

# **STRATEGIC PLAN for the Town of Caswell Beach**

*Status of Implementation and Updates*



**August, 2015**

**The Strategic Plan for the Town of Caswell Beach was adopted by  
the Caswell Beach Board of Commissioners by unanimous vote on  
July 18, 2002.**

**Revisions and updates  
by the Caswell Beach Planning Board  
Presented  
July 28, 2009**

**The revisions and updates presented by the Planning Board were adopted  
by the Caswell Beach Board of Commissioners by unanimous vote on  
September 10, 2009**

**Revisions and updates  
by the Caswell Beach Planning Board  
Presented  
August 19, 2015**

**Approved by the Caswell Beach Town Commissioners  
November 12, 2015**

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# Executive Summary

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A review of the Caswell Beach Strategic Plan was initiated in May 2014 to update and revise the initiatives identified by the Town in 2009 that were required to keep the Town moving toward its stated goal of enhancing the quality of life on Caswell Beach. This review focuses on the status of the initiatives implemented by the Town during the past five years (2009-2014). The original Strategic Plan identified the enablers that support the quality of life as defined by the Town and the Board. All initiatives implemented in the Town are in some-way associated with one of these enabler categories. These Enablers are:

- Environment
- Town Government
- Health and Public Safety
- Cohesive Community

This review also has identified initiatives that need to be implemented in 2015 to keep the Town moving toward its stated goal. Each of these initiatives under the appropriate Enabler is discussed below.

## **Environmental quality:**

- Reactivate the Beach Preservation Committee to focus on beach re-nourishment, public education and awareness, and enforcement of the dune, beach and maritime forest vegetation.
- Continue initiatives started in the 2009-2014 period to protect and preserve the environment of Caswell Beach.
- For contractors working in Caswell Beach the Town’s building inspector will meet and provide information on appropriate Town Ordinances and requirements.

## **Town Government:**

- Initiate a quarterly review by the Town Commissioners of progress toward achieving policy related issues identified in the Strategic Plan; relate findings to the public in a Town meeting on a quarterly basis.
- Review Town operations in light of the Town Charter and determine if actions/revisions are warranted.
- Continue with programs put in place during 2009-2014.

## **Health and Safety:**

- Establish a committee for exploring “Ageing in Place” ideas and implement appropriate programs.
- Provide plan for transitioning to the new Public Services Facility Building.

## **Cohesive Community:**

- Establish a welcoming committee for introducing newcomers to the Caswell Beach community.

# Overview

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## Preface

In 2002 the need for a Strategic Plan for the Town of Caswell Beach arose from a growing recognition that the affairs of the Town had become sufficiently complex to demand a multi-year comprehensive planning and management process document. This document would enable the Town Commissioners to discharge their leadership responsibilities in a more efficient and effective manner.

A second review of the plan and an update of accomplishments, along with future objectives were completed by the Caswell Beach Planning Board (hereafter referred to as The Board) in July 2009. A third review was initiated in May 2014 and was completed in May 2015. From that review, the status of the Strategic Plan actions and objectives were updated based on initiatives implemented by the Town of Caswell Beach during the past five years (2009-2014). These actions and objectives, noted in the 2009 strategic directions, were developed and defined by the Town and the Board. A modification of the “Format for tracking Strategic Plan Activities”, provided in the original Plan was used to list the Town’s specific actions in meeting the original strategic objectives. They also were used to develop future objectives that are needed to keep the Town moving toward its stated goal of enhancing the quality of life on Caswell Beach.

The Town of Caswell Beach adopted a “Town Administrator” form of operations in 2004 and where the 2004 Strategic plan discussed the role of the town Commissioners’ in daily duties and responsibilities, this role was not addressed in the 2009 revision nor is it in this 2009-2014 revision.

The structure of this revision parallels the original Strategic Plan to allow comparisons to the original to proceed more easily. The delivery of this supplement to the Strategic Plan to the Town Commissioners fulfills the Planning Board’s responsibility for monitoring the implementation process.

