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2021 AIA Fellowship

Candidate Benjamin B. Cahoon
Organization Cahoon and Kasten Architects, PC
Location Nags Head, North Carolina
Chapter AIA North Carolina; AIA Eastern North Carolina

Category of Nomination

Object 4 > Public Service

Summary Statement

Mayor Ben Cahoon combines practice with community leadership by blending resilient design strategies, sustainability education, and legislative advocacy to address climate change impacts and improve the quality of life for inhabitants of fragile coastal environments.

Education

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC - 1 year - Bachelor of Architecture

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC - 4 years - Bachelor of Environmental Design in Architecture

Licensed in:

North Carolina

Virginia

Maryland

Employment

Cahoon and Kasten Architects, PC - 20 years

Benjamin Cahoon, Architect - 10 years

Bissell Professional Group - 2 years

Burnstudio Architects, PA - 3 years

Benjamin Cahoon

AIA

4 Object Four
Public Service



6 October 2020

Nancy Rogo Trainer, FAIA
Chair, 2020 Jury of Fellows
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292

Re: Ben Cahoon, AIA

Chair Trainer and the 2021 Jury of Fellows,

I am truly honored to serve as Ben Cahoon's sponsor in support of his candidacy for Fellowship. Ben and I first met over forty years ago when we both began our architectural training at North Carolina State University. Since that time, we have remained close friends and I have followed his remarkable career with great interest. I have been both impressed and inspired by his unrelenting focus on improving the quality of life for inhabitants of fragile coastal environments through his established practice, his passionate advocacy and his devoted public service.

Throughout the United States, we are all facing the increasingly serious and obvious signals of climate change. Our fragile coastal communities represent some of our most vulnerable areas, where the impacts of sea level rise and increasingly frequent severe weather events are emerging as significant threats to these sensitive ecosystems. By blending resilient design strategies with sustainability education and legislative advocacy, Ben has established himself as a national leader by developing successful mitigation strategies and environmentally responsible policies aimed at addressing these impacts. He has provided the technical tools, the organizational roadmap and – perhaps, most importantly – the inspired leadership, for others to learn from his wisdom as they begin to address similar challenges in their own coastal communities.

The results of Ben's career are impressive. From authoring FEMA's first national model program for hazard-resistant construction, to establishing the Coastal Studies Institute which brings together the natural and social sciences to develop effective climate risk adaptation strategies, to influencing state, regional and national policies, his work has had significant and far-reaching impacts. As Mayor of the Town of Nags Head, Ben recently stood up to 'big oil' and convened a mayoral roundtable which led to gaining congressional support and ultimately a Federal Executive Order including North Carolina in a moratorium on offshore drilling extending along the entire southeastern coast. As a direct result of Ben's advocacy, those fragile ecosystems will continue to be protected for the foreseeable future.

Ben's influence can be felt in the design community, in the public realm, and in coastal communities through the United States. Through his example, he encourages us all to practice with purpose, serve with passion and advocate through leadership. Mayor Ben Cahoon truly embodies what it means to be a 'Citizen Architect'.

I heartily endorse his candidacy for Fellowship and urge your strong consideration for elevating Ben Cahoon into the American Institute of Architects' College of Fellows. He is an inspiration and a national treasure.

Sincerely,

Scott Wolf, FAIA, Partner

The Miller Hull Partnership, LLP

Polson Building
71 Columbia, 6th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104
T: 206.682.6837

Point Loma Marina
4980 North Harbor Drive - Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92106
T: 619.220.0984

Mayor Ben Cahoon combines practice with community leadership by blending resilient design strategies, sustainability education, and legislative advocacy to address climate change impacts and improve the quality of life for inhabitants of fragile coastal environments.

With more than thirty years of constant civic engagement while practicing architecture in coastal communities, and now as mayor of a barrier island town, Ben is intimately familiar with the impacts of climate change on the land, infrastructure, buildings, and people. Those impacts, which include ocean shoreline erosion, severe and frequent flooding, elevated water tables, malfunctioning wastewater systems, and more frequent and severe hurricanes— all require architectural, planning, educational, and political solutions. Whether pursuing those solutions through the U.S. Congress, Federal agencies, or developing replicable local models, Ben is the quintessential “Citizen Architect”. He addresses these issues with an inquisitive spirit, open-mindedness, collaboration, and holistic non-linear thinking.

Resilience

One of his earliest engagements after establishing his practice was to serve as Program Architect for Blue Sky, FEMA’s first national model program for hazard-resistant construction. Ben contributed to the development of hurricane-resistant details, designed model new-construction and retrofit buildings, advocated for insurance and financial incentives, and wrote and delivered educational programs for architects, builders, inspectors, and homeowners. Many aspects of Blue Sky live on in provisions of the International Building Code and initiatives like the Fortified program of the Institute for Business and Home Safety.

Now as Mayor, Ben leads his town along what Duke Professor of Environmental Politics Megan Mullin calls “the leading edge of thinking about how to prepare for the future.” Ben has led numerous committees and his town Board in the consideration and adoption of a Land Use Plan focused on resilient development, to construction of sustainable infrastructure like parks and multiuse paths, and initiating innovative drainage projects. With Ben’s advocacy and participation, the town engaged North Carolina State University’s Coastal Dynamics Design Lab to explore resiliency to sea level rise through a number of student projects. The award-winning responses to environmental challenges developed by this studio have application to the world’s coastal communities.

Education

Recognizing the value of education to inform and change behavior led Ben to multiple roles in the creation of the Coastal Studies Institute (CSI). Founded in 2003, CSI is a multi-institutional research and education partnership that integrates the natural and social sciences and brings together researchers from different disciplines to answer pressing

coastal questions. Ben served on the task force that conceived of the Institute, lobbied for its funding, and conducted the site search. He was a founding member of its Foundation, served on its Board of Directors, and was one of the architects for its campus. Current research at CSI includes a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded study of adaptation on barrier islands and low-lying coastal areas, analyzing how coastal processes and economic decisions about land use and coastal engineering interact to determine the nature and timing of adaptation to climate risk.

Advocacy

Ben also recognizes that the root causes of the climate change challenges faced by coastal residents on a daily basis must be confronted with education and political action. Toward that end he lobbies the U.S. Congress on a regular basis, serves on Congressional Briefing Panels, and authors editorials encouraging U.S. Senators and Representatives to action. As a witness before the U.S. House Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee he helped defeat an offshore drilling bill. He led a coalition of twenty-four coastal mayors to oppose offshore drilling and seismic testing. And he was selected by North Carolina’s Governor Cooper to moderate the 2019 Coastal Resiliency and Clean Energy Roundtable.

Ben believes, too, in the power of advocacy from and through the profession. Notably he was an AIANC board member during construction of the NC Center for Architecture and Design (NC CfAD). CfAD serves as headquarters for the AIA NC Chapter, acts as a contact point for government participation, and is a catalyst for public outreach.

AIA North Carolina recognized the value of Ben’s contributions to a culture of sustainability with the 2019 Gail Lindsey Award.

