

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
August 26, 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

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board regarding items listed on the agenda. No comments were made.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, the agenda as amended to add an additional closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6) and the consent items below were unanimously approved.

- Tax Refund Request totaling \$362.91
- Budget Ordinance Amendment #2026-1

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Downtown Beautification Committee Proposal

Cynthia LaCorte of 220 South Elm Street presented a proposal for a Swansboro Beautification Committee. She thanked the Mayor, Commissioners, and town staff for the opportunity to present their proposal. Ms. LaCorte mentioned that Mayor Justice had attended their unofficial meetings and provided valuable input.

Other members of the proposed committee introduced themselves.

- Doug Rogers (406 Elm Street) explained that the committee would serve as an advisory body to enhance the appearance of the historic downtown district and surrounding areas. They would rely on grants, town budget funds, sponsorships, and public-private partnerships.
- Karen Miller (401 South Fifth Street) discussed the committee's mission to aesthetically enhance downtown Swansboro, emphasizing charm, history, and coastal elements. She mentioned that improving downtown's appearance could increase tourism and economic development.

- Melissa Seddon (210 South Walnut) shared her perspective on how beautifying surroundings impacts residents' and visitors' feelings about the town.

Ms. LaCorte noted that Kenna Phillips, another member not present, had experience with similar projects in larger towns.

The group presented their overview and mission statement, which focused on enhancing the appearance of historic downtown Swansboro and surrounding areas through various funding sources and partnerships. They also mentioned that they had drafted bylaws, which were included in the proposal packet.

Commissioner Eckendorf suggested that a public-private partnership might be more beneficial than an official town committee, as it would allow more freedom in selecting board members and adjusting their mission. Town Attorney Francis Rasberry clarified that as an advisory board to the Board of Commissioners, the proposed committee would be subject to public records law and open meetings law.

After further discussion, the Board decided to have town staff research the legal and structural considerations for such a committee or partnership. Town Manager Jon Barlow stated that they would bring back options to the Board at a future meeting.

Business Non-Consent

Monthly Financial Report as of July 31, 2025

Finance Director Sonia Johnson presented the July 2025 financial report. She highlighted the following points:

- The General Fund showed a deficit of \$448,694 in revenues over expenditures, which was normal for this time of year as the bulk of ad valorem tax revenues were not collected until November-December.
- Total expenditures were at 9.33% of budget, slightly higher than the monthly projection of 8.33% due to annual payments for property and liability insurance, workers' comp, and some dues and subscriptions.
- The Stormwater Enterprise Fund had a deficit of \$7,245 in revenues over expenditures.
- The Solid Waste Enterprise Fund had a deficit of \$1,846 in revenues over expenditures.

Director Johnson also provided updates on the town's debt and current cash and investment account balances.

Mayor Justice noted that next year, about \$160,000 in debt would be paid off, which would be beneficial for the town.

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 inquiries from the Board, Mrs. Fender advised that there were still pending items for the developer to finalize in order to complete the process for Street acceptance of Swansgate.
- The beautification committee proposal would be added to the October 28th agenda if not addressed earlier.

Public Comment

Ralph Kohlmann of 60 Picket Court in Swansboro expressed his concerns about the proposed Flybridge development, highlighting that Swansboro residents generally support the existing land use plan. He urged the Board to respect community consensus and avoid immediate plan changes, emphasizing that Flybridge LLC's property acquisition was knowingly contrary to their business plan and should not create division between the Board and the town.

Becky Mulholland of 122 Bonita Lane in Swansboro shared her recent experience at an upscale apartment complex in Charlotte. She remarked on the luxury amenities such as pools and fitness centers and noted the regular flow of delivery and moving vehicles, typical of an urban environment. Ms. Mulholland expressed concerns about how a similar development might negatively impact Swansboro.

Elaine Sioufi of 717 Phillips Drive in Swansboro, addressed the Board, urging them to consider citizen concerns about the Flybridge development and to prioritize the town's best interests. Drawing on her teaching experience, she recalled how a student's inaccurate report on Moby Dick revealed the danger of officials ignoring informed public opinions. Ms. Cuvee emphasized the community's intelligence and shared goal of preserving the town's integrity. She reminded the Board of their accountability to constituents, noting that their decision on Flybridge would impact their future re-election.

Manager's Comments

Town Manager Jon Barlow briefed the Board on the denial of the town's two defense infrastructure grant applications submitted in July for the EOC/fire station/police station construction and sidewalk projects. This marked the second consecutive year without success, as they competed against other area applications for limited funds, with outcomes dependent on submissions and annual priorities. A debrief meeting was planned after October 1st to understand why the application fell short and gather insight

into funded projects, intending to enhance future applications. Mr. Barlow also mentioned changes in the manager's report format, reorganizing initiatives and projects to improve clarity and added a current planning projects section for better tracking.

Board Comments

Commissioner Turner expressed her gratitude for the consistent hard work of the staff and emphasized her appreciation for the citizens who take the time to attend the meetings regularly. She noted the significance of community involvement and how it contributes to the learning and decision-making process of the Board.

Commissioner Eckendorf expressed gratitude to attendees and commended staff for their agenda preparation. He hopes for more comprehensive agendas to address pending and ongoing issues, highlighting the need for thorough discussions to resolve town matters efficiently.

Commissioner Brown talked about what he promised during his election campaign. He was focused on controlling the town's growth and bringing jobs for local kids once they finished school. He wanted to keep taxes low to help people who might struggle financially stay in Swansboro. Despite some disagreements and conflicts in the community, he stressed the importance of everyone working together to uphold Swansboro's values, no matter how they feel about him personally.

Commissioner Tamara Pieratti extended her gratitude to the staff for their updates and work, as well as to members of the public who were actively participating in the meeting.

Mayor Justice restated his dedication to improving the town and encouraging community involvement. He thanked the citizens for their input and recalled the decision not to spend \$50,000 on updating the land use plan due to budget concerns, highlighting that the plan can be changed as needed. He encouraged ongoing community involvement, noting its important role in shaping the town's future through active participation in meetings and discussions.

Closed Session

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, and with unanimous approval the board entered closed session at 7:03 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 was 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.

Mayor Justice reported that the Board had decided not to pursue the Rotary property further and would close out negotiations on that matter. The town will start pursuing another piece of land.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.