

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
March 18, 2026

I. Call to Order & Roll Call The meeting of the Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for March 18th was called to order at 5:33 PM by Deb. P. Roll call was conducted with the following members present Deb Pylypiw, Ryan Swanson, Matthew Prane, and Jennifer Steele, Bets Love was absent and Elena Messenger was absent for the first half hour of the meeting, but arrived late. Anna Stanley and Sara Elliott were present on behalf of Swansboro Parks and Recreation.

II. Adoption of Minutes

- a. Adoption of February 18, 2026 Minutes-Matthew P. made a motion to accept the minutes and Ryan S. seconded the motion and they were unanimously approved.

III. Reports

a. **Monthly Report-** The monthly report for February was presented with no questions from board members. Festival sponsorships were added back to the report as sponsorship packets had been distributed and funds were beginning to come in.

b. **Upcoming Programs/Events**

c. **Updates-** Several significant updates were provided by Director Stanley:

Marketing Campaign Win: Anna S. attended a marketing webinar workshop with WITN and won a \$2,750 marketing campaign package for the department. The package will be split between two events: Touch a Truck (which has never been advertised before) and either Pirate Fest or Arts by the Sea, depending on funding decisions.

Grant Applications: Three grants have been submitted:

- Onslow County tourism assistance grant for \$25,000 for festivals (increased from the usual \$20,000)
- Swansboro TDA grant for \$2,000 for Pirate Fest television advertising (the first time TV ads would be run for this event)
- TDA grant for \$6,500 for the current fiscal year, with \$5,000 designated for city data tracking services (a company comparable to Placer.ai but at half the cost) and \$1,500 for Arts by the Sea

The data tracking service would provide 15 locations for monitoring visitor counts, tracking visitor origins and journey patterns, and would be usable for both events and parks. Anna S. also requested that TDA consider establishing an annual funding amount to avoid repeated applications each year.

Ryan Swanson inquired about TDA's position on annual consistent funding versus startup funding, noting that he had heard TDA express preference for supporting first-year startups or capital improvements. Director Stanley explained that when they returned in 2019, TDA had not supported festivals for about five years prior, but had previously supported them. Support resumed at \$10,000 annually, increasing to \$20,000 in 2025-26 FY. Stanley noted that TDA had implemented a new policy limiting applications to two years to give other events

opportunities, though there was discussion that this might not apply to long-running established festivals.

Ryan S. suggested exploring partnerships with Lamar Billboards as an alternative advertising strategy. Anna S. indicated they had previously approached Lamar for sponsorship without success, though they had received package deal options. Also noted that TDA funds must be spent outside the county to attract overnight visitors, and that billboard costs include both printing fees and monthly charges, potentially consuming a significant portion of the \$2,000 budget.

Budget Review: The first round of budget review meetings had begun, though these were preliminary discussions. Director Stanley requested a new full-time position, part-time pay increases to match competing areas, and increased funds for playground equipment repairs. Most other items remained status quo due to current success in programming supplies and similar areas.

IV. New Business

- a. Little Pink Houses of Hope- The board reviewed a special event application from Little Pink Houses of Hope, a local nonprofit serving cancer patients. This is their third year requesting a fee waiver for use of Bicentennial Park for paddleboard and kayaking activities during their annual family retreat.

Deb P. made a motion to recommend waiving the permit fee for Little Pink Houses of Hope. Jenn S seconded the motion and was passed unanimously.

V. Old Business

- a. Pickleball Courts- Director Stanley provided an extensive update on the pickleball courts project, explaining that in 2024-2025, the Board of Commissioners allocated \$150,000 for dedicated pickleball courts. Two options have been discussed: converting the skate park into dedicated courts or building new courts.

Current Situation: Investigation revealed that converting the skate park would only accommodate three regulation-size courts and would still require adding concrete. Any new court construction requires a storm water permit because the property is at maximum capacity for impervious surfaces (12%). The property has reached this limit due to the recreation center, tennis courts, playgrounds with pour-in-play surfaces, and sidewalks.