Ben has influenced thinking on sustainability and response to climate change in numerous capacities throughout his 30-year career.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

Mayor, Town of Nags Head | 2017–Present

Dare County Board of Education | 2008–2014, 2016

AIA and AIA North Carolina | 1988–Present

Disaster Response Alliance | 2017–Present

Presbyterian Church (USA) | 1988–Present

ELECTED OFFICES

Mayor, Town of Nags Head | 2017–Present

Elected to a 4-year term in November 2017

Mayor Cahoon has led the adoption of a new resiliency-focused Comprehensive Land Use Plan and companion Unified Development Ordinance, completion of a \$42.7 million beach renourishment project, completion of Dowdy Park (the town's largest and most fully developed), construction of miles of multi-use paths, and installation of stormwater mitigation projects.

Dare County Control Group | 2017–2020

The Control Group coordinates town and county preparation for and response to emergencies like hurricanes and pandemics.

North Carolina Resort Towns and Convention Cities Board of Directors | 2019–2021

Eastern North Carolina Alliance for Recovery and Resiliency

The Alliance works with local communities, the NC Legislature, Federal agencies, and U.S. Congressional representatives securing support for recovery from Hurricane Florence and for resiliency implementation.

Dare County Board of Education | 2008–2014, 2016

Appointed and elected terms totaling 7 years

Member (Appointed) Dare County Board of Education | 2008–2010

Selected by a Committee of the Board to complete an unexpired term

Member (Elected) Dare County Board of Education | 2010–2014

Elected to a 4-year term in November 2010

Member (Appointed) Dare County Board of Education | 2016

Selected by the Board, based on experience, to complete another unexpired term

Vice Chair, Dare County Board of Education | 2011–2014

Elected by the Members of the Board to 1-year and 2-year terms

Dare County Academically and Intellectually Gifted Students Advisory Board | 2008–2016

Appointed by the Chairman of the Board

Dare County Board of Education Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) Committee | 2012–2014

Appointed by the Chairman of the Board

Ben led the CIP Committee to develop and advocate for a long list of post-Great Recession “catch up” projects (including energy efficiency) and worked with the Committee and the County Commissioners to create a funding plan. The innovative funding formula they developed remains in place today.

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Member of the American Institute of Architects | 1988–Present

Hazard Resistant Continuing Education Task Force 1999

Member of AIA North Carolina | 1988–Present

Board of Directors | 2008–2010

During Ben’s term the Board financed and constructed the NC Center for Architecture and Design. CfAD is a contact point and catalyst for the profession’s legislative advocacy and public outreach

Political Action Committee | 2017

Membership Committee

Awards Committee | 2000

Member, Eastern Section of AIA North Carolina | 1988–Present

Board of Directors | 2007–2011

President | 2009 and 2010

Ben led the Board to reinstate the Section’s awards program and to create a scholarship for high school graduates from largely rural eastern North Carolina who enroll in North Carolina colleges of architecture.

Immediate Past President | 2011

President-Elect | 2008

Secretary | 2007

SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

Nags Head Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee | 2015–2019

Nags Head Technical Codes/UDO Steering Committee | 2015–2019

Ben was the only design professional and the only appointee to serve on both committees. His years of experience in resilient design and knowledge of

the town’s previous development standards were invaluable assets. As Mayor, Ben led adoption of both documents.

Dowdy Park Steering Committee | 2014–2017

Ben helped the Dowdy Park Steering Committee understand the site constraints and design issues and with articulating the Committee’s vision to the design team.

Nags Head Committee for Arts and Culture | 2016–2017

Nags Head Beach Road Committee | 2010–2014

Dare County Higher Education Task Force | 2000–2008

UNC Coastal Studies Institute Board of Directors | 2008–2012

2013 UNC CSI Art+Science Symposium, Steering Committee

Founding Director, UNC Coastal Studies Institute Foundation, Inc. | 2001

UNC Coastal Studies Institute Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors | 2001–2017

Chairman of the Foundation Board | 2008–2012

Chair Emeritus of the Foundation Board | 2013–2017

Ben's vision, capacity for consensus-building, legislative outreach, and understanding of the environmental issues, both those to be studied and those to be addressed in the Coastal Studies Institute's campus design, were fundamental to the creation of the Institute and its buildings. He continued to lead the Foundation to support innovative Institute programs.

Member, Outer Banks Transportation Task Force (OBTTF) | 2005–2009

The task force was a broad coalition of government and business interests seeking to diversify visitor and workforce transportation options on the Outer Banks.

FAITH-BASED SERVICE

Outer Banks Presbyterian Church

Member | 1988–Present

Session Member | 1989–1991, 2003–2009

President, Outer Banks Presbyterian Church, Inc. | 1991–2011

Presbytery of New Hope, Successor to New Hope Presbytery

Member | 1988–Present

Presbytery Council/Coordinating Body | 2011–2016

Presbytery Visioning Committee | 2012–2016

Ben led the Committee to redesign mission programs of the Presbytery (composed of 120 churches) from a structure of funded committees to a grant-based "Passion Driven Ministry" model in which all churches can initiate new programs. A Place at the Table Café, a pay-as-you-can restaurant located in Raleigh, NC, was one of the early grantees.

Commissioner, Presbyterian Church (USA) 205th General Assembly

Elected by the Presbytery

Commissioner, Presbyterian Church (USA) 222nd General Assembly

Elected by the Presbytery

Commissioner, Synod of the Mid-Atlantic | 2017–2020

Elected by the Presbytery

With Ben as an active committee member and delegate, the 222nd General Assembly endorsed a Resolution entitled "The Collaborative Agenda on Environmental Stewardship". In addition to providing Biblical Principles and Historical Witness, it is a "how to" document with actions for individuals, congregations, mid councils and other mission and ministry groups. The biennial General Assembly is the Presbyterian Church's national rule and policy making body.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Building Assessment Volunteer, NC Emergency Management Hurricane Floyd Engineering Mission | September 1999

Building Assessment Volunteer, NC Emergency Management Puerto Rico Earthquake Engineering Mission | February 2020

As a Building Assessment Volunteer following the 6.4 magnitude earthquake on January 7, 2020, Ben joined a team to assess dozens of damaged structures, including homes, churches, community centers, and sports stadiums. Many families were able to return safely and confidently to their homes as a result of his work.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Witness before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Regarding Proposed Legislation Entitled "Enhancing State Management of Federal Lands and Waters Act" | June 2018

Moderator, North Carolina Coastal Resiliency and Clean Energy Roundtable | September 2019

Organizer and Chair, Mayoral Roundtable to Protect North Carolina's Coast | May 2019

Panelist, Impacts of Offshore Drilling and Exploration, Capitol Hill Briefing | March 2018

Panelist, Rising Seas and the Implications for U.S. Coastal Real Estate, Capitol Hill Briefing | September 2018

Panelist, A Community Conversation About Coastal Change, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center, On the Ground—Community Leaders, Planners & Resource Managers | August 2018

Panelist, Science on the Sound, Coastal Studies Institute, Rising | October 2018

Speaker, Duke University Energy Initiative, Nicholas School Energy Club, Sustainable Architecture | April 2018

