

**Town of Swansboro  
Board of Commissioners  
December 10, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes**

In attendance: Mayor Pro Tem William Justice, Commissioner Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Joseph Brown, and Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf. The board had one vacancy.

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**Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Mayor Pro Tem 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 Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the agenda as amended to add closed session 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, 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, along with the below consent items were adopted unanimously.

- Resolution – Supporting Major Capers Medal of Honor
- Resolution for Bank Financing of Vehicles/Equipment

**Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations**

*Samuel Swann Bland Community Service Award*

The Samuel Swann Bland Community Service Award was created to honor the diligence, hard work, leadership, and dedication that characterized the contributions of Sam Bland to the public and the Swansboro Community. The award is made annually to a public employee, civic leader, or community volunteer that has demonstrated the qualities of outstanding dedication to the improvement of community services that were exhibited in the career and contributions of Samuel Swann Bland.

Mayor Pro Tem Justice, along with guest John Davis, announced that the award was given to Bob and Ann Shuller for their lifelong dedication to Swansboro, including creating Bicentennial Park, revitalizing the Swansboro Historic Association, preserving historical structures, and actively serving on various community boards and projects.

Board members along with members of the Historical Association expressed deep appreciation for Bob and Ann Schuller, highlighting their lifelong dedication to Swansboro, their role in preserving local history, and their significant contributions to the Swansboro Historic Association and Heritage Center. They were praised as mentors, community pillars, and inspirations, with many emphasizing that the award was long overdue. Their impact on historical preservation, infrastructure projects, and community service was widely recognized, and their love for Swansboro and its heritage was celebrated with gratitude and admiration.

#### *Recognition - Teacher of the Year*

BobbiJo Ramsey of Sandridge Elementary School, Melinda Whorley of Swansboro Elementary School, Erin Strohschein of Swansboro High School and Kelsey Gurslin of Queens Creek Elementary School were all recognized for being chosen as teacher of the year at their school. John Davis read a proclamation acknowledging their contributions as area school educators.

#### *Presentation to Mayor Pro Tem Bill Justice*

John Davis expressed gratitude to staff, volunteers, and board members for their service and accomplishments, highlighting key community projects and teamwork. Most importantly, he recognized Mayor Pro Tem Bill Justice for taking over leadership, passing him the gavel, key to the city, and microphone as a symbolic transition of responsibility.

#### *Onslow County Update*

Onslow County Assistant Manager Janelle Golloway reviewed a PowerPoint, herein attached with the PowerPoint slides of the meeting, that presented key accomplishments of the County Board of Commissioners, emphasizing improved communication, strategic planning, and forward-thinking initiatives. She outlined the county's updated vision, five strategic focus areas, and results from a community survey highlighting priorities like managing growth, workforce development, and public safety. Notable achievements included EMS system analysis, landfill expansion, DSS office capacity increase, and Emergency Operations Center upgrades. She also introduced the REACH core values program and unveiled the county's refreshed branding to better connect with its younger population.

In response to inquiries from the board, Ms. Golloway affirmed her willingness to help improve communication between the county and municipalities. She acknowledged concerns about limited communication and emphasized her openness to collaboration. She stated that she had been awaiting an invitation to participate more actively in discussions and decision-making processes. Additionally, she noted that the county had already established quarterly meetings with mayors and managers, mentioning that the

next meeting was scheduled for Thursday. She expressed her appreciation for the discussion and looked forward to continued cooperation.

#### *FY 23/24 Audit Report*

Gregory Redman, CPA, presented his audit summary for Swansboro, highlighting the town's strong financial position. He noted that the audit report, covering 92 pages, found no issues, which was rare among the 30 towns his firm audits. The general fund had unrestricted cash of over \$5 million, restricted cash of \$179,000, and an overall revenue surplus of nearly \$800,000. The unassigned fund balance stood at 74% of annual expenditures, exceeding the Local Government Commission's recommended 34%.

The town's enterprise funds, including stormwater and solid waste, were largely self-sustaining. The stormwater fund had a surplus of \$85,000, while the solid waste fund showed a \$6,000 loss, primarily due to depreciation. Long-term liabilities included just over \$900,000 in debt and pension obligations for employees and law enforcement officers.