There are some goals and objectives that may prove to be more complex to achieve than others, requiring advanced planning and budgeting. In 2009 the Board felt that it would be advantageous to the citizens to have an up-to-date status report on a quarterly basis. The quarterly review would aid in understanding the need for certain projects to be included in the annual budgeting process. Thereby, the Board recommended that the Caswell Beach Town Commissioners and the Planning Board provide a quarterly status review, to the citizens, of the Strategic Plan objectives in an open meeting.

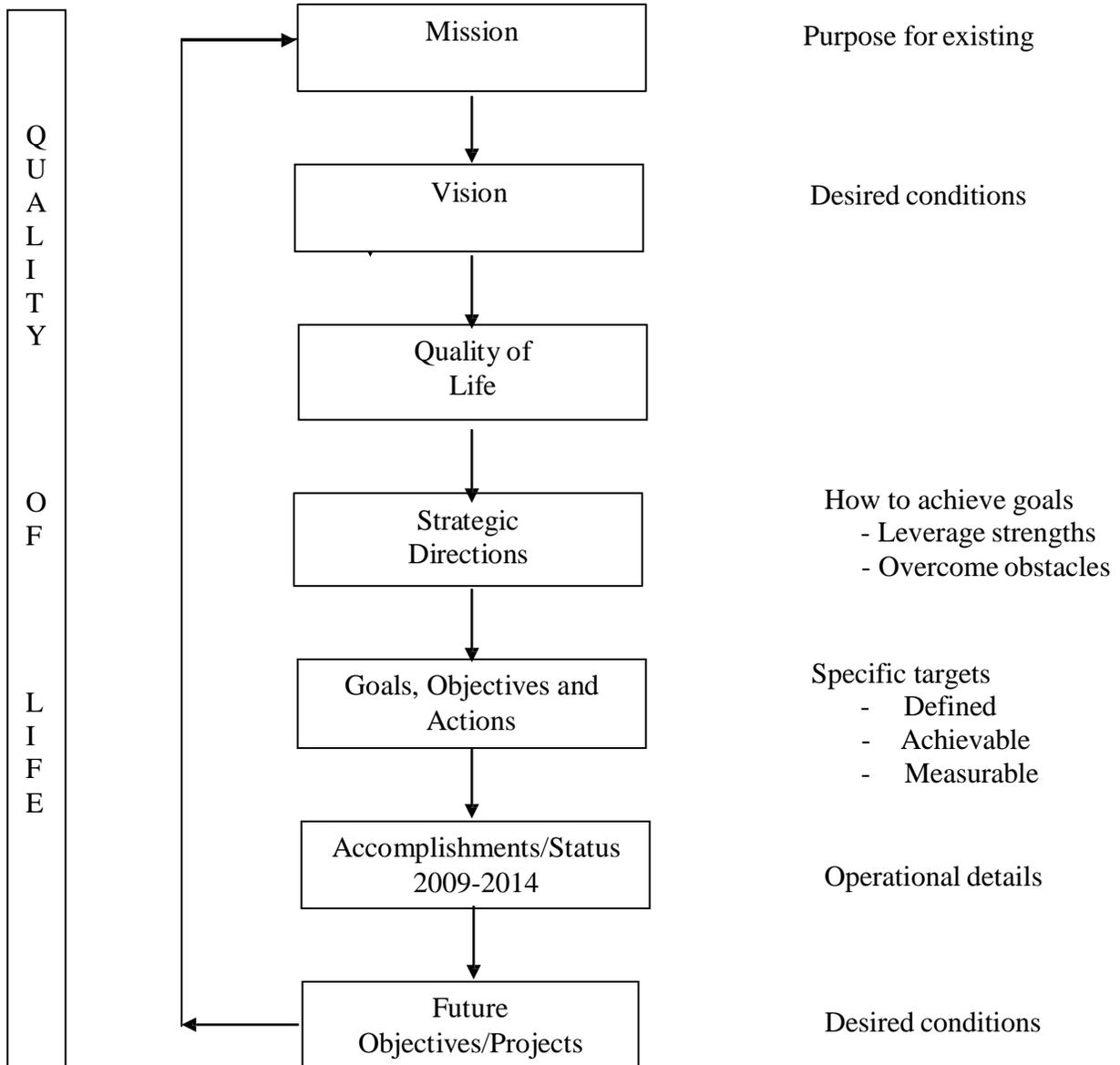
During our 2014 review the Board noted that the quarterly status review, recommended above, was not being performed on a regular basis, and concurred that it was extremely important to resurrect this practice.

## **Strategic Planning Review Process**

The purpose of the Caswell Beach Strategic Plan is to provide a road map and tools to achieve the Town's vision. In so doing, the Strategic Plan was designed to be the master-management guideline and discipline by which all subsequent plans and projects were to be developed and implemented over a multi-year period. The Town's efforts to meet the Plan's objectives (Figure 1) were determined during a series of meetings between the Planning Board members and the Town Administrator. A modification of the "Format for tracking Strategic Plan Activities" provided in the original Plan was used to list the Town's specific actions in meeting the original strategic objectives. Each "quality of life enabler" or strategic direction (Figure 2), was listed in a separate table in a manner that allowed each goal, objective and action to be evaluated during the review process. As the Board proceeded through the review process for the 2009-2014 time-period, accomplishments and future objectives were added to the tables. In this manner the Board and the Town could quickly and easily assess the progress toward meeting Town goals. At the same time, areas that required more effort also were identified.

The final tables resulting from the 2009-2014 review are presented in the Appendices. Two copies of each Table are included for each Strategic Direction. The first is the revised statement of objectives and actions, along with the Town's accomplishments and future objectives; and the second is a color-coded form that shows how the changes to the original Plan's statement of objectives and action were made.

**Figure 1. Strategic Planning Review Process**



*This Process ensures that continuing actions taken to meet the Goals set forth in the Strategic Plan will enable The Town to achieve Its Vision and Quality Of Life.*

I. **The Town of Caswell Beach, North Carolina**

**Mission**

The mission of the Town of Caswell Beach, a North Carolina residential beach community, is to provide leadership, cost-effective services and protection of individual and collective investment. The Town believes in necessary regulations, involved constituents, pragmatic independence\*, efficient government, beach preservation, protection of natural resources, public health and safety, preservation of quality of life and stakeholder interests.

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\* *Pragmatic independence is the desire of the Town of Caswell Beach to remain independent as long as it is viable.*

**Vision**

The vision of the Town of Caswell Beach is one of a viable residential community having the foresight, resources and will to meet new challenges and opportunities in accomplishing its mission. The Town is proud of its unique residential character, its natural assets and quality of life, and these will continue to be of paramount importance. Caswell Beach will provide cost-effective and timely services. Caswell Beach will endeavor to be a friendly, cohesive, community-spirited town in which the residents work together. Caswell Beach will continue to practice mutually beneficial relationships with local, state and federal governing bodies. These in combination will achieve the desired quality of life.

# Quality of Life

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## Achieving the Town's Quality of Life

During the past 12 years the Town has initiated and implemented a number of programs and projects outlined in the (a) 2002 Strategic Plan and the subsequent (b) revision in 2009 and this current (c) revision (2009-2014) of the plan. All of these have been directed toward maintaining the unique character of Caswell Beach and thus supporting the Town as a desirable place to live. In developing the original 2002 Strategic Plan, four enablers were defined as necessary prerequisites to the quality of life, and thus the town vision.