Speaker, Blue Sky National Model Program for Hurricane Resistant Construction, National Hurricane Conference, Norfolk, VA | April 1998

Plenary Speaker, Incentives for Hazard Resistant Construction, National Hurricane Conference, Houston, TX | April 1999

COLLABORATIONS

Collaborator, “Rising: A Visual and Oral History

of Climate and Sea-Level Change on North Carolina’s Inner and Outer Banks”

2.2

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Cahoon and Kasten Architects, PC
President | 2000–2020

Ocracoke School | 2020
Floodproofing, elevating, and replacing buildings flooded by Hurricane Dorian

Kitty Hawk Police, Fire, and EMS Stations | 2019
Master Planning to replace existing facilities subject to flooding

Chamberlin Cottage | 2019
Elevating a historic cottage to protect it from flood damage

North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching | 2019
Making emergency post-hurricane repairs to the historic former Lifesaving Station

Dare County Arts Council Courtyard | 2017
Creating an outdoor teaching and event space in an historic floodprone village

Brindley and Brindley Real Estate Office Building | 2015

Replacing a building destroyed by fire with a highly fire-conscious design

Seven Cs Condominiums | 2013
Replacing an oceanfront building destroyed by fire with a wind, flood, and fire-resistant design

Swan Quarter Dike Walking Trail | 2009 (Unbuilt)
Designing a trail and interpretive elements along the dike which protects the village from estuarine storm surge

Engelhard Medical Center | 2007
Designing a critical facility for quick recovery after hurricanes; super-elevated against flooding, wind resistant, and generator-equipped

Coastal Studies Institute | 2004
Programming and designing a 52,000 square-foot estuarine and coastal research facility on a reclaimed dredge spoil site

Benjamin Cahoon Architect
Sole Practitioner | 1990–1999

Bissell Professional Group, Inc,
Architect | 1988–1990

Burnstudio Architects, PC
Intern | 1984–1987

RECOGNITIONS

2019 Gail Lindsey Sustainability Award

In recognition of Ben's significant contributions to North Carolina's culture of sustainable design

2014 International Architecture Award for Best New Global Design

Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design and the European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies, For the UNC Coastal Studies Institute, Wanchese, North Carolina (As Associated Architects with Clark Nexsen)

Certificate of Appreciation

North Carolina Emergency Management Emergency Response Team, Emergency Management Assistance Compact January 2020 Puerto Rico Earthquake

1988 Richard Green Award for Design Achievement

Presbytery of New Hope Certificate of Appreciation | 2015

In recognition of Ben's significant contributions over a 25 year period to the work of to the Presbyterian Church (USA)

2.3

PUBLICATIONS

Planning for Climate Change

"Climate Change Turns the Tide on Waterfront Living," *The Washington Post* | April 13, 2020

"A Coastal Town Pummeled by Climate Change Prepares for the Future," *Governing* | July 26, 2019

"Climate Change in a Coastal County: Think Global, Act Hyperlocal," *Stateline* | July 26, 2019

"Nags Head Rebuilding its Beach for the Second Time in Eight Years," *Pilot on Line* | May 9, 2019

"The Long View," *Sea Grant NC Coastwatch* | Summer 2018

Offshore Petroleum Exploration and Renewable Alternatives

"Wasted Resources: Forcing More Oil Drilling," *Medium* | September 25, 2018

"Governor, Local Mayors Talk Hurricane Resilience, Clean Energy," *Washington Daily News* | September 24, 2019

"GOP Move on Offshore Drilling is Money Shakedown," *South Carolina Statehouse Report* | June 29, 2018

"North Carolina Gov. Cooper Joins Others in Protest of Federal Fines for Opposing Offshore Drilling," *Stateportpilot.com* | June 20, 2018

"US House Oil and Gas Reform Idea Uses Carrot-stick Approach," *Oil and Gas Journal* | June 20, 2018

"Nags Head Mayor: Offshore Drilling Threatens Tourism and Wildlife," WUNC 91.5 | June 19, 2018

"Federal Bill to Give States Greater Control Over Offshore Oil," *Spectrum 13 News, Orlando, FL* | June 16, 2018

"Cooper Rightfully Blasts Trump's 'Ransom' Proposal on Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling," *NC Policy Watch: The Progressive Pulse Blog* | June 15, 2018

"Nags Head Mayor Testifies in DC Against 'Oil Ransom Bill,'" *The Outer Banks Voice* | June 14, 2018

"Proposed Legislation Would Make States Pay To Block Offshore Drilling," *Public Radio East* | June 14, 2018

“Cooper Joins Four Other Governors In Opposing Offshore Drilling,” *WFAE 90.7* | June 14, 2018

“US Officials Applaud Trump For Diverting Public Attention Away From Atlantic Drilling Plan,” *CleanTechnica* | March 14, 2019

“US Official Reveals Atlantic Drilling Plan While Hailing Trump’s Ability to Distract Public,” *The Guardian* | March 14, 2019

Advocacy and Alliance-building

“Nags Head Mayor Fights Offshore Oil Drilling,” *Coastal Review Online* | November 13, 2019

“Nags Head Mayor in DC to Fight Offshore Drilling,” *The Outer Banks Voice* | November 13, 2019

“Drilling Opponents Look West for Support,” *Island Free Press* | July 11, 2019

“Coastal Leaders Sign Resolution Against Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Drilling,” *The Eastern Beacon* | May 20, 2019

“Protecting North Carolina’s Coast at Top of Agenda for Mayors,” *The Coastland Times* | May 13, 2019

“Regan, Mayors Tout Unity Against Drilling,” *Coastal Review Online* | May 10, 2019

“Coastal Mayors Show United Front in Opposing Offshore Drilling,” *The Outer Banks Voice* | May 9, 2019

“Coastal Leaders to Hold Offshore Drilling Roundtable Wednesday in Manteo,” *OBX Today* | May 8, 2019

“Groups Move to Block Start of Seismic Tests,” *Ocracoke Observer* | February 21, 2019

“How DC Impacts Dare County: Dare County Asks for Local Drilling Hearing,” *South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce Blog* | January 30, 2018

Hazard-resistant Building Construction

“Depth Defying,” *Business North Carolina* | November 2014

“Societal Responses: Reducing the Impacts of Coastal Hazards,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | 1998

“Withstanding a Huff and a Puff,” *The Washington Post* | August 31, 1996

“Houses That Stand Up to Hurricanes,” *The Washington Post: Washington Home Magazine* | October 12, 1995

“Blue Sky Project to Set Construction Standard New Materials and Methods Will Resist Weather Damage in Coastal Buildings,” *The Virginian-Pilot* | May 20, 1995

Editorials

“Senator Tillis, Listen to the People, Not Big Oil,” *New Bern Sun Journal* | February 26, 2019

“Rebuttal to Sen. Thom Tillis’ Request for More Details from Administration on Offshore Drilling and Plans to Protect North Carolina,” *BladenOnline* | February 22, 2019

