

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, March 24, 2026 - 9:00 AM

Council Chambers, 1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach, NC



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barbee called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

PRESENT

Mayor Lynn Barbee

Mayor Pro Tem Deb LeCompte

Council Member Jay Healy

Council Member Wayne Rouse

Council Member Vince Losito

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Deputy Town Manager Ed Parvin

Finance Director Debbie Hall

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Sidewalk Options for South Lake Park Boulevard

Mr. Parvin presented an update on the sidewalk project for South Lake Park Boulevard, explaining that the Town had been working toward installing sidewalks from Alabama Avenue all the way down to Lake Park. He noted that while they had secured some N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) funding and were exploring grant opportunities, the project costs had increased significantly since their last discussion.

Mr. Parvin showed cost estimates for a sidewalk from Lake Park to Carolina Sands that had grown from an initial \$640,000 in 2023 to \$1,418,800 by 2026. He explained that the Town had already contributed \$666,880 to DOT for this project based on earlier estimates, but when costs escalated, staff needed to reassess the approach and find out from DOT how far the project can go with the current funds.

Mr. Parvin said one option would be to use existing funds to construct a sidewalk from Lake Park to Sumter Avenue, covering approximately two blocks for \$762,295. Mr. Parvin noted that DOT numbers showed some discrepancies that staff was working to clarify, as the available funding appeared to be \$788,237, according to recent communications.

Council Members debated whether to proceed with the limited section to Sumter Avenue or wait for potential grant funding for the entire project.

Mayor Barbee said the Town has twice, without success, applied for a Surface Transportation Block Grant from the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO), noting competition from larger entities such as the County.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte expressed frustration with the dramatic cost increase from \$850,000 to \$1,400,000 in less than six months. Mr. Oakley explained that engineering challenges with stormwater infrastructure had significantly increased costs.

Mayor Barbee said he would rather take this project in pieces and make some progress.

Council Member Healy questioned why the project required re-engineering multiple times, expressing concern about escalating costs.

Mayor Barbee asked if engineering is done. Mr. Parvin said nothing has been engineered from Carolina Sands to Alabama Avenue, so all of that would still have to be done.

Council Member Healy asked about the status of the grant application. Mr. Parvin said it has not yet been announced when the Town can apply. He said this should happen in the spring with a fall deadline.

Council Member Losito raised concerns that proceeding with only the section to Sumter Avenue would not address the critical Spartanburg Avenue area, which experiences heavy pedestrian traffic. Mayor Barbee agreed that getting to Spartanburg Avenue would be beneficial, as it would solve more problems and create a more complete project, although he added that if Sumter Avenue is the best they can do, they'll take it.

Mr. Parvin said staff can come back with numbers to get to Spartanburg Avenue and make sure the math adds up with DOT, and then Council can make a motion regarding how to move forward.

Council Member Rouse pointed out that the Town's contribution had nearly tripled between 2023 and 2026 estimates, emphasizing that delaying the project was only resulting in watching their contributed money lose value.

2. Spartanburg Avenue Crosswalk Options

Community Development Director Jeremy Hardison presented the crosswalk project for Spartanburg Avenue, noting that staff was seeking direction on timing. The project was already designed and budgeted, with equipment available, though a new pedestrian head would need to be ordered, requiring approximately 10 weeks.

Public Works Director Brian Stanberry confirmed that while they still had equipment from the Hamlet Avenue project, it was about 10 years old and might need replacement. He indicated they would likely need a new pedestrian head regardless.

Mr. Hardison explained that the original plan was to coordinate the crosswalk installation with the sidewalk project, but given the uncertainty around sidewalk timing, staff was asking whether to proceed with the crosswalk independently.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte emphasized this had been a priority for over 10 years.

Mr. Oakley said he thinks the second half of paving Lake Park Boulevard to Carolina Sands is coming up later this year. Mayor Barbee said that is also his recollection. He expressed a preference to move forward with the crosswalk because of the heavy pedestrian traffic in that area.

Council Member Rouse asked if time would cause price fluctuations, as with the previously discussed sidewalk project. Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte pointed out that this is an in-house project, and Mr. Hardison said it is already in the budget. Mr. Stanberry said the costs should not go up much over time.

Council gave consensus to proceed with the crosswalk project without further delay and directed staff to move forward with final DOT approvals and installation.

3. Saint Joseph Street Multi-use Path

Mr. Hardison provided an update on the St. Joseph Street multi-use path project. He traced the project's history, explaining that it began with a recommendation from the Bike/Ped Committee and was voted as a high priority by Council. After public input and committee review, a multi-use path was selected from three original alternatives.

The preliminary design connected the path to the public boat ramp and nearby areas, with a crosswalk initially planned between The Vault and Saint Joseph Business Center. However, after receiving feedback suggesting Winner Avenue might be a better crossing location, engineers evaluated that option but found utility conflicts that would eliminate parking and create complications.

