

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
July 14, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Mayor William Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Wayne Herbert, Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf, and Commissioner Tamara Pieratti. Commissioner Tim Vannoy was absent.

Call to Order

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 given.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the agenda as prepared and the following consent items were unanimously approved.

- April 28, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes
- April 28, 2026, Closed Session Minutes
- Resolution Approving the Plan to Annex Certain Real Property

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

ONWASA Community and Partner Update

Franky Howard, CEO of ONWASA, presented an overview of the agency's water and wastewater operations, capacity, and capital improvements, including the Highway 24 force main connection nearing completion and planned treatment plant expansions. He also reported on that morning's contractor-caused water main break, which affected approximately 1,300 customers, confirming that repairs were complete, the storage tank was refilling, and a precautionary boil water advisory would remain pending satisfactory laboratory results.

In response to Board inquiries, Howard explained:

- Damage recovery: Because the water line was properly located and marked, ONWASA would document repair costs, water loss, and labor and submit a damage claim to the contractor that filed the locate request.
- Future wastewater needs: ONWASA intended to retain the Old Hammocks Road treatment permit for contingency use. The Highway 24 force main could reverse flow if needed, and the Marine Corps Base was required to provide only three years' notice of any capacity reduction. ONWASA was also exploring a regional treatment plant in the Hubert area.

Employee Introduction & Oaths of Office

Police Chief Dwayne Taylor introduced two newly appointed officers, Officer Aaron Thompson and Officer Shane Bruno, who were sworn in by Mayor Justice.

Chief Taylor subsequently introduced Josh Johnson, the department's first volunteer member of the Volunteer Police Services program. Josh assists with administrative functions in the police department and has expressed a desire to engage with the broader community. In his remarks, Josh shared his background, including a lifelong aspiration to serve in uniform despite a diagnosis of high-functioning autism, and expressed sincere gratitude for the opportunity to serve alongside the department. Mayor Justice commended Josh and a fellow officers for going above and beyond after the July 4th celebration by cleaning up a significant amount of debris near a local business at a resident's request. The police cadets participating in the department's cadet program were also recognized.

Arts by the Sea, Taste of the Town Winners

Parks and Recreation Director Anna Stanley announced the winners of the 2026 Taste of the Town competition, held in conjunction with the Arts by the Sea Festival on June 13th. Participating restaurants competed in three categories: best appetizer, best entrée, and best dessert. Stanley noted that the judging was especially competitive this year, with score cards being very close across the board.

The winners were as follows:

- Best Appetizer was awarded to Drizzle for their olive oil and balsamic vinegar salad, marking the establishment's first year of participation in the event.
- Best Entrée was awarded to the Boro Restaurant for their Cajun pasta.
- Best Dessert was awarded to IL Cigno for their chocolate mousse.

Parks and Recreation Month

Mayor Justice read a proclamation designating July as Parks and Recreation Month in the Town of Swansboro, recognizing the role parks and recreation play in promoting public health, youth development, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality.

Parks and Recreation Director Anna Stanley addressed the Board and audience, highlighting the contributions of Parks and Recreation staff, town departments, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, program instructors, entertainers, nonprofit organizations, community partners, and volunteers. She acknowledged several partners and sponsors present in the audience and emphasized that parks and recreation represent a foundational component of a healthy and connected community.

Business Non-Consent

Public Street and Sidewalk Acceptance Request- Swansgate Subdivision

Town Planner Rebecca Brehmer presented a request from Tidewater Associates, Inc., on behalf of A Sydes Construction, for acceptance of all public streets and sidewalks in the Swansgate Subdivision, excluding stormwater infrastructure. She reported that the stormwater permit had been transferred to the homeowner's association in January 2026, all inspection items had been corrected and verified, and supporting certifications and a letter of credit for the required one-year, 10 percent warranty had been submitted.

In response to a Board inquiry, Brehmer confirmed that the engineer's report addressed stormwater components to verify proper functioning in support of street and sidewalk acceptance. The stormwater permit would remain with the homeowner's association; the acceptance request covered only streets and sidewalks.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, Resolution 2026-R9 to accept public streets and sidewalks in Swansgate Subdivision was unanimously approved.