“Senator Tillis, Protect Our Coast,” *The News and Observer* | February 19, 2019

“Bob Woodard and Ben Cahoon: No to seismic testing off North Carolina,” *The Virginian-Pilot* | December 16, 2018

“Bob Woodard and Ben Cahoon: Seismic tests for oil and gas pose a threat to the Outer Banks,” *Greensboro News and Record* | December 15, 2018

Exhibits

3.0

3.1 Impacting Federal Energy and Climate Policy

3.2 Focusing Education on Coastal Sustainability

The Coastal Studies Institute

3.3 Improving Climate Engagement Through Science Literacy

Design+Arts+Science+Humanities (DASH) Program

3.4 Engaging the Public to Discuss Climate Change

Rising: A Visual and Oral History of Climate and Sea Level Change on North Carolina's Inner and Outer Banks

3.5 Creating Alliances to Impact Climate Policy

3.6 Innovating Solutions for Hazard-Resistant Building Construction

Project Blue Sky

3.7 Addressing Sea Level Rise Through Municipal Resiliency Planning

Impacting Federal Energy and Climate Policy / 3.1

Exhibit 3.1

CHALLENGE

Offshore oil and gas drilling propagates reliance on fossil fuels, which contributes to global warming and climate change. It also threatens the financial prosperity of thousands of coastal communities by throwing into chaos their booming fishing and tourism industries. In no small terms, it threatens coastal ways of life for millions of people.

In January 2018, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released its draft 2019–2024 National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, proposing the largest number of potential offshore leases ever offered by any president.

ROLE

As a practicing architect in a coastal resort community, and its mayor, Ben understands the importance of outdoor recreation- and tourism-based economies and the risks posed to them by offshore oil drilling. He also understands the risks climate change poses to buildings, infrastructure, and coastal residents.

Ben has served as a panelist in multiple U.S. Congressional briefings to help educate elected officials, their legislative staffs, and the public on these issues, describing the potential impacts of testing and drilling on barrier island economies, and the effects of sea level rise on coastal residents. He has also authored or co-signed numerous editorials in opposition to offshore seismic testing and oil and gas drilling, and has lobbied federal and state legislators to support legislation barring or limiting testing and drilling.

In 2018, as opposition to the President’s Oil and Gas Leasing plan grew, many states joined lawsuits or passed legislation to restrict exploration and drilling, or to preclude on-shore support operations. In response, Republican leadership in the U.S. House proposed “The Enhancing State Management of Federal Lands and Waters Act”. If passed this act

Ben served as a witness when the bill was considered by the U.S. House Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee. He was the only witness, of four, to testify against the bill. Witnesses for the bill included Myron Ebell, Director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute’s Center for Energy and Environment, publicly known as an architect of the

“While the focus (of the Hearing) was offshore oil drilling, the discussion touched on climate change. At one point, U.S. Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán, from California, posed a question to Cahoon: ‘Is climate change something that you talk about in your city? Is this something that, when you talk about sea level rise, you make that connection?’”

Coastwatch, The Long View, Summer 2018

would have allowed states to disapprove of drilling in up to half the federal lease blocks within their borders or off their coasts without a penalty, but states that put more than half of the lease blocks off-limits would be penalized at a rate of one-tenth the amount of government revenue estimated to come from lease sales, royalties, and other drilling revenues. The proposed legislation became known as the “Oil Ransom Bill”.

president’s climate denial strategy, and whose idea it was for the White House to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

OUTCOMES

Ben’s testimony before the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee helped halt consideration of the “Enhancing State Management of Federal Lands



Mayor Ben Cahoon with Congressman Paul Tonko (NY-20th)

“The fight against offshore drilling in the Atlantic has been an unprecedented story of triumph for grassroots advocacy, and it would not be possible without civic leaders like Ben Cahoon who advocate tirelessly to defend their communities and coastal way of life.”

Diane Hoskins, Offshore Drilling Campaign Director Oceana

and Waters Act”, according to Lara Levison, Senior Director for Federal Policy at OCEANA.

Ben’s testimony was cited in February 2019 during the 116th Congress’s Oversight Hearing on Climate Change: The Impacts and the Need to Act. Nearly simultaneously eight anti-drilling bills were introduced, two of which ultimately passed with bipartisan support.

In September 2020 President Trump, by Executive Order, removed areas offshore of South Carolina,

Georgia, and Florida from consideration for oil and gas leasing between July 2022 and July 2032. North Carolina and Virginia were later added to the same Executive Order. Simultaneously, acoustic testing companies like WesternGeco began to withdraw their permit applications. These were significant victories for opponents of offshore exploration.

Ben’s consistent message and presence on Capitol Hill has helped move legislators, including North Carolina Republican Congressman Greg Murphy, to neutral or opposed positions on offshore oil drilling.

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above.

That responsibility included:

The advocacy activities described.

Collaborator in the described activities.

*Randy Sturgill, Oceana
Senior Campaign Organizer*

Exhibit 3.1



Focusing Education on Coastal Sustainability

The Coastal Studies Institute

3.2

Exhibit 3.2

CHALLENGE

Estuaries around the world provide coastal populations with important resources, even as burgeoning coastal populations threaten their health. In 1994 the National Research Council's Environmental Science in the Coastal Zone: Issues for Further Research outlined several key issues confronting science in the development of a more holistic approach to managing intense human activities and important natural resources.

“As a visionary and hard-working member of this (Higher Education) Task Force, Ben was focused on the need to understand how to live and manage coastal resources more sustainably. He knew the university presence would be a significant resource in realizing those goals.”

Dr. Nancy White, Founding Executive Director, Coastal Studies Institute

Seven years later Molly Broad, then President of the University of the UNC System, wrote:

Northeastern North Carolina encompasses a complex of ecosystems unique in their natural resources, characteristics, and importance to the state and the nation. The nature and importance of these ecosystems necessitate sustained, broad, and in-depth consideration of issues such as water quality, fisheries, land and water habitats, tourism and leisure activities, and the legacy of human interaction with the natural environment.

ROLE

Ben was appointed to the Dare County Task Force on Higher Education in February of 2000. The Task Force was focused on establishing a degree-granting institution in the county, but began to turn toward a partnership with the UNC System for an estuarine research facility as a core component. Ben was perfectly equipped as an architect to help the Task Force refine its vision. He helped write the Institute's Mission Statement, conducted the search for potential sites, and lobbied the NC General Assembly for funding.

As one of the architects for the campus design Ben led both community stakeholder sessions and client programming worksessions, and co-authored the programming document. He contributed to site and building design decisions and designed the unbuilt dormitories.

Ben served one term on the Institute's Board of Directors and advocated for the building's modern design and LEED features.

Ben was a founding member of the Institute's Foundation and sixteen-year Board member, nine of which he served as Chairman. He promoted programs of the Institute including the DASH design, art, science, and humanities partnership.