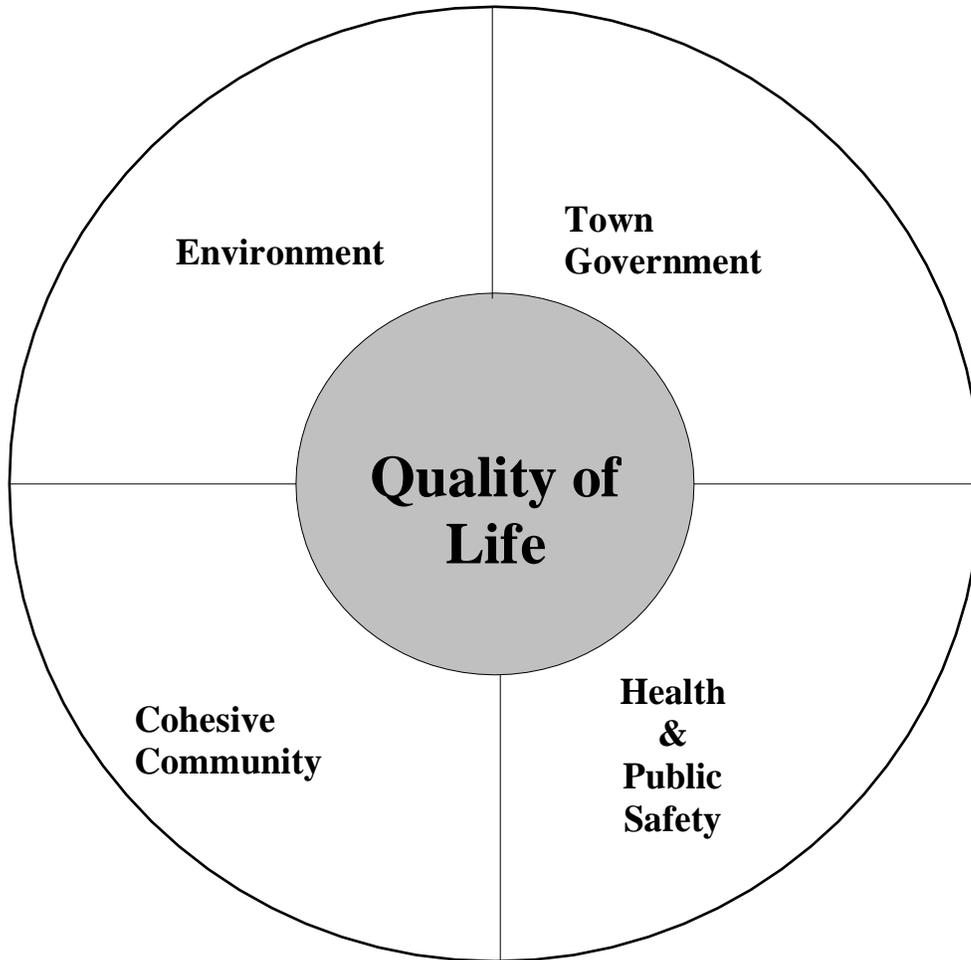
Figure 2 from the original Strategic Plan depicts the enablers that support the quality of life as defined by the Planning Board in developing the Strategic Plan. In this diagram, quality of life is the foremost and central desire of residents who moved to Caswell Beach.

### Enablers to the Quality of Life: Strategic Directions

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Environment:</b>              | Preserve and protect our endangered environment of physical and living natural beauty.                                   |
| <b>Town Government:</b>          | Provide an efficient and cost-effective Town government that meets the growing and challenging demands of Caswell Beach. |
| <b>Health and Public Safety:</b> | Assure the availability of human services and maintain a safe and secure environment.                                    |
| <b>Cohesive Community:</b>       | Achieve a community united with a shared town vision and spirit.   |

The accomplishments the Town has achieved associated with each strategic direction are summarized in the Sections that follow. Also included in the summaries are future objectives that specify projects and programs that will continue to lead the Town to enhance the quality of life in our community.

**Figure 2. Enablers to the Quality of Life**



*The Consistent And Enduring Effort Applied Through Four Integrated Enablers Will Ensure The Desired Quality of Life.*

# **Strategic Directions**

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## **Environment**

### **Preserve and Protect Our Endangered Environment of Physical and Living Natural Beauty**

The Town of Caswell Beach exists in a beautiful but fragile and endangered natural environment of truly priceless value. It is located on the eastern end of a south-facing barrier island that is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the south, the marshes and Intracoastal Waterway on the north, the Cape Fear River on the east and the Town of Oak Island on the west. This unusual location provides an abundance of physical and living natural beauty.