RFQ Contract Negotiation Approval

Parks and Recreation Director Stanley reported that two proposals were received for grant writing services supporting Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) applications. Following review, the Town Manager, Finance Director, Parks and Recreation Director, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recommended WithersRavenel.

In clarification to the Board, Town Manager Barlow explained:

- **Contract approval:** The requested action authorized negotiations with WithersRavenel only; the resulting contract would be returned to the Board for final approval.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, authorization for the Town to enter into contract negotiations with WithersRavenel for grant consulting services was unanimously approved.

Approval of the Appearance Commission By-Laws

Town Clerk Alissa Fender presented the final Appearance Commission By-Laws for Board approval. She explained that the newly appointed commission had been tasked with drafting bylaws to govern its internal organization and meeting procedures in accordance with its advisory role under the town ordinance and state law. The bylaws had been reviewed, revised, and approved for adoption by the Commission at its most recent meeting and were now submitted to the Board for final approval.

Commissioner Conaway offered remarks commending the quality of the bylaws, noting that the document was well-organized and comprehensive upon a single reading. He indicated that Commissioner Herbert had shared a similar assessment.

On a by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, the Appearance Commission By-Laws as recommended by the Appearance Commission was unanimously adopted.

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:

- Schedule a presentation by Zoe Empowers
- Schedule review of the Waterfront Plan

Board members also addressed several matters of interest not specifically identified as future agenda items, including:

- Development of a grant tracking mechanism to monitor pending and submitted grant applications and assist with communication of Town priorities to state and federal representatives.
- Availability of a newly announced Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program and potential opportunities for future funding.
- Expressions of interest in leasing space within the Emerton School building, although no formal discussions or negotiations had occurred to date other than with the Swansboro Historical Association.

Public Comment

Tim Eason, 728 West Phillips Drive, commended the July 4th fireworks event but raised concerns about severe post-event traffic congestion and limited emergency-vehicle access to downtown. He requested a consistent, predictable parking and traffic plan for all festivals, noting that Arts by the Sea offered shuttle service from Ward's Farm while the July 4th event did not.

Manager's Comments

Town Manager Jon Barlow provided a brief update on the Emerton School renovation project. He noted that a walkthrough was scheduled for the following Thursday to review the two remaining phases: painting the metal ceilings and replacing all exterior doors. He indicated that once the ceiling work was approved by state inspectors, the town would enter into a contract for the door replacement, with that work expected to be complete by August 18th and the overall grant closed out by August 30th.

Board Comments

All board members voiced their appreciation for the July 4th celebration and staff and volunteer efforts, the success of the Park & Rec Safety Town program, provided comments on the new Visitor Center and its restrooms, and concerns about event traffic and parking, and congratulated the Arts by the Sea winners.

Commissioner Eckendorf thanked the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and its representatives for financial support of the Visitor Center.

Commissioner Herbert noted near-record or record July 4th attendance and recognized the Swansboro Fire Department and Onslow County EMS for responding to a resident's medical emergency within approximately five and ten minutes, respectively.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway shared that he attended the Bear Creek Fire Department groundbreaking with Mayor Justice. Additionally he specifically offered his appreciation to the downtown businesses for the support of the July 4th event.

Mayor Justice reported attending the initial Onslow County Opioid Settlement Steering Committee meeting with Commissioner Conaway and hosting Representatives Laurie Buckhout, Don Davis, and Blake Belch (Ted Buds representative) for facility tours and infrastructure funding discussions. He credited Representative Wyatt Gable with securing approximately \$225,000 for the town (\$200,000 for fire and \$25,000 for police) and encouraged acknowledgment. He recognized Doug Rogers for planting more than 110 live oaks at no cost to the town and receiving local television coverage, and Isabella, the prior year's military child of the year, for receiving an \$80,000 college scholarship. He also encouraged support for the upcoming Tunnels to Towers event.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf the meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm.