

Town of Swansboro
Appearance Commission
August 20, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Cynthia LaCorte, Doug Rogers, Larry Philpott, and Nancy Palbicke. Claire Cole, Kim Kingrey, and Linda Thornley were absent.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Vice-Chair Rogers, seconded by Mr. Philpott the July 16, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

Business

Discussion of Areas of Focus for Appearance Project Program Schedule

The Commission reviewed potential areas of focus for the Appearance Project Program Schedule to begin developing a project proposal. Ideas discussed included cleanup and light maintenance, gateway and Highway 24 bridge improvements, downtown, the cemetery, parks, trails, pocket parks, swan placement, street lighting, consistent design elements, and community partnerships. Staff recommended prioritizing projects on public property and street rights-of-way, separating public and private projects, considering private-property projects on a case-by-case basis, and excluding residential properties.

No formal action was taken. Chair LaCorte and Vice-Chair Rogers were tasked with taking the ideas discussed and work to prepare a proposal identifying project locations, scope, priorities, and a proposed schedule for consideration at the next meeting.

The final proposal would be presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval before implementation.

Property Appearance Recognition Program

The Commission reviewed and discussed the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program. The draft included separate commercial and residential recognition categories, with commercial awards presented quarterly and the residential award schedule to be determined. Members discussed accepting nominations from the public, businesses, and Commission members; having a committee review nominations and recommend recipients; providing recipients with Town-branded signage, certificates, and recognition at a Board of Commissioners meeting; and seeking promotional or award support from the Chamber of Commerce, the local real estate association, and area businesses. Staff confirmed that separate residential and commercial categories were permitted and advised that the Town could assist with certificates, signage, and online nomination notices. The Commission agreed that public voting would be impractical.

No formal action was taken. Chair LaCorte and Mrs. Kingrey were tasked with using the details discussed to prepare a proposal for consideration at the next meeting and subsequent presentation to the Board of Commissioners for approval before implementation.

Appearance Commission Strategic Plan Board Collaboration/Workshop

The Commission continued discussion on developing an Appearance Commission Strategic Plan to provide a framework for supporting implementation of adopted Town plans. Members agreed the plan should focus on realistic and achievable appearance-related projects within the Commission's scope and available resources, rather than large-scale infrastructure improvements. Discussion included identifying incomplete or previously proposed initiatives from existing Town planning documents and organizing them into a phased approach. Potential focus areas included gateways into Town, wayfinding, signage, design standards, lighting, streetscape elements, downtown Swansboro, parks, pocket parks, and other Town-owned public spaces. Members also discussed the value of establishing a consistent visual identity for the community through coordinated design elements. The Commission agreed to review strategic plan examples from other communities to help develop a format and framework that could be adapted to establish priorities and implementation objectives for Swansboro.

Chair LaCorte stated that the workshop should focus on a realistic overall plan to avoid disconnected improvements, and that the Commission can enhance existing features but cannot rebuild Town infrastructure. Commission Member Philpott recommended drawing achievable, phased components from existing plans, including the land use plan, economic development strategic plan, waterfront plan, and Renaissance plan. Suggested items were wayfinding, a design palette, gateway signs, trash cans, street signs, and lighting standards.

Vice-Chair Rogers and Mr. Philpott agreed to gather example strategic plans from other eastern North Carolina appearance commissions for the next meeting, so the Commission can choose a template and add its own priorities. Areas of focus will include the gateways and bridge, downtown, and Town parks and public property.

Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments

Mr. Philpott recommended that the Commission pursue renewing a Tree City designation and suggested looking into designating the live oak as the Town tree due to its historic connection to Swansboro's boatbuilding heritage. Staff reported that the Town has existing tree regulations, including permit requirements, historic district standards for tree removal and pruning, and an approved replacement tree list associated with land disturbance activities. Staff further reported that no official Town tree had been designated and could provide details on the towns tree ordinance and tree city

designation at the next meeting. Chair LaCorte directed that the item be placed on a future agenda.

Vice-Chair Rogers emphasized the importance of meeting deadlines and preparing recommendations for presentations to the Board of Commissioners within the coming months. He reported discussions with the Swansboro TDA regarding potential collaboration opportunities and noted that the owner of the Saltwater property had expressed openness to potential project ideas. Rogers requested that staff evaluate what type of agreement might be required for future consideration. Discussion included potential regulatory and site considerations, including CAMA requirements, stormwater impacts, and pervious and impervious surface concerns.

Chair LaCorte thanked members for their participation and encouraged them to come prepared for future discussions. She reiterated that any projects or recommendations developed by the Commission would be subject to review and approval by the Board of Commissioners. Staff reported no additional comments.

Public Comments

No comments were offered.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Philpott, seconded by Mr. Rogers, the meeting adjourned at 9:58 am.