

**Town of Swansboro**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**June 9, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes**

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

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**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 Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Vannoy, the agenda as prepared and the following consent items were unanimously approved.

- April 1, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes
- ONWASA Administrative Service Agreement

**Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations**

*Employee Introduction*

Town Manager Jon Barlow introduced Steve Edwards as the Town's new Public Services Director. Mr. Barlow noted that Mr. Edwards previously served as Public Works Director for the Town from 2006 to 2014 and returned to an organization and community he knew well. He highlighted Mr. Edwards' extensive public service background, including military service and more than three decades of experience in public works and local government operations.

Mr. Edwards thanked the Board for the opportunity to return to Swansboro and expressed his appreciation for rejoining the organization.

Mayor Justice shared that Mr. Edwards was the inaugural recipient of the annual Sam Bland Award.

*Board Appointments*

Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed that appointments/reappointments were needed for the Board of Adjustment due to expiration of terms and the Historic Preservation Commission alternate seats remained vacant.

Board of Adjustment

Town Clerk Fender reported that the terms of Wayne Nixon and Ralph Kohlmann were set to expire and that both members had expressed interest in being reappointed.

Additional applications were received from Brian Lowe and Laurent Meilleur with interest in serving.

On a motion by Commissioner Pieratti, seconded by Commissioner Vannoy, Wayne Nixon and Ralph Kohlmann were reappointed to the Board of Adjustment with unanimous approval.

The Board then considered filling the vacant alternate position on the Board of Adjustment. Commissioner Vannoy moved to appoint Laurent Meilleur to the vacant alternate position on the Board of Adjustment. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway and approved unanimously. *(This appointment was subsequently rescinded later in the meeting after staff determined the vacancy was designated as an Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) seat.)*

#### Historic Preservation Commission

Town Clerk Fender reported that two alternate positions on the Historic Preservation Commission remained vacant and that there was 1 application received from Cynthia LaCorte with interest in serving. Cynthia LaCorte was currently serving as the chair for the Appearance Commission.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway voiced his concern regarding individuals serving simultaneously on multiple Town boards and commissions. Several commissioners agreed and shared their preference to provide opportunities for additional residents to become involved in local government service before making appointments.

Commissioner Eckendorf expressed support for proceeding with the appointment, noting the importance of maintaining a full and active commission. Other members of the Board indicated they would prefer to continue recruitment efforts and revisit the appointment once additional applications have been received.

Commissioner Eckendorf moved to appointment Cynthia LaCorte to the vacant seat, but the motion failed for lack of a second.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission were tabled until a future meeting to allow additional recruitment efforts and further consideration regarding dual service on Town advisory boards. The motion passed 4:1.

Ayes: Conaway, Pieratti, Herbert, Vannoy

No: Eckendorf

#### **Public Hearing**

*FY 2026/2027 Budget Ordinance, Tax Rate, Salary Schedules, and Fee Schedule*  
Town Manager Jon Barlow presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Ordinance and accompanying documents. He explained that the budget was developed

around the Board's established goals of maintaining the current tax rate of \$0.35 per \$100 valuation, adopting a balanced budget without appropriating fund balance, providing employee compensation adjustments, funding one additional firefighter and one additional police officer position, and maintaining capital reserve contributions.

Town Manager Barlow reviewed several significant factors affecting the budget, including a 2.35% cost-of-living adjustment and 2.35% merit increase, increases in retirement and insurance costs, personnel additions in public safety, capital equipment purchases, capital reserve funding, and approximately \$9.7 million in planned capital projects, primarily related to the future public safety facility. He also identified several requested projects and personnel items that were not funded within the proposed budget. Mr. Barlow discussed uncertainty surrounding North Carolina Senate Bill 889 and its potential impact on county property revaluation figures and municipal budget planning. He explained that the proposed budget was based upon revaluation figures provided by Onslow County, but that legislative action could require local governments to revert to prior valuation figures. Staff reviewed multiple budget scenarios and recommended maintaining flexibility until legislative action was finalized.

Finance Director Sonia Johnson presented the financial overview of the proposed budget. She reported that the proposed budget balanced revenues and expenditures without appropriating fund balance, marking the first such occurrence since Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Ms. Johnson reviewed projected fund balance levels, tax revenue projections, enterprise fund operations, debt obligations, and the potential financial implications should the Town be required to use previous valuation figures.

Board members discussed staffing needs within the Police Department, future debt obligations, capital reserves, long-term budget planning, and the challenges created by uncertainty at the state level. Police Chief Dwayne Taylor addressed current staffing levels and operational needs, emphasizing the importance of maintaining sufficient officers on duty for public safety and officer safety purposes.

