

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
August 12, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Mayor William Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf, Commissioner Tamara Pieratti, and Commissioner Joseph Brown.

Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm and Mayor Justice led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Richard Galati introduced himself as one of the citizens interested in the vacant planning board seat. He shared details on his family's history in Swansboro and expressed his commitment to continuing his family's legacy of service and mentioned his past role on the Swansboro Historic District Preservation Commission.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, the agenda and consent items below were unanimously approved.

- June 10, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
- June 10, 2025, Closed Session Minutes
- June 24, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
- June 24, 2025, Closed Session Minutes
- Resolution 2025-R9 ETJ Appointment to Planning Board

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Board Appointments

Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed that there was a vacancy on the Planning Board for one in-town seat due to the resignation of Jerry Seddon on July 23, 2025. There were nine in-town applications on file for citizens interested in serving.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, Frank Jones was appointed to the vacant planning board seat with unanimous approval.

Fire Department – Mid-Year Performance Report

Fire Chief Jacob Randall reviewed the Swansboro Fire Department's Mid-Year Performance Report, highlighting the department's improvement in incident response times as a part of the community risk assessment program. He shared that they had succeeded in reducing the alarm handling time by 48 seconds and the turnout time by 1 minute and 17 seconds, ultimately decreasing the overall response time to 8.5 minutes. Despite improvements, challenges persist when relying on volunteer agencies, which

results in a delay of 2 minutes and 49 seconds. Ongoing efforts focus on enhancing alarm handling, developing a performance data dashboard, and integrating social media. Chief Randall emphasized the need for emergency preparedness, especially with hurricane season approaching.

In response to an inquiry from the board about the department's communication with Onslow County EMS, Chief Randall confirmed that they were working on building relationships and developing a strategic plan for the entire county to ensure all departments were working together effectively.

Business Non-Consent

Request from the ONWASA Board of Directors to amend its Articles of Incorporation
Town Manager Jon Barlow reviewed a request from the ONWASA Board of Directors to amend their Articles of Incorporation. Currently, each governmental member must appoint an elected official as a board representative. The proposed change would allow non-elected individuals to be appointed, offering more choices, especially for those with water and sewer expertise, however, the ability to appoint an elected official remained. If all agencies agree, ONWASA will review this amendment on November 20, 2025.

In response to an inquiry from the board, Manager Barlow shared that it was not specified if the individual appointed had to be a town resident.

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, Resolution 2025-R10 Amendment to the ONWASA Articles of Incorporation was unanimously approved.

Future Agenda Topics

Future agenda items were shared for visibility and comments. In addition, an opportunity was provided for the board to introduce items of interest and subsequent direction for placement on future agendas. The following items were addressed:

In response to an inquiry from the board, Fire Chief Randall reviewed that he had not heard any news related to the DOD Grant selections.

Town Manager Barlow provided additional information about the upcoming Flybridge item, explaining the time constraints and procedural requirements for considering zoning amendments. He noted that the earliest the board could consider the Flybridge matter would be September 23rd, due to public notification requirements. Manager Barlow also mentioned that there would be a "blackout period" for considering conditional rezoning between November 4, 2025, and December 9, 2025, due to the municipal election.

Additionally, Manager Barlow informed the board that the Main Street Extension closure for necessary sewer maintenance was moving along and as expected would conclude on Friday August 15th.

Public Comment

Mayor Justice addressed the public sharing that this comment period allows comments for no longer than 5 minutes related to items not on the agenda, additionally he directed that applause or clapping after every speaker was not conducive and should be withheld until the end of the meeting.

Matthew Prane of 309 Baffle Court in Swansboro provided the board with a map that he created which highlighted areas the board should consider for annexation near Swansboro, estimating a \$2 million annual tax revenue loss from unincorporated zones. He recommended considering annexation to boost revenue instead of depending only on new projects like Flybridge.

Ashley Gardner of 101 Longwood Drive in Stella voiced concerns about the Flybridge development, stressing the need to preserve Swansboro's character. She urged the board to consider infrastructure strains from rapid growth and shared personal experiences with overcrowded schools and healthcare as community challenges.

Constance Crocker of 111 Jones Road in Hubert shared that around 800 new housing units were planned in Hubert, Queens Creek, and Bear Creek. She mentioned two sizable land parcels that could be developed, raising concerns about traffic and infrastructure.

Terry Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road in Swansboro addressed two points: First, she corrected an error she had made in a previous meeting regarding the traffic analysis for Flybridge. Second, she criticized claims made on the Carolina Commercial Contractor site about Flybridge filling a housing gap, pointing out that there are many other communities in the area where people could live.

Todd Gardner of 304 Limbaugh Lane in Swansboro shared personal observations about the impacts of growth on the community, including overcrowding in schools, long bus rides for students, and difficulties accessing healthcare services. He urged the board to consider these issues when making decisions about future development.

Laurent Meilleur of 220 River Reach Drive in Swansboro addressed the board, explaining that he had conducted calculations regarding the potential financial impact of the Flybridge development. He shared that the town's budget was approximately \$7 million, which translates to roughly \$1,300-\$1,400 per person based on a population of 4,000. He highlighted that the tax revenue from Flybridge, projected to be around \$200,000, when

divided among an estimated 500 new residents, would fall short in covering the per-person cost necessary for town services. Meilleur suggested that this would not align with the current per-capita spending, raising concerns that the development might impose additional financial burdens on the town rather than providing the anticipated benefits.

Kathleen Lazo of 108 Oyster Bay Road in Swansboro commented to remind everyone that Peytons Ridge subdivision was also not completed with an estimated 50 houses still to be built.

Joyce Johnson 195 Peninsula Manor Road in Hubert inquired if the fire department's ladder truck request was linked to the Flybridge development and whether the town should perform its own traffic studies rather than relying on those from developers.

David Johnson also of 195 Peninsula Manor Road in Hubert, mentioned the possibility of implementing a moratorium on development, citing North Carolina General Statute 160D-107 and providing an example of the town of Cornelius using a moratorium due to concerns about school systems and traffic.

Board Comments

Commissioner Turner thanked the staff for their work and the citizens for attending and sharing their thoughts. She encouraged continued participation from the public.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway echoed appreciation for the staff and citizens. He encouraged ongoing public participation in meetings, regardless of the topics being discussed, to help citizens better understand the processes and procedures involved in town governance.

Commissioner Eckendorf thanked everyone for attending and expressed appreciation for public comments, even when critical. He encouraged citizens to educate themselves on various aspects of local government, including school board strategic plans and county responsibilities.

Commissioner Brown thanked the staff and citizens for their participation. He encouraged people to read the land use plan and stay informed about town issues. He also mentioned that he reads Facebook posts about town matters, noting that some are concerning while others are humorous.

Mayor Justice expressed gratitude to the staff for their work within tight budget constraints. He thanked the public for attending and sharing diverse perspectives, emphasizing the value of community input in reaching satisfactory resolutions. The mayor encouraged citizens to reach out to board members with any concerns or questions.

Closed Session

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner and with unanimous approval, the board entered closed session at 7:10 pm pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3) To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged; and (5) to establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; and (6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.

Pursuant to a motion duly made and seconded in closed session the board returned to open session with nothing to report.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Pieratti, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.