Redman also emphasized the town's high property tax collection rate of 98.74%, well above the common range of 90-92%. Compliance with grant requirements and regulations was also confirmed, with no issues found. Overall, the audit revealed a well-managed budget, a strong financial outlook, and no recommended changes.

#### *GFOA Award*

Manager Barlow shared that notification had been received that the Town was awarded the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for financial reporting. Appreciation was expressed to Finance Director Sonia Johnson.

#### *Board Appointments*

Town Clerk Fender reviewed that due to expiration of terms or resignations, board appointments were needed for the Planning Board, Tourism Development Authority, and the Parks Board.

Board members voiced their concern about the number of applicants to consider and preferred to see more for consideration.

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, with unanimous approval, Board Appointments were tabled to the next meeting to allow for more applicants to submit for consideration.

### *East Carolina Council Appointment*

Town Clerk Fender reviewed that annually, a Board member was selected to serve as a local jurisdiction representative on the East Carolina Council (ECC) General Membership Board. Town Manager Barlow shared that a staff member could also be selected.

By consensus the board agreed to revisit this appointment at its January meeting and the presentation given to the board by David Bone in February of 2024 would be email out to the board to provide a refresher on the East Carolina Councils roles and benefits.

### **Business Non-Consent**

#### *2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Schedule*

Town Clerk Fender reviewed that NCGS 160A-71 provides that the Board establishes a time and place for its regular meetings. The 2025 meeting schedule had been prepared based on the Town's Administrative Policy 1F which states that the Board of Commissioners meeting dates fall on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month. A meeting schedule for the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month with the exception of October and November due to the dates falling near a Town event or a recognized holiday was provided for consideration. Once adopted, the meeting schedule would be posted on the bulletin board outside the Administrative Offices at Town Hall and on the Town website.

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the proposed 2025 Regular Meeting Schedule for the Board of Commissioners was unanimously approved.

#### *Allocation of Remaining Funds-Grant Project for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Finance Director Johnson reviewed the U.S. Treasury's Final Rule regarding the period of performance for ARP/CSLFRF funds, stating that all monies must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026. It was noted that two previously approved expenditures—drinking fountains and commercial toilets—remained unobligated. Staff assured the Board that these expenditures would be obligated by the December 31, 2024, deadline.

Following these obligations, approximately \$10,000 in funds would remain. Staff requested that the Board of Commissioners authorize the Town Manager to determine the allocation of the remaining funds. The Town Manager recommended the following priorities:

1. Panic Button System (if obligations were feasible by December 31, 2024)
2. Plotter Printer (to serve multiple departments effectively)

3. Other Eligible Expenditures – If neither the panic button system nor the plotter printer could be obligated by the deadline, the Town Manager would allocate the funds to other eligible expenditures that met the obligation requirements by December 31, 2024.

On a motion by Commissioner Tuner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, and with unanimous approval, the Town Manager was authorized to allocate the remaining \$10,000 in funds according to the outlined priorities.

#### *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:

- A budget amendment Public Safety Pay in Classification Salary increases would be on the January 14, 2025, agenda.

#### **Public Comment**

Natalie Sargent, Brian Ashe, and Brandon Rivas, addressed the board regarding their concerns about heavy traffic, lack of planning, and safety issues in busy areas, and the potential impacts from the future proposed Flybridge development on Highway 24. They felt traffic studies weren't done at the right times and suggested changes like limiting certain turns and improving roads before adding new housing. They also worried about the impact on schools, emergency services, and who is responsible for fixing road issues.

Board members agreed that traffic was a problem and shared that major fixes required working with state and county agencies. They have made small improvements, like better sidewalks, but bigger changes need teamwork. They encouraged residents to stay involved and share concerns with the right officials.

#### **Manager's Comments**

Manager Barlow shared that the Swansboro Bicentennial Park Boardwalk Extension with Public Day Docks Project was progressing and there should be no issues with meeting the deadline for completion.

#### **Board Comments**

Board members thanked residents for coming and encouraged them to stay involved in future meetings and decisions because making changes takes everyone working together and urged people to speak up at different levels of government. They also voiced their

appreciation for the town staff, recognizing their hard work in preparing reports and running town operations.

### **Closed Session**

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner, with unanimous approval, the board entered closed session at 7:50 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, 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.

Pursuant to a motion duly made and seconded in closed session the board returned to open session.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.