The current design places the crosswalk north of the original location to avoid the brick wall at Saint Joseph Place while meeting DOT setback requirements for vehicles coming off Lake Park Boulevard. Mr. Hardison explained that without traffic-control devices, this was the southernmost location that met safety standards.

Discussion included references to previous proposals for traffic improvements at that intersection, including a chicane and right-in/right-out configuration that DOT had recommended but were not part of the current project. Mr. Oakley noted that Police Chief Vic Ward was working with DOT contacts to potentially revisit those improvements.

Council Member Rouse expressed concerns about the crosswalk location, drawing from his nine years of living at that corner. He worried about the proximity to heavy traffic coming off Lake Park Boulevard and the concentration of parking lots in the area, suggesting Winner Avenue would be safer despite higher costs.

Council Member Healy pushed back on reopening design discussions, noting the project had been in development for four to five years and emphasizing the need to complete it rather than spend another two years on revisions.

Mayor Barbee acknowledged both perspectives and said doing nothing is not acceptable. Mr. Hardison said the current plan is close to going to bid. Council Member Rouse said he didn't think anything was going to change but rather just wanted to share his opinion during open discussion. Mayor Barbee said if they are going to stick with the current plan, they must make a commitment to figure out how to get traffic-calming measures off Lake Park Boulevard to slow down motorists.

Mr. Hardison reported that most construction easements had been obtained, with only two remaining – one property owner was out of the country, and another involved stormwater infrastructure that the Town recognized needed replacement. The project is scheduled to go to bid this summer, with construction beginning in the fall. The total project cost was confirmed at \$1.8 million.

4. Cape Fear Boulevard/Canal Drive/Harper Avenue Traffic Pattern

Mr. Parvin updated Council on the temporary traffic pattern that had been implemented, with a reminder that Council had directed removal of the temporary design after Easter weekend. He noted that feedback had been limited, though some positive comments had been received.

Mr. Parvin mentioned the upcoming air show weekend when the street would be closed anyway, asking if Council wanted to extend the trial through that weekend or proceed with removal after Easter as planned. He confirmed that the current direction was to remove the temporary pattern after Easter and return to two-way traffic until a final traffic engineering design could be completed for potential implementation in the fall.

Mayor Barbee expressed continued support for removing the temporary pattern for summer, citing aesthetic concerns about it looking like a construction zone during the busy season. He said after that, Council can look at the design and make a decision.

Council Member Healy agreed that the temporary barriers do not look good.

Mr. Parvin said they will stick with the plan to remove the temporary pattern after Easter weekend.

Mr. Oakley noted positive feedback about the one-way pattern from business owners and law enforcement, who found it safer.

Mayor Barbee indicated that law enforcement's preference for the one-way pattern would weigh heavily in future decisions, acknowledging that officers' daily experience with traffic issues in the area.

5. Canal Drive/Winner Avenue Intersection Configuration

Mr. Oakley presented the intersection improvement that Council had requested at the retreat and said the plan is to put it in the budget for this year.

Mayor Barbee explained that the current configuration created a “jousting competition” between cars, with the straight southbound lane directly facing the northbound turn lane.

Mr. Oakley said the proposed solution would eliminate the dedicated left-turn lane for northbound traffic on Canal Drive, instead creating a combined straight/left-turn lane. He confirmed that traffic engineering analysis indicated this change would not create backup issues.

Mayor Barbee said this would better align traffic flows and eliminate the current conflict where lanes face each other directly.

Council gave consensus to proceed.

6. DOT Striping and Improvements

Mr. Oakley provided an update on the Lake Park Boulevard striping project, expressing frustration with delays but reporting that the contractor and DOT had committed to starting work the following week. He noted the work should move quickly and that wheel stops required for the parking plan had been ordered and would be installed once striping was complete.

Mr. Oakley also confirmed that Harper Avenue striping would be corrected as part of this work.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte noted that the traffic light at Winner Avenue is finally flashing. She asked whether crosswalk striping would include full markings or just basic lines across the street. Mr. Oakley said he thinks it’s just two lines across, and he’s not sure why it was done that way.

Mr. Oakley added that the Town is planning to do a ribbon cutting on the Boardwalk bathrooms sometime in mid-April.

Mayor Barbee asked if the new Lake Park bathrooms are open. Mr. Hardison said they are awaiting flood doors and engineer certification before the final inspection. Mr. Oakley confirmed that the doors on the front are not being painted and were ordered that way to match the playground and other elements in the area.

Mayor Barbee asked if the old Lake Park bathroom facility will be demolished in the summer or fall. Mr. Oakley said the Town is going to wait on doing that and widening the bridge, with plans to put those items in next year’s budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 10:00 AM.