Caswell Beach is an outstanding place to live, work and play, but at the same time, it is presented with an awesome challenge and responsibility for protection of the natural beauty and wildlife that is an integral part of the lifestyle. The challenge of environmental protection is multidimensional and highly complex. Some factors are under the control of the Town, such as local construction, storm-water erosion and runoff, wastewater control and solid waste collection. However, a wide range of external factors also threaten the town's environment, including mainland and Cape Fear Basin storm-water and wastewater management, commercial and recreational boating, a growing regional vacation industry and, of course, beach erosion. It is therefore imperative that the Town dedicate itself to the perpetual task of environmental protection, whatever the threat, so that future generations can also enjoy the natural beauty of Caswell Beach. The following summary lists the projects/programs that have been implemented over the past five years (2009-2014). Also noted are the future projects/programs needed to ensure that this pristine beauty will endure:

#### **Summary for Strategic Direction: Environment**

##### **A. Significant Accomplishments: implementing actions associated with the environment as specified in the Town Strategic Plan (2009-2014).**

##### ***E1. Preserve and protect our endangered environment of physical and living natural beauty***

- Completed Long range Beach Plan.
- Member, Regional Sand Management Plan.
- Initiated annual beach cleanup sweep.
- Initiated 96 gal curbside recycling for paper, glass, and metal.

- FOIL and the Town stabilized the Oak Island Lighthouse and adjacent property from erosion.
- Developed and implemented Lighthouse Site Plan.
- Passed a wildlife protection ordinance.
- Continued to support the Caswell Beach Turtle Watch.

***E.2. Protect the environment from the deleterious effects of storm-water by putting in place adequate management systems and controls.***

- Completed ordinances revision that require licensed professional engineer to supply engineered storm-water management plan with development permit applications.

***E.3. Protect the environment from the deleterious effects of wastewater by developing a pro-active plan that is cost-effective and fair for our citizens and which uses management systems and controls.***

- Completed the wastewater collection system.

***E.4. Integrate development and implementation of the storm-water and wastewater projects to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and awareness of cost benefits.***

- Resolved the restriction distance between irrigation wells and waste-water lines.

***E.5. Preserve marshes and woodlands.***

- Developed periodic ground-water monitoring program.

***E.6. Minimize light and noise pollution.***

- Enforced ordinance concerning lighting and noise pollution.

***E.7. Institute a citizen awareness program on environmental issues.***

- Developed a Town “Notify Me” e-mail list for notifications.

**B. Future Objectives: Actions to be implemented to enhance the environmental quality of the Caswell Beach as specified in the Town Strategic Plan.**

- Reactivate the Beach Preservation Committee to focus on beach re-nourishment, public education and awareness, and enforcement of the dune, beach and maritime forest vegetation.
- Continue initiatives started in the 2009-2014 period to protect and preserve the environment of Caswell Beach.
- Institute training for contractors and developers and builders regarding Town ordinance requirements.

# **Town Government**

## **Provide an Efficient and Cost-Effective Town Government that Meets the Growing and Challenging Demands of Caswell Beach**

The form of Caswell Beach government adopted in 2004 has provided the Town Commissioners the time to focus on operational oversight and on policy and planning. The everyday operations are performed by the Town Administrator and a dedicated staff that are well qualified to conduct the functional aspects of Town daily activities.

Many projects and programs designed to meet the initial goals of the Strategic Plan and the subsequent revision in 2009, have been accomplished during the 2009-2014 period, two areas, however, have not received the adequate attention. These two are noted under goals G.3. and G.7. The Board has recommended that these received attention as the Town continues to achieve the quality of life we all expect.

### **Summary for Strategic Direction: Government**

#### **A. Significant Accomplishments: implementing actions associated with the Town Government as specified in the Town Strategic Plan (2009-2014).**

**G.1. Elevate the current governing body from day-to-day operations to a policy-making body with operational oversight.**

- Added adequate staff to ensure completion of operational requirements.
- Provided funding for staff training.