The public hearing was opened at 6:41 pm then closed, as no comments were offered.

Town Manager Barlow recommended tabling adoption of the budget until the June 23, 2026, meeting to allow time for additional legislative guidance.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, consideration of the FY 2026-2027 Budget Ordinance, Tax Rate, Salary Schedules, and Fee Schedule was unanimously tabled until June 23, 2026.

### **Business Non-Consent**

#### *Future Agenda Topics*

Town Clerk Fender requested that the Board revisit the earlier Board of Adjustment appointment. She explained that the alternate seat vacancy was designated as an Extra

Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) position and that the appointment of Laurent Meilleur had been made in error because as a town resident he could not serve in an ETJ seat. Attorney Rasberry advised the Board regarding the proper procedure to correct the appointment.

On a motion by Commissioner Pieratti, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway the Board unanimously rescinded the appointment of Laurent Meilleur to the Board of Adjustment alternate seat.

Future agenda items were then 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 Jacob Maybry on Peru Mission trip

### **Public Comment**

Cynthia LaCorte of 220 South Elm Street addressed the Board regarding their comments and decision-related appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission. She explained that she submitted an application after learning of concerns and challenges facing the commission and expressed a desire to volunteer her time and contribute positively to the community. Ms. LaCorte encouraged the Board to carefully consider opportunities to engage residents willing to serve the Town.

### **Manager's Comments**

Town Manager Barlow reported that Arts by the Sea would take place on June 13th and anticipated strong attendance. He announced that the Visitor Center was expected to receive a temporary or final certificate of occupancy and could be utilized during the event. He thanked Town staff and contractor Bob Steele for their efforts in preparing the facility and suggested scheduling a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony at a later date.

Additionally, it was also reported that the Town's grant application through the North Carolina Beach Access Program for repairs to the Riverview Park Boardwalk had not been funded. He noted that the project could require the Town to pursue repairs independently should future grant opportunities not materialize.

### **Board Comments**

Commissioner Pieratti thanked those who attended and staff, and she thanked Finance Director Johnson for redoing the budget repeatedly under stressful conditions.

Commissioner Herbert thanked staff for the significant work that went into developing the proposed budget and stated he had been prepared to support its adoption. He expressed disappointment that uncertainty created at the state level would require the Board to delay action and potentially revisit the budget. Commissioner Herbert emphasized the importance of adopting a budget that maintains Town services and

supports the community, and he thanked those in attendance and watching from home for their continued interest and engagement.

Commissioner Eckendorf thanked staff for their work on the proposed budget and expressed confidence that the Board would be prepared to move forward with budget adoption at its next meeting. He reaffirmed his support for public safety and ensuring those departments have the resources needed to serve the community. Commissioner Eckendorf also expressed disappointment with the Board's decision to postpone the Historic Preservation Commission appointment, noting his belief that citizens willing to volunteer their time and service should be encouraged to participate in Town government.

Commissioner Vannoy welcomed Mr. Edwards and said the Town had a great Public Works team to work with him. He thanked Ms. Johnson and viewers at home and said the Town was transparent about the budget. He invited residents to ask questions, which would be answered.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway thanked staff for their work on the proposed budget and noted that the Board's ability to act had been impacted by factors outside of staff's control. He stated that the Board's goal was to make the best decision possible under the circumstances. Mayor Pro Tem Conaway also reiterated his longstanding preference against individuals serving on multiple Town boards simultaneously, explaining that he believes doing so encourages broader community participation and diverse perspectives. While expressing his dislike of leaving vacancies unfilled, he indicated his support for continuing recruitment efforts and suggested the Board move forward with an appointment at its next meeting if no additional applicants came forward. He concluded by thanking those in attendance and watching remotely for their engagement.

**Mayor Justice** welcomed Steve Edwards back to the Town and also welcomed Whitney Cantrell, an upcoming candidate for Onslow County Commissioners. He provided updates from a recent regional economic development meeting, including the hiring of a new director and the status of ongoing business recruitment efforts. Mayor Justice highlighted the success of Military Appreciation Day, recognized the upcoming Medal of Honor presentation to Major James Capers, and commended staff for their work on the Visitor Center project. He also discussed the Board's efforts to maintain a responsible tax rate amid uncertainty surrounding property valuations and encouraged residents to reach out to Board members with questions or concerns.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert the meeting adjourned at 7:04 pm