

**Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners &
Historic Preservation Commission
Joint Special Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2026**

Call to Order

The joint meeting was called to order at 5:32pm. Historic Preservation Commission members in attendance were Jonathan McDaniel, Kim Kingrey, Christina Ramsey, Elanie Justice, and Brad Phillips.

Board of Commissioners in attendance were Mayor Bill Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Conaway, Commissioner Tamara Pieratti, Commissioner Doug Eckendorf, Commissioner Wayne Herbert, and Commissioner Tim Vannoy.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Phillips seconded by Mrs. Kingrey the January 20, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

Business

Election of Chair, and Vice-Chair

In accordance with the Historic Preservation Commission General Rules, a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman shall be elected from within the membership by the members.

On a motion by Mrs. Ramsey, seconded by Mrs. Kingrey and approved unanimously, Jonathan McDaniel was reappointed to serve as Chair.

On a motion by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mrs. Justice and approved unanimously, Kim Kingrey was reappointed to serve as Vice-Chair.

State Historic Preservation Office Presentation

Planner Rebecca Brehmer introduced two representatives from the NC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Lauren Poole, Historic Preservation Specialist, and Wade Rogers, the newly appointed Restoration Specialist for the Eastern Office. Planner Brehmer noted that the meeting had been prompted by ongoing questions surrounding the historic district, the addition of new Board of Commissioners members, and a desire to clarify the town's path forward in preservation matters.

Ms. Poole presented an overview of the fundamental differences between the National Register of Historic Places and Swansboro's local historic district. She explained that the National Register, administered federally by the National Park Service with SHPO serving as the facilitating bridge, was an honorary designation that imposed no restrictions on private property owners using private funds. The local historic district, by contrast, was established by local ordinance and administered by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), and it was that local designation that provided meaningful, enforceable protections through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process.

Ms. Poole noted that federal oversight of National Register properties was only triggered in specific circumstances when a federal undertaking occurred (such as a DOT road project),

when a property owner opted into the federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit program, or when a nonprofit or municipality received a federal or state grant.

The presentation continued with an explanation of National Register criteria. Ms. Poole detailed the four main criteria used for assessment:

- Criterion A: History or its history
- Criterion B: Association with important persons
- Criterion C: Architecture and engineering
- Criterion D: Archaeology

She noted that Swansboro's district was listed under both *Criterion A* for its association with industry and commerce as an early port town and *Criterion C* because the buildings help tell the story of that time period.

She clarified the distinction between contributing and non-contributing resources within the district. Contributing buildings were those constructed within the period of significance—1770 to 1938 for Swansboro—that retained sufficient historic character. Non-contributing buildings were those built outside the period of significance or those substantially altered such that their historic character was no longer legible. Ms. Poole noted that at the time of the district's 1990 listing, there were 123 resources, with 77 contributing and 46 non-contributing, and that these figures had likely changed.

Ms. Poole outlined three levels of changes regarding updating the National Register Nomination:

- Technical changes - the simplest, including correcting errors, changing construction dates, or updating building status.
- Substantive amendments - requiring more work, such as resurveying the district or extending the period of significance.
- Boundary increases or decreases.

Ms. Poole clarified that removal from the National Register was not a simple administrative act but required a formal petition to the Keeper of the National Register, and that SHPO's office did not proactively seek to remove districts. She noted she could not recall SHPO ever facilitating the removal of a district except in cases of demolition or destruction. She recommended that, before pursuing a full resurvey and period-of-significance extension, that she first conduct a site visit to walk the district block by block, building by building, and offer her professional assessment of the district's integrity before any decision was made.

Ms. Poole outlined available tax credit programs, noting that income-producing properties could qualify for a 15% state credit and a 20% federal credit, with an additional 5% bonus available in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, for a potential total of 40%. A 15% tax credit was also available for non-income-producing residential properties. Mr. Rogers noted that proactive education of contractors on these programs and proper preservation techniques had proven effective in other communities.

Enforcement discussion:

Board members discussed challenges in achieving compliance and the importance of proactive education and outreach. Mr. McDaniel emphasized that the HPC's role was guidance rather than punishment and noted that widespread lack of awareness among contractors regarding COA requirements.

Ms. Poole and Mr. Rogers offered to return for a public information session at no cost. Suggestions discussed included targeting realtors, contractors, insurance agents, and mortgage lenders as key points of contact in the property transaction process; distributing welcome packets to new homeowners; using social media; and hosting workshops that could be funded through CLG grants. Ms. Poole noted that CLG-funded workshops were open to surrounding communities and also serve as training opportunities for Historic preservation Commission members to maintain CLG status. Mr. Rogers specifically recommended focusing hands-on preservation workshops on contractors, noting that they were often responsible for decisions regarding historic materials on behalf of property owners.

In response to inquiries from the board, Ms. Pool and Mr. Rogers clarified the following:

- There was no specific required percentage for contributing versus non-contributing resources; however, the general guideline was to have more contributing than non-contributing resources, with determinations ultimately depending on the specific circumstances of each district.
- The architectural survey completed in 2021 using a CLG grant had been conducted for local records purposes and had not been submitted to the National Park Service as an amendment to the National Register nomination. It remained as local survey housed in SHPO's archives and the Town's records and did not constitute an official update to the 1990 nomination.
- The survey had not been submitted due to concerns regarding integrity. It was noted that if such an update were submitted to the National Park Service, the district could be reevaluated and potentially found to lack sufficient integrity, which could initiate consideration of removal from the National Register.
- The 2021 survey report included recommendations for potential boundary increase areas worth exploring.
- Enforcement was a local responsibility, with SHPO having no authority to compel compliance, and directed staff to Christie Brantley for guidance on available mechanisms.
- The most common enforcement tools available to towns were liens and fines, with an emphasis on setting fines at levels sufficient to be meaningful rather than nominal and easily ignored. Consultation with the Town Attorney was recommended.
- SHPO staff could review the town's existing ordinances for gaps or improvements. Christie Brantley would be the appropriate SHPO contact for that question, and that she would follow up with Ms. Brantley regarding additional resources for enforcement and ordinance review.
- Archaeological finds on outlying properties or within the historic district, such as pottery shards from the colonial and Civil War periods, fell under the jurisdiction of

the Office of State Archaeology. SHPO's role was limited to above-ground resources, while archaeological matters were handled by that office.

In response to inquiries from the board, Planner Brehmer clarified the following:

- Enforcement begins with notice of violation under the UDO, with escalation through building code provisions where applicable, including stop-work authority in health and safety cases.
- Unresolved matters would require consultation with the Town Attorney and that compliance was primarily achieved through fines and administrative enforcement tools.
- New home buyers were not required to meet with the Town Planner.
- If work was being conducted without a permit, the Town would inspect the property, provide education to the homeowner, and inform them that they were in violation.
- The Town provides welcome packets for new homeowners.

Board /Staff Comments

Commissioner Vannoy raised concerns about weekend alterations changes made overnight without COA approval and questioned the commission's ability to respond. He suggested that outreach to new homeowners, including personal visits from Historic Preservation Commission or Commissioners, could help bridge the gap.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway expressed concern regarding low participation and limited attendance at meetings and stated a desire to have Ms. Poole and Mr. Rogers return to conduct an all-day workshop to increase engagement.

The Board of Commissioners and the Historical Preservation Commission expressed gratitude to Ms. Poole and Mr. Rogers for their presentation.

Public Comments

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board. No comments were made

Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Kingry, seconded by Mrs. Justice, the HPC meeting adjourned at 7:53pm.

On a motion by Commissioner Vannoy, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conway, the Board of Commissioner meeting adjourned at 7:53pm.