**G.2. *Create a communications plan.***

- Developed a Town “Notify Me” e-mail list for notifications.

**G.3. *Establish the practice of a Strategic Plan-based review at Town meetings.***

**G.4. *Maintain sound fiscal policies and effective use of taxpayer money to achieve the Town’s vision using efficient multi-year planning, e.g. cost/benefit analysis, outsourcing, joint ventures and comprehensive project data.***

**G.5. *Be aware of and pro-active toward land acquisition opportunities of benefit to the Town.***

**G.6. *Utilize the latest technology in all aspects of Town government when appropriate and cost-effective.***

**G.7. *Review the adequacy of the Town Charter in light of the increased complexities facing the governing body.***

**B. Future Objectives: Actions to be implemented associated with the Town Government as specified in the Town Strategic Plan.**

- Initiate a quarterly review by the Town Commissioners of progress toward achieving policy related issues identified in the Strategic Plan, relate findings to the public in a Town meeting on a quarterly basis.
- Review Town operations in light of the Town Charter and determine if actions/revisions are warranted.
- Continue with programs put in place during 2009-2014.

## **Health and Public Safety**

### **Assure the Availability of Human Services and Maintain a Safe and Secure Community**

The Town of Caswell Beach is a residential community located in a coastal regional area of a geographically dispersed population that has resulted in many key services also being dispersed. Human services being provided by the town are purchased or are self-contained and include police, EMS, fire protection, building and code inspections, water and tax billing and solid waste collection for the residents.

The year round population of the Town has grown from 370-398 during the eleven year period. Multi- and single family dwellings have risen to 748, up from 571 in 2000. Overall, citizens enjoy a safe environment with a very low crime rate, good fire protection, and good access to quality professional medical facilities. During the period from the statement of original objectives, many projects /programs have been implemented, making Caswell Beach a safer and healthier place to reside. The future objectives recommended by the Board will continue to refine existing efforts and services and promote new approaches to potential problems.

#### **Summary for Strategic Direction: Health and Safety.**

##### **A. Significant Accomplishments: implementing actions associated with the health and safety as specified in the Town Strategic Plan (2009-2014).**

###### ***H.1. Provide effective and timely medical emergency services to the Town's residents.***

- Response time standards identified and deemed acceptable.
- Established an EMS Station on Oak Island.
- Established an integrated 911-alarm system.
- Implemented "early morning" call program.

###### ***H.2. Provide adequate police and safety capability, coverage and visibility throughout the Town. Enhance patrols, including along the beach, during holidays and the high tourist season.***

- Obtained the appropriate vehicles to support police patrols.

###### ***H.3 Provide the capability for adequate permit issuance, inspections and code enforcement to ensure timely and effective service and compliance.***

- Retained a full-time, fully certified building inspector.

***H.4. Ensure emergency preparedness during hurricanes, oil spills, fish kills and other emergency situations.***

- Compiled a listing of the Town's Damage Assessment Teams.
- Completed brochures with appropriate information.
- Completed Emergency Preparedness Plan and a HAZMAT plan.
- Town provides funding to support Water Search and Rescue Teams as required.

***H.5. Ensure a safe supply and sufficient volume of water which can be used for drinking and sufficient pressure and volume for a major fire.***

- Implemented monthly testing program to ensure a quality water supply.
- Changed metering at pumping station by enlarging line from 6" to 10" piping leading to the 8" water line.

***H.6. Ensure seamless, effective emergency communications with and between Town citizens and pertinent parties, i.e. police, EMS, U.S. Coast Guard.***

- Completed interface of Town emergency programs with those in the surrounding communities.
- Created the "current status of rip tides" notification sign.

**B. Future Objectives: Actions to be implemented associated with the Health and Safety strategy as specified in the Town Strategic Plan.**

- Establish a committee for exploring "Ageing in Place" ideas and implement appropriate programs.
- Provide transition plan for transitioning EMS services to the new Public Services Facility Building.