Preferred Approach: Director Stanley recommended pursuing six new dedicated regulation-size pickleball courts rather than the skate park conversion, citing long-term revenue generation potential through tournaments, increased league fees for over 200 current members, and the possibility of sanctioned tournaments. It was noted that three courts would be inadequate for tournament hosting and wouldn't significantly improve the situation.

Engineering and Permitting: Crystal Coast Engineering has surveyed the property and determined that wetlands must be constructed regardless of which option is chosen, though fewer wetlands would be needed for the skate park conversion. The wetlands would be located between the current wooded area and walking path.

Cost Estimates: Preliminary cost estimates totaling approximately \$400,000:

- Coastal Planning Services (storm water permit process): not to exceed \$11,500 (plus unknown permit costs)
- Crystal Coast Engineering (wetlands construction and court design): \$100,000
- Court construction: approximately \$200,000
- Fencing and gates (6-foot): \$25,000
- Subtotal: \$336,500
- Amenities (windscreens, trash cans, message boards, landscaping): \$25,500
- Total with contingency: approximately \$400,000

Grant Strategy: Given the significant cost increase beyond the allocated \$150,000, potential grant opportunities; two major grants could potentially be combined:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): maximum \$750,000 (this property already has LWCF funding, which is advantageous)
- PARTF grant: maximum \$500,000
- Both are dollar-for-dollar matching grants that can be used as matches for each other

Expanded Project Scope: To maximize grant scoring, particularly for PARTF which awards maximum points for three recreational facilities, Anna S. proposed expanding the project to include:

- Tennis court resurfacing (already planned for CIP)
- Tot Lot Replacement (already in CIP)
- Skate Park area redevelopment (equipment removal already approved); potential renovations like multi-use recreation areas or Safety Town

Matthew P. questioned whether this was the right approach given that the park is already at maximum infrastructure capacity and suggested this might be an opportunity to advocate for acquiring additional land as outlined in the comprehensive plan (minimum 6 acres, ideally 12 acres to reach national averages). He emphasized the importance of developing a proper master plan rather than adding bolt-on solutions, especially if pursuing significant grant funding.

Concerns and Requirements: Anna S. noted that LWCF requires facilities to remain outdoor recreation "forever," though modifications are possible with state approval and justification (similar to the recent skate park equipment removal approval). PARTF requires facilities to remain the same for 25 years. All improvements must be ADA accessible.

Timeline: The consultant provided a timeline indicating that if this grant cycle is to be pursued, decisions must be made by June, with LWCF applications due in November. Anna S. has consulted with WithersRavenel (a consultant company already working with the town on another project) to guide the process, though an RFQ would still need to be issued for consultant selection.

Director Stanley plans to present this information to the Board of Commissioners on April 14th and requests board member support at that meeting.

Matthew Prane emphasized the importance of establishing hard deadlines and timelines for project management, and suggested that if grants are being pursued, the project should be designed comprehensively rather than as incremental additions. He stressed the need to reference the master plan and advocate for priorities identified through community input and data.

- b. Skate Park Area- Discussion of the skate park was integrated into the pickleball courts discussion, Anna S. noting they have received verbal approval to remove the equipment (pending written confirmation) and that any replacement facility must be active recreation to meet grant requirements. Potential options discussed included multi-use recreation areas with permanent bocce courts and shelters, Safety Town (a permanent miniature town for bicycle safety education), additional basketball courts, or outdoor fitness areas.
- c. 2025 Festival Advertising Reports- This item was mentioned in the updates but not separately discussed due to time constraints.
- d. Future Agenda Items

VI. Comments- Board members discussed the importance of referencing the master plan for strategic decision-making and the need to advocate for land acquisition to meet national standards for parks and recreation services. Concerns were raised about staying aligned with comprehensive planning documents and ensuring decisions are data-driven based on citizen input from previous planning processes.

VII. Adjournment- Matthew P. made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 pm and Ryan Swanson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting April 15, 2026