finalists for by the end of October and conduct interviews in early November. The selection of a town manager would occur once the right candidate is determined.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

North Topsail Beach is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages all qualified individuals interested in this position to apply. North Carolina General Statute 153A-98 'Privacy of employee personnel records', outlines the limitations on the release of information related to applicants for public positions. Finalists selected for interviews will be subjected to a thorough personal and professional background search.