OUTCOME

Today the Institute's research provides stakeholders with valuable insight and data on environmentally and culturally important issues through the use of informed science. It also allows universities to extend research efforts by providing a venue for inter-institutional cooperation and a national resource for coastal and ocean education. The Institute is housed in a 52,000-square-foot facility on a 200-acre site along the Croatan Sound on the Outer Banks. The facility includes research labs for marine archaeology, coastal processes, estuarine ecology, public policy and engineering.

Current research initiatives span the world and include harnessing renewable energy from ocean tides and currents, studying groundwater and saltwater interactions for the effects on both sea life and drinking water supplies, sustainable shoreline stabilization, and coastal adaptation to sea level rise.

“Ben’s leadership role at countless community meetings helped people understand the importance of sustainability, trust for the concepts, and galvanized support for the university program to come to the Outer Banks.”

*Dr. Nancy White, Founding Executive Director,
Coastal Studies Institute*

*I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s
responsibility for the exhibit listed above.*

That responsibility included:

*The Committee and Board activities de-
scribed and shared design responsibility.*

*Mark A. Kasten, AIA LEED-AP
Collaborator in the described activities.*



Exhibit 3.2



Improving Climate Engagement Through Science Literacy

Design+Arts+Science+Humanities
(DASH) Program

3.3

Exhibit 3.3

CHALLENGE

In 2012 the Coastal Studies Institute was immersed in a wide array of coastal research programs, many of them rich with potential public benefits. The areas of study were also relevant to coastal audiences and the Institute wanted greater public engagement. The Institute also had a strengthening relationship with East Carolina University, home of a nationally recognized School of Art and Design. And the communities surrounding the Institute had strong and growing arts programs of their own. The Institute's Director, Dr. Nancy White, believed using the available resources to merge art and science would have multiple benefits. It would improve both the science and the art, while making scientific concepts more accessible to the public.

ROLE

Creating a science and art collaboration like the one Dr. White envisioned would require organizing the arts community, securing financial resources, identifying guest artists, and finding venues. As partner to the Coastal Studies Institute this was the Foundation's primary responsibility. As Chair of the Foundation and member of the DASH Steering Committee, Ben led both the Committee and the Foundation Board to advocate for the symposia, build the community connections, secure the financial resources, and assess potential symposium topics.

As an architect, Ben brought the value of design thinking to the event's planning, and with his help artist Thomas Sayre (founder of Clearscapes Archi-

“Making science fun and interactive in a simple way provides opportunities to educate audiences about specific issues. The scientific community in particular will find this difficult to accept, but the fact is: if science seeks to promote positive change in the world, it must strive to encourage grassroots movement. Governments move slow, and they're as likely to move backward as forward. And so it is up to the people to create the change themselves, but that will only happen when they understand why such change is necessary.”

Sean Montgomery in “Synergy in Art and Science Could Save the World”

tecture with Steve Schuster, FAIA) was identified as the featured artist for the first event in 2013.

OUTCOME

Subsequent DASH symposia were held in 2015 and 2017. The symposia brought together partners that included the East Carolina University School of Art and Design, College of the Albemarle, the Dare County Arts Council and The Pocosin Arts School of Fine Craft.

The symposia brought scientific concepts to broad public audiences with keynote speakers like Reuben Margolin, the American-born artist and sculptor known for his mechanically driven kinetic sculptures of wave-forms. In the 2015 symposium, Boats and Boards, Ripples and Waves his work spoke directly to the interchange between the art and science of waves.

Scientific and technological advancements arising from DASH include the use of photogrammetry

Exhibit 3.3

to rapidly produce 3-D images and models of shipwrecks, a university level art-of-boatbuilding class, and an NEA funded summer Honors course to expose students to the science and art of coastal systems.

Projects arising from the DASH model include “Rising: A Visual and Oral History of Climate and Sea Level Change on North Carolina’s Inner and Outer Banks”. “Rising” uses photographs and oral histories to highlight the effects of, and adaptations to, sea level rise.

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above.

That responsibility included:

The Committee and Board activities described.

Bill Massey

Collaborator in the described activities.

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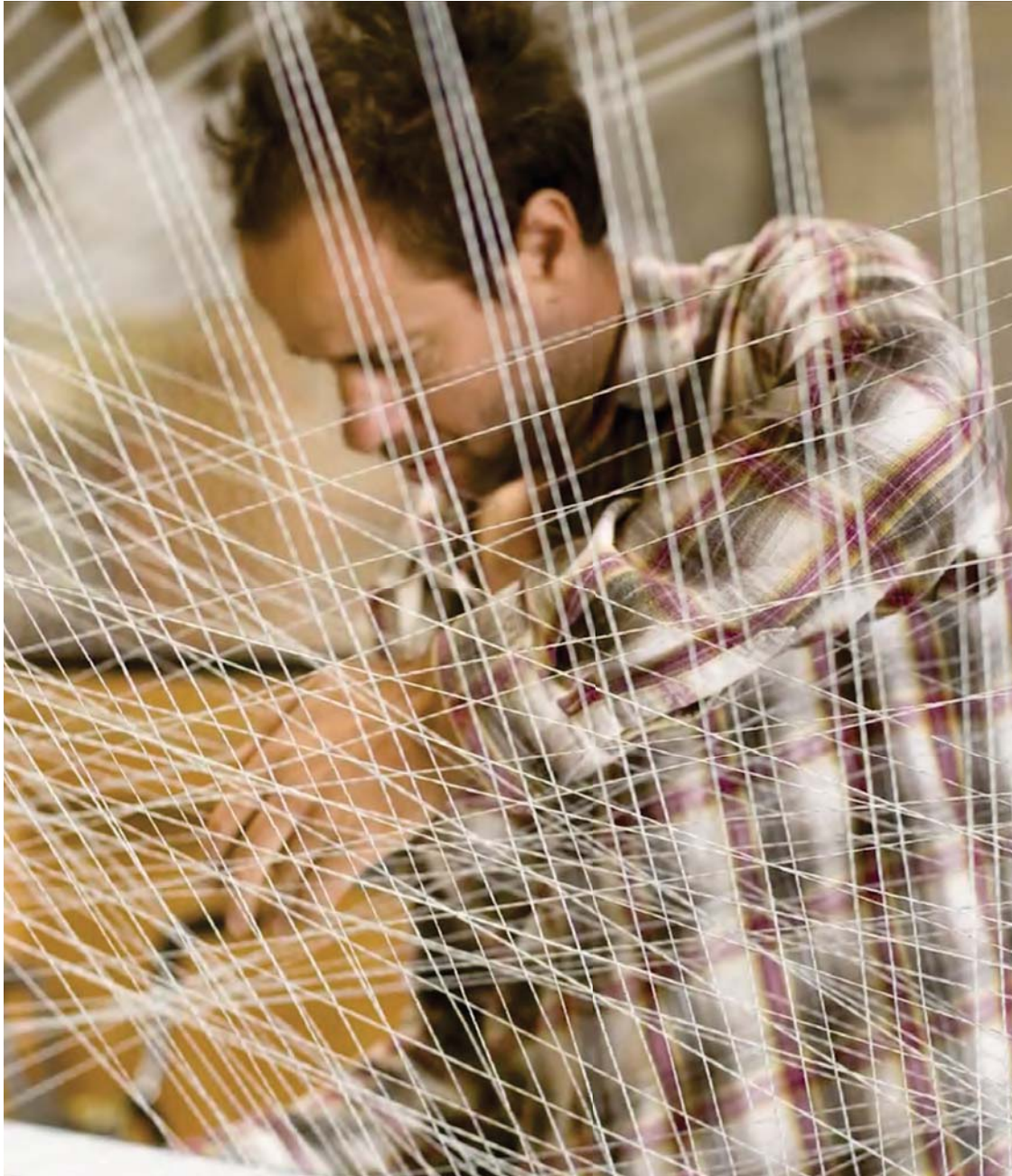
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Exhibit 3.3



Engaging the Public to Discuss Climate Change

34

Rising: A Visual and Oral
History of Climate and Sea
Level Change on North
Carolina's Inner and Outer Banks

Exhibit 3.4



For coastal families in which farming has been the way of life for generations the damaging effects of salt intrusion, brought by sea level rise, is rapidly becoming part of their collective story.

CHALLENGE

Public perception of sea-level rise and other climate-related change is influenced by a number of factors: political ideology, education, proximity and exposure to risk, age, media influence, and messaging and delivery. Public discourse can be polarizing and policy conversations are frequently driven by scientists and decision-makers using obtuse language, encumbered with data and jargon. A notable stakeholder often missing from the dialogue: coastal residents who live and work in such regions.

The collaborators of Rising saw an opportunity for a multimedia project using oral histories from community stakeholders to capture the perceptions and observations of sea level and other climate-related changes. The purpose of the project was to bridge science and the humanities using alternative storytelling methods.

ROLES

Ben, as collaborator and one of the team's "Community Liaisons", provided insight into sea level

rise's impacts and the perceptions and responses of rural farm and fishing communities and barrier island resort residents. His coastal plains farm upbringing, experience as an architect, engagement as a community leader, and insights as an elected official helped him to bring a unique set of skills and expertise to the project, spanning grassroots advocacy, media, education, town planning, and decision making. He leveraged resources to identify stakeholders and navigate community dynamics, and his

“Mr. Cahoon’s input was valuable in making sure that the words and images would speak to anyone... and displace political perceptions of climate change with physical evidence and testimony.”

*Dr. Jessica Whitehead, Chief Resilience Officer,
N.C. Office of Recovery and Resiliency, and
Rising Co-collaborator*

understanding of those cultures helped inform the crafting of oral history questions.

As the exhibit travelled, Ben served as a panelist to address issues raised by the exhibit.

OUTCOME

The oral histories and documentary photos culminated in a traveling multimedia exhibit that helps viewers and listeners better understand coastal communities’ beliefs and understandings regarding climate change. It addresses questions like “What changes have coastal residents witnessed due to

recurring coastal hazards?” and “How have they adapted to the changes?”

The oral histories were conducted in accordance with Southern Oral History Program guidelines by skilled oral history interviewers. The body of artfully produced photographic work documents impacts of climate change and areas most susceptible to sea level change. The vivid visual representation of climate change is a core component of the outreach communication, pulling the viewer into conversation on a topic with which she may not usually engage. The resulting exhibition drives outreach and widespread understanding of sea level rise and inspires planning and adaptation to mitigate harm.

The selected sixteen interview recordings and transcripts were made available to academic and community institution archives. These oral histories now serve as a resource that quantifies public perceptions, assessments of risk, perceived needs for planning and intervention, and levels of success for implemented adaptation methods.

Exhibit locations included The Center for Study of the American South, The African American Cultural Center at NC State University, the Core Sound Museum and Heritage Center, and the Coastal Studies Institute. The African American Cultural Center exhibition was part of the Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center’s Global Change Seminar.

The work remains at the Core Sound Museum as part of a larger exhibit titled “Living on the Edge”. That current exhibit and “Rising” were topics of

conversation in the Smithsonian Institute’s 2020 Folklife Festival’s “Islands on the Edge”.

The oral history interviews are available through institutions and archives, including UNC’s Southern Oral History Collection, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center archive, NC Sea Grant archive, and the Coastal Voices Website.

*I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s
responsibility for the exhibit listed above.
That responsibility included:*

*The collaborative and speaking activities
described.*

*Baxter Miller
Photographer and Collaborator in “Rising”.*

Exhibit 3.4



Creating Alliances to Impact Climate Policy

3.5

CHALLENGE

Influencing public policy change can be difficult and complex, particularly for communities with limited experience, power, and resources. For any issue, like climate change or offshore petroleum drilling and seismic testing, there may be several groups advocating from different policy perspectives. Affecting change requires uniting constituencies with a single message.

“Nags Head Mayor Ben Cahoon said the roundtable was partly spurred when he shared with Secretary Regan the value of his monthly meetings with other mayors. The realization, they agreed, was that grassroots engagement starts with conversation, and that engagement with people can affect policymaking.”

Coastal Review Online, Regan, Mayors Tout Unity Against Drilling, May 10, 2019

ROLES

From his frequent visits to the U.S. Congress, Ben understands that local elected officials are an especially powerful constituency. Working with North Carolina's Secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality and his local County Board of Commissioners Chairman, Ben organized the Mayoral Roundtable to Protect North Carolina's Coast in opposition to offshore seismic testing and drilling. The Roundtable brought a bipartisan group of coastal mayors together with state environmental officials to discuss the potential impacts on their communities from offshore oil testing and drilling, and to discuss how to influence state and federal policy. Ben also drafted, for the mayors' consideration, the “Coastal Leadership's Resolution to Protect the Environmental and Economic Future of North Carolina's Coast”. Through the resolution, the mayors asked North Carolina and the federal government to permanently place state and federal waters off limits for oil or gas exploration, leasing, and extraction.

As a launch to Clean Energy Week in North Carolina, Ben also moderated the bipartisan Coastal Resiliency and Clean Energy Roundtable organized by N.C. Governor Roy Cooper. Ben led the collected officials through a discussion of planning for and funding resilient infrastructure and buildings, green energy initiatives at the municipal level, and brought to light their concerns about the impacts to their communities and the state's coastal economy from offshore petroleum drilling and seismic testing.

OUTCOME

The “Coastal Leadership's Resolution to Protect the Environmental and Economic Future of North Carolina's Coast” was passed with unanimous support and has, to date, been signed by over twenty-four mayors representing the entire coast. Both the Mayoral Roundtable and the Resolution received widespread press coverage, and were highlighted in Governor Cooper's August 26, 2020 press release titled “North Carolina Appeals Federal Seismic Testing Decision That Could Lead to Oil Drilling”. In September 2020 the mayors actively campaigned for President Trump to add North Carolina to his ten-year moratorium on offshore drilling.

Shortly following the Governor's Coastal Resiliency and Clean Energy Roundtable, the Cooper Administration published the N.C. Clean Energy Plan, recommending policies and actions to grow clean energy resources benefitting all of the state. Two topics specifically discussed at the Roundtable are key parts of the Plan. They are 1) Creating long term jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits in renewables and grid infrastructure industries for low income communities and workers displaced by the transition to a clean energy economy and 2) Identifying and advancing legislative and/or regulatory actions to foster development of North Carolina's off-shore wind energy resources.

