

Hyde County Waterfowl Blind Committee Meeting #2

7:00pm Wednesday May 8, 2018 Hyde County Government Center Extension Teaching Kitchen

Members Present: Randy Hignite, Adam Jones, Michael Dean Sadler, Teddy Gibbs, Greg Berry, Chase Luker, Marco Gibbs, Ray Tooley

Members Absent: Thomas Newman (Prior Professional Commitment), Brett Mason (Illness)

The meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Chase Luker. Opening remarks included disclosure of absences and welcomed Greg Berry to his first meeting. A review of the committee's charge was offered, and a review of notes and accomplishments from the April meeting was conducted, including completion of a 9-0-1 (1 abstained) vote in agreement to propose the elimination of stake blind construction on public trust sea floor.

Discussion then moved onto the presentation of new ideas and solutions, of which Ray Tooley proposed the permitting of a permanent blind registration system. Tenets of his proposal included fees that were intended to be exclusionary, a permitted blind's intended privilege to ensure a setback while unoccupied, and a limit on how many may be permitted in an effort to reduce the amount that would indeed limit public participation. Elevated discussion followed by many of the members, and the discussion was curtailed when the moderator thanked Mr. Tooley for his thoughtful effort.

Afterwards, several members expressed concern that the committee would be at a standstill. The moderator concluded that other tenets of a proposal could still be addressed, while a blind's occupancy requirements could be finalized near the end of the process. Members agreed that the committee should move forward in an effort to meet the self-imposed deadline so that any proposal could be vetted by the general public.

Randy Hignite and Marco Gibbs then moved forward suggesting that they would be agreeable to move forward with blinds having to be occupied to earn a setback, which allowed for continued progress.

The moderator redirected the meeting to begin to appropriately structure any law created hereafter. A review of the "No Stake Blinds" unanimity and the agreed-in-principle portions of 300 yard setbacks and blind occupancy standard was established to move forward. Randy Hignite then suggested that the committee grant all residents a float blind permit, of which the committee whole-heartedly agreed. The moderator asked for a consideration of standards instead of wholesale permitting, and encouraged that a permit application and successful permit indeed be required, to maintain equitable status of other interested parties. Discussion over fees was then held, with many agreeing that local property taxes might exempt a permit fee, though not an application fee. Discussion then continued on how many would actually take advantage of a permit and that those in the county who did hunt open water might still feel inclined to purchase a permit. Discussion for locals was tabled and moved to address out-of-county visitors.

General discussion on the influx of hunters who reside outside of the county and lack an understanding of local culture. It was then discussed that these hunters rarely, if ever utilize local businesses, if only because many services aren't available on their route into the county.

Continued discussion moved to establish an appropriate number of blind permits for those living outside of the county. Randy Hignite explained procedures used by Dare County Game Commission he recalled from conversations with a member of the DCGC. Many felt that Dare and Currituck County placed heavy restrictions on hunters from outside of the county, and that blind permits rarely become available. The moderator asked others to consider whether a permit issued would be in perpetuity for a recipient or if it would require an annual

draw as opposed to an annual reapplication. By and large many agreed that a 1 year permit would ensure opportunity. Discussion then moved to the amount of float blind permits would be issued, with many agreeing that up to 125 permits could be issued for out of county residents, which would also be far more liberal than other counties. Sgt. Robert Wayne entered the meeting to offer well-wishes for what could be a difficult task and fielded a few general enforcement questions.

Upon Sgt. Wayne's departure, a fee structure was discussed with Ray Tooley insisting that the process should be net-neutral, with costs including permitting, mailing, overhead, and other items not yet imagined. Fees for daily use on game lands and NWR's were discussed and several members felt like that permit fees should be reasonable. Discussion then transitioned to assuring that a draw process be transparent. The moderator presented the nature of Currituck County's draw, which is done in public at a meeting. Several suggested that it could be livestreamed or require attendance to apply and draw. The moderator closed the meeting by suggesting he would put notes together and form a first draft proposal which the committee could work from as a baseline, with nothing set in stone until a final vote.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, June 12, 7:00pm