

Town of Swansboro
Historic Preservation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2025

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm. Board members in attendance were Jonathan McDaniel, Kim Kingrey, Christina Ramsey, Brad Phillips and Elaine Justice. Alternate member Jerry Seddon was not present. An alternate seat was vacant.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mrs. Ramsy seconded by Mrs. Kingrey the August 19, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes were approved unanimously.

Business

Staff Review of Historic District Violations

Planner Rebecca Brehmer and Building Inspector Paul Ingram presented information on ongoing historic district violations, focusing primarily on a demolition by neglect case at 211 Elm Street.

Planner Brehmer detailed the process followed under DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT §152.485 of any historic building, which includes property evaluations, establishing standards for determining a demolition by neglect case, sending notices, and working with the property owner. She noted that, although the homeowner had indicated an intention to complete the required work, various issues had delayed immediate action. Planner Brehmer explained that they had exhausted the resources outlined in the ordinance, and the next step would require involving the town attorney.

Planner Brehmer stated that she had consulted with the Town Attorney, whose recommendation was to review the file to ensure all criteria had been met before proceeding with potential legal action. She clarified that such a decision would not be made by staff or the Historic Preservation Commission but would require approval from the Town Manager or the Board of Commissioners.

Chief Building Inspector Ingram added that an engineer had evaluated the property and determined that foundation repairs were needed to stabilize the structure. The estimated cost was \$6,350, which included installing 11 interior masonry block piers, replacing damaged or poorly installed piers, and repairing and modifying existing exterior brick piers with leveling. Mr. Ingram noted that the contractor had backed out because the cost exceeded what the property owner was willing to pay. He also discussed potential enforcement options under building code authority, including the possibility of condemning the structure, which could lead to demolition, taking ownership, or placing a lien on the property.

Board members expressed frustration about the situation, raising concerns regarding the following:

- The impact on the neighborhood and historic district
- Safety issues with people trespassing in the deteriorating structure
- The potential loss of a historic property

- The precedent being set for other properties

The board had discussed enforcement options, including fines, but Planner Brehmer explained that fines often did not change behavior when property owners had already refused to cooperate. The board had also discussed potential incentives, such as preservation easements, that might encourage restoration. Planner Brehmer had agreed to research this option.

Mr. McDaniel suggested that the Town Attorney develop a “worst-case enforcement procedure” and present this specific case to the Board of Commissioners, as it would involve the use of town funds. Planner Brehmer agreed to discuss this approach with the Town Manager to determine whether they could proceed with having the attorney prepare options for presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Chief Building Inspector Ingram committed to reaching out to the property owner at 211 Elm Street again to determine why he backed away from the repairs and to encourage action.

Minor Work/Staff Approval Application Report September – October

Planner Brehmer reviewed the minor work and staff approval applications for September – October. The following applications were approved:

- 131 Front Street - convert a wet slip finger dock to boat lift.
- 210 Water Street - replace HVAC system in the same location.
- 307 West Church Street – replace 3-ton heat pump package unit.
- 215 Water Street – Install aluminum standing seam roof system
- 214 Walnut Street - tree maintenance and pruning.

Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments

Mr. Phillips inquired about follow-up procedures once Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) had been approved, asking whether a tracking system existed to ensure compliance with the approved plans. Planner Brehmer acknowledged that no formal inspection system had been in place, but that she had worked closely with the building Inspection department to monitor projects. She noted that enforcement had become significantly more difficult when work was completed contrary to the approved plans.

Chief Building Inspector Ingram suggested he and Planner Brehmer could develop a checklist for inspectors to use while on site.

Planner Brehmer reported that the Emmerton School historic preservation work was in its final stages, with storm windows scheduled to be installed within the next two weeks. She invited the Historic Preservation Commission members to tour the building once the work was complete to view the successful preservation efforts, including refurbished windows, brickwork, storm windows, door updates, and ceiling tile restoration.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mrs. Justice, the meeting adjourned at 6:33pm.