Both Roundtables illustrate the ways in which active engagement, similar to that practiced by architects every day, can be employed to advance environmental goals.



“Mayor Cahoon, in a great leadership capacity, facilitated a conversation with myself, Governor Roy Cooper, and a number of mayors who are concerned about the lack of clean energy opportunities in North Carolina and the benefits of a clean energy vision in North Carolina.”

Michael Regan, Secretary, NC Department of Environmental Quality

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: Roundtable planning, document authorship, and the activities described.

*Kathleen Lance
Special Assistant to Secretary
Michael S. Regan*

Innovating Solutions for Hazard- resistant Building Construction

3.6

Exhibit 3.6

CHALLENGE

Warming of the North Atlantic, along with other climate changes under way, points to increasing risks associated with hurricanes. If global warming pollution continues unabated over the next century, tropical sea surface temperatures could increase another 3 degrees Fahrenheit - three times the warming to date. Tropical storms are likely to bring higher wind speeds, more precipitation, and larger storm surge in coming decades.

Meanwhile, rapid population growth continues in the Caribbean and along the US and Mexican coasts, where the impacts of hurricanes are felt the most.

“Project Blue Sky...will change forever how single-family homes are built,’ says Cay Cross, Southern Shores town manager.”

Virginian-Pilot, Blue Sky Project to Set Construction Standard, May 20, 1995

This combination of stronger storms and increased populations has and will continue to result in more widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure. Even so, with proper design and construction, wind and flood damage to structures can be greatly reduced or eliminated. More resilient construction reduces both the population displacement and resulting social and economic disruptions such storms too often bring to communities. Generally,

in the United States, such initiatives to improve storm resistance are administered by FEMA or the National Institute for Science and Technology (NIST).

ROLES

Ben served as Program Architect for Project Blue Sky, FEMA's first national model for hazard-resistant construction. Blue Sky was the most comprehensive program of its kind and included research and development, improved building details and construction standards, technical training and consumer education, an information clearinghouse, incentives for better construction, and construction demonstration models. In his role as Program Architect, Ben

lobbied at the state and federal levels for funding, advocated at the federal level for the model program designation, moderated roundtables of corporate insurance and technical partners, advocated for improved construction practices at numerous national and state hurricane conferences, designed model buildings and retrofits in multiple states, participated in the development of Improved Design and Construction Practices (IDCPs) and Approved

Alternative Methods and Materials (AAMMs), and developed and delivered training for design professionals and contractors.

OUTCOMES

The Blue Sky program resulted in the publication of thirteen innovative Load-path and Envelope construction details endorsed by the International Building Code, design of two hurricane-resistant model buildings (one of which was built and used as a training center), retrofit products and techniques for commercial and residential structures, adoption of program elements in New York, North Carolina, South Carolina and Hawaii, and development and dissemination of training materials for designers, builders, and building inspectors.

The program's research initiatives contributed to new products like FoamSeal, a construction adhesive suitable for retrofit, and the “Blue Sky Strap” developed and marketed by Simpson as their model RST Hurricane Strap. Many other aspects of Blue Sky live on in provisions of the International Building Code. Blue Sky construction incentives remain part of the Hawaii Hurricane Relief Project.

When FEMA's grant support ended Blue Sky became a non-profit entity - The Blue Sky Foundation. The Foundation conducted conferences and continued to produce educational materials encouraging builders and developers to adopt safe construction methods. The Foundation developed closer working relationships with the Institute for Business & Home Safety and supported that organization's Showcase

“It’s not our idea to build the perfect hurricane-proof structure. It is instead to show what we were doing wrong and what improvements we can make’, Cahoon said.”

Houses That Stand Up to Hurricanes, The Washington Post: Washington Home Magazine, October 12, 1995

and Fortified Home programs. Aspects of Blue Sky live on in the now robust Fortified Home Program.

Blue Sky was also a model for regulators, manufacturers, and the construction industry working together, as detailed in “Collaboration: Using Networks and Partnerships”, by John Kamensky and Thomas Burlin. They wrote “The Blue Sky Foundation has an important role in bridging the gap between FEMA, IBHS, and other organizations that promote safe construction, and the building industry, which tends to be very wary of attempts to regulate building practices.”

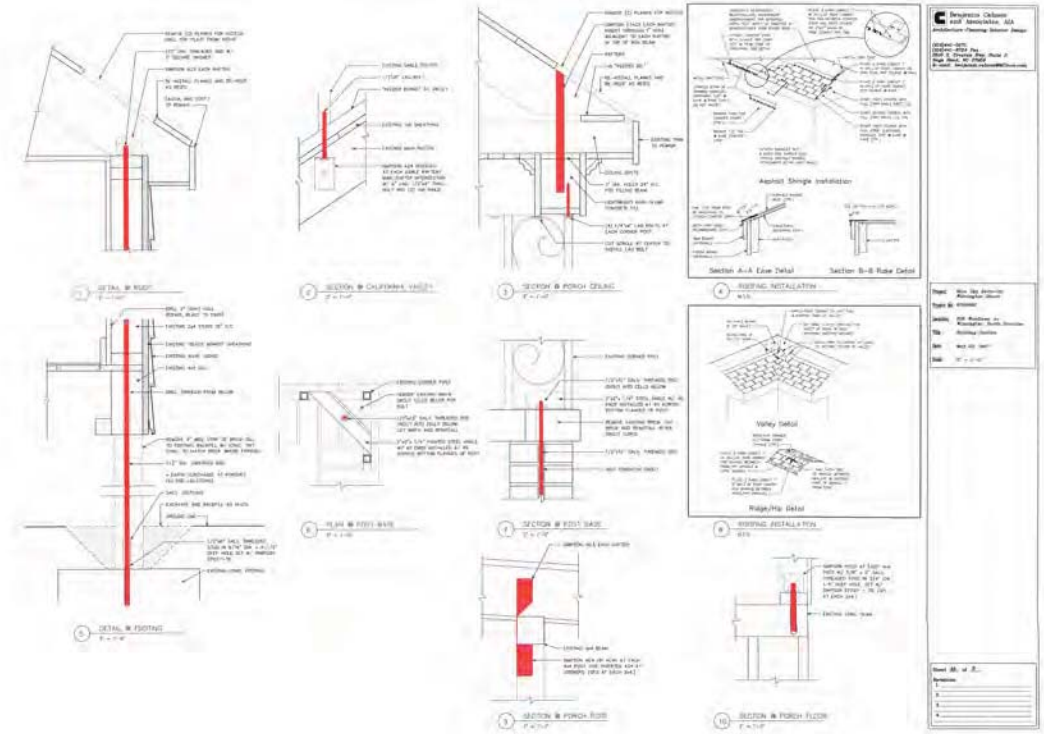
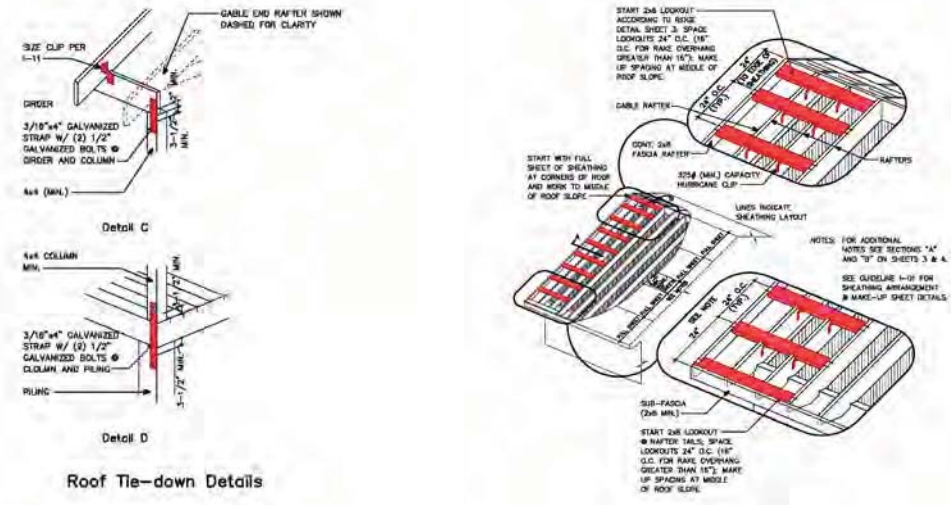