## **Cohesive Community**

### **Achieve a Cohesive Community United with a Shared Town Vision and Spirit**

Despite its small size and relative youth, the Town has developed as five separate and distinct neighborhoods: The Arboretum, Oak Island Beach Villas, Caswell Dunes, Ocean Greens and Caswell Beach Road. All but Caswell Beach Road have Home Owners/Condominium Owners Associations or the equivalent which are legal entities responsible for streets and street lighting, storm-water and waste-water management, landscaping, enforcement of restrictive covenants and other matters unique to their respective properties. The Town includes two corporate property owners, CP&L and the Oak Island Golf Club. In addition, there are two valued neighbors, the North Carolina Baptist Assembly and the U.S. Coast Guard, both with property adjoining the Town. For many reasons, the Town has developed without a shared vision and behavior. Some significant accomplishments have been achieved over the past 5 years (A), but there are still much needed to bring the community into a single minded unit.

The future objectives and actions for a Cohesive Community must be undertaken if we are, indeed, to be “The Best Little Beach Town in America”.

#### **Summary for Strategic Direction: Cohesive Community**

*A. Significant Accomplishments: implementing actions associated with our cohesive community as specified in the Town Strategic Plan.*

*C.1. Know and care about each other, recognizing that we share in common the fact that we have chosen to live in the Town of Caswell Beach.*

- Developed a Town Website.
- E-mail and police notification programs are in-place.

*C.2 Develop a sense of pride in and celebrate the fact that we live in the Town of Caswell Beach.*

- Ordinances developed for lighting, signage, and other physical setting items.

*C.3. Demonstrate a “can do” spirit of living, playing and working together as a unified community.*

**B. Future Objectives: Actions to be implemented associated with the Cohesive Community strategy as specified in the Town Strategic Plan.**

- Establish a welcoming committee for introducing newcomers to the Caswell Beach community.

## **Future Projects/ Programs requiring Funding for Implementation**

During the Board's discussion of future objectives there were a number of projects/programs that were identified as essential in meeting the Strategic Plan Goals. Three of these, in the Board's view would require a funding commitment. Funding of these items would ensure the Town's commitment to achieving these objectives in a cost effective manner.

The proposed project/program objectives are listed in the following Table 1 and are grouped according to Strategic Direction.

**Table 1. Future Projects/Programs Identified During a Review of the Town of Caswell Beach Strategic Plan that would Require Funding in the Town’s FY 2015-2016 Budget .**

<i>Strategic Direction</i>	<i>Strategic Plan Goal</i>	<i>Strategic Plan Objective</i>	<i>Strategic Plan Action</i>	<i>Item for Inclusion in the FY 2015-2016 Budget</i>
<b><u>E. Environment</u></b>	E.4. Integrate development and implementation of storm-water and wastewater projects to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and awareness of cost benefits.	E4-1. Maximize efficiency and minimize disruption and cost redundancy.	E4-1-1. Review storm-water, irrigation and wastewater plans to ensure proper integration.	Utilize a licensed/certified professional consulting engineer to review submitted development plans for compliance with Ordinances and State laws.
<b><i>G. Town Government</i></b>	G.1. Elevate the current governing body from day to day operations to a policy making body with operational oversight.	G1-3. Ensure that the Town staff is qualified, providing required training, and compensated appropriately.	G1-3-1. Ensure that staff is sufficient in number, expertise, and adequately trained to perform assigned tasks and are crossed trained where needed.	Provide funding for staff training, FY 2015-2016.
			G1-3-4. Contract for required professional services. Consider using resources such as the Institute of Government staff and interns for specific projects.	Continue to adequately fund FY 2015-2016 for required professional services.

**Appendices:**

*Appendix 1. Environment Strategic Direction.*

*Appendix 2. Government Strategic Direction.*

*Appendix 3. Health and Safety Strategic Direction.*

*Appendix 4. Cohesive Community Strategic Direction.*