The Blue Sky Model Building and Training Center (bottom center) mimicked surrounding residential and commercial buildings while incorporating numerous innovative construction features.

Exhibit 3.6

“I do think that the project paved the way for substantial changes in the way we build and think about coastal communities.”

Scott D. Schiff, Ph.D., Wallis - Lage Family - Carl and Mary Ice Cornerstone Teaching Scholar, Carl R. Ice College of Engineering, Kansas State University



I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included:

The design work and other activities described.

*Skip Saunders
Blue Sky Builder*

Addressing Sea Level Rise Through Municipal Resiliency Planning

3.7

CHALLENGE

Many disaster and mitigation studies are not well integrated with other community policy and regulatory documents, including comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. A community's success requires that resilience is a common goal for all of its planning, which requires adding specific performance goals for buildings, infrastructure systems,

“They’re really on the leading edge of thinking about how to prepare for the future,” said Megan Mullin, who studies public policy and environmental issues at Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment. “More communities are taking (climate change) more seriously than we give them credit for. In Nags Head it really is happening.”

Climate Change in a Coastal County: Think Global, Act Hyperlocal Stateline, July 26, 2019

“The proof of a plan is in its implementation, and when Ben was elected Mayor of Nags Head, I had no doubt of his continued support of sustainable and resilient practices both as an elected official and, critically, in encouraging and enabling Town staff. There are so many sustainability and resilience plans that sit on shelves forgotten, yet as a champion of sustainability in the Unified Development Ordinance, Ben is helping to ensure that Nags Head counts as a success story.”

Dr. Jessica Whitehead, Chief Resilience Officer, N.C. Office of Recovery and Resiliency

and protective natural features. Setting these goals for all of a community’s essential natural and built assets requires detailed input from and development by a broad cross section of leaders and stakeholders, both public and private.

Good resilience planning also calls for understanding the community’s social, political, and economic systems, and an understanding of how they are supported by the built environment. What are their vulnerabilities? How will damage to buildings and infrastructure systems impact community recovery?

ROLES

Ben’s observations of changing site conditions, like persistently-elevated water tables and the effects

on building foundations and wastewater systems, helped inform Nags Head’s development of its first ever Vulnerability, Consequences, Adaptation and Planning (VCAPS) report. This report initiated the public dialog, laid the groundwork for resiliency planning, and defined a set of “next steps” for refining these actions into strategic plans to address sea level rise.

Ben subsequently served as a member of both the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Technical Codes Steering Committee, guiding staff through a rewrite of the Town of Nags Head Land Use Plan and the consolidation of its zoning code into a new Unified Development Ordinance. Both the Comprehensive Plan and the Ordinance incor-



porate specific policies and regulations to address sea level rise, including building elevation standards exceeding those set by FEMA.

Ben brought valuable expertise to the process and the work of the two committees including specific knowledge of building performance gained from mitigation projects like Blue Sky, post disaster building inspection, and hundreds of completed projects in high-hazard environments. Ben also had expansive infrastructure knowledge gained through professional practice and town committee work. Due in part to the perception of the Town

Board that his expertise was unique, he was the only citizen appointed to both committees.

As mayor, Ben led the way to adoption of both the Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Ordinance. Ben continues to work with stakeholders and lead the Town Board of Commissioners in refining the ordinance to improve its effectiveness.

Ben also invited and participated in research by North Carolina State’s Coastal Dynamics Design Lab. The studio of 25 students unified the disciplines of landscape architecture, architecture, and engineering. Interdisciplinary student teams 1) researched and developed innovative strategies and techniques to address known and anticipated future socio-environmental issues related to sea-level rise and 2) proposed design interventions capable of simultaneously promoting the health, safety, and well-being of both residents and coastal ecosystems. Students consulted with design professionals, planners, policy experts, and community leaders like Mayor Cahoon to inform the design dialogue necessary to frame new directions in coastal design.

OUTCOMES

Nags Head’s implementation of resilience in its Comprehensive Plan is featured in the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, and is referenced in NOAA publications on resilience planning.

The work of the Coastal Dynamics Design lab resulted in alternative strategies and scenarios for addressing sea level rise and in the development and dissemination of policy and economic pathways that

are innovative, contextually appropriate, and strategic to operationalizing proposed design strategies.

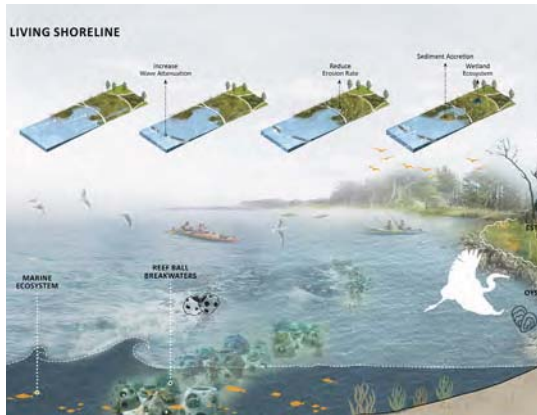
One of the proposed interventions, Sound Design by Xinyi Liu and Xinyu Li, received a 2020 National ASLA Student Award (General Design category). Their proposal for a soundside site included development of a community park and living shoreline. A second proposed intervention by Ryan Cooper received an AIA South Atlantic Region Student Design Award.

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included:

The Committee and Board activities described.

*Andy Garman, Deputy Town Manager
Town of Nags Head, N.C.*

Exhibit 3.7



Students explored naturalized approaches like living shorelines to planned retreat from ocean-front beach erosion.