

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
September 9, 2025, Regular Meeting

In attendance: Mayor William Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf, Commissioner Tamara Pieratti, and Commissioner Joseph Brown.

Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm and Mayor Justice led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Lauren Brown of 504 Greenfield Place in Sneads Ferry praised the pool survey's quality but proposed two edits. For question 12, she suggested adding a specific option for liability, and for question 15, she recommended rewording indicating it did not sound correct.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the agenda and the consent items below were unanimously approved.

- July 22, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
- July 22, 2025, Closed Session Minutes

Business Non-Consent

Swansboro Aquatics Community Survey

Matthew Prane, Swimming Pool Committee Chair, reviewed the proposed community pool survey. He shared that the survey was developed after a joint meeting with the Board of Commissioners and the Pool Committee on June 26, 2025. The survey sought to understand community interest and preferred programs for a potential pool facility. It was comprised of 15 questions and estimated to take about two minutes to complete. The main focus was to identify interest and program preferences. Mr. Prane reviewed the strategies for survey distribution included coordinating with the Parks and Recreation Director and Fire Chief Randall. Strategies included QR codes at the recreation center, email lists, and possibly paper copies or radio announcements. Sophisticated geographical analytical tools in the program used to facilitate the survey will help analyze responses at no cost.

In response to an inquiry from the board about any resources needed for the survey distribution and analysis, Mr. Prane responded that he hadn't considered any significant monetary requirements, estimating that the only potential costs might be for paper copies or radio announcements if pursued.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the presented draft of the community pool survey and authorization for distribution to the community was unanimously approved.

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:

- Consider reexamining the CAMA land use plan and potentially seek a budget amendment for a new plan

Public Comment

John Plegman of 401 Point Drive in Swansboro, shared his support for the Flybridge project, saying it's a smart mix of homes and businesses that encourages walking. He noted the developer plans to improve roads and traffic signals to help with traffic. He also shared concerns that turning down the project could lead to less useful options, like a chicken farm or development outside town limits that wouldn't help Swansboro's tax base.

Tony Pereira of 204 Harborview Drive in Swansboro, shared his opposition to the Flybridge development.

Carol Pereira, also from 204 Harborview Drive, expressed concern about outside developers from Sanford telling Swansboro residents what they need without living in the community themselves. She urged the Board to listen to local residents rather than outside developers.

Jamie Petani of 2102 Holly Hills Court in Swansboro, shared her opposition to high-density apartments, stating that people choose Swansboro for its current character and quality of life, not for potential development. She questioned whether the projected revenue would be worth jeopardizing the small-town quality of life and raised concerns about infrastructure, school capacity, and traffic.

Elaine Cuvee of 717 West Phillips Drive in Swansboro, representing Common Sense Swansboro, presented slides highlighting comments made on social media in opposition to the Flybridge development.

Kayleigh Defabrizo of 407 Patriots Point Lane in Swansboro, shared also on behalf of Common Sense Swansboro, focusing on school overcapacity issues. She shared enrollment numbers for area schools which she indicated she received directly from the schools. Swansboro Elementary School at 502 students (capacity 505, including 6 trailers); Queens Creek Elementary at 593 (capacity 563); Swansboro Middle School at 1062 (capacity 912); and Swansboro High School at 1276 (capacity 1240). She noted 387 new

single-family homes would be built this year, further impacting schools, and described overcrowded conditions in the middle school.

Susan Keller, a representative with Flybridge, explained that her company, Rampart, would manage the apartment complex with 7 on-site staff members and 24-hour emergency maintenance. She described their approach to building community through resident events and their focus on safety and security, including background checks. She stated the property would not be government-subsidized but would be affordable for local workers including teachers, healthcare workers, firefighters, and police officers.

Terri Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road in Swansboro spoke about her deep roots in Swansboro, describing her family's history in the town and expressing her love for the community. She urged the Board to vote against the Flybridge development.

Lauren Brown of 504 Greenfield Place in Sneads Ferry spoke again, criticizing what she perceived as a threat from Flybridge representatives that they would build just outside town limits if not approved. She presented petitions opposing the development with over 500 confirmed registered voters. She challenged assumptions about the development's financial benefits, arguing it would increase long-term liabilities for the town's infrastructure and services. Additionally, Ms. Brown expressed her appreciation to Town Clerk Fender for being quick and responsive to her public records request. Addressing Commissioner Pieratti, Brown praised her responses to citizens that indicated her decision would rely on facts and resident feedback. She expressed confidence in Commissioner Pieratti's capacity to handle this critical decision, recognizing its impact on the town's future. Ms. Brown also revealed her ambition to eventually join the board to contribute further to Swansboro's governance and uphold community values.

Constance Crocker of 111 Jones Road in Hubert expressed concerns about traffic on Queens Creek Road and argued that the Flybridge development conflicted with multiple aspects of the land use plan, particularly regarding maintaining the town's small-town character and infrastructure capacity.

Clayton New of 11 Creekside Woods Court in Hubert, shared that the community had been researching school capacity issues but received contradictory information from Onslow County officials despite 2021 facility assessment documenting overcrowding problems. He argued that existing infrastructure issues would only worsen with the proposed development.

Ashley Gardner of 101 Longwood Drive in Stella, shared her opposition to the Flybridge development, drawing parallels to development that harmed her former hometown New York. She raised concerns about developers potentially selling the property after development, citing a previous project involving some of the same agents.

Todd Gardner of 304 Limbaugh Lane in Swansboro, questioned the developers' claims about traffic mitigation and environmental impact, expressing skepticism about proposals to reduce green light time at intersections. He challenged the affordability of the proposed apartments and raised concerns about non-point source pollution from additional cars and impervious surfaces.

Vicki Brown of 601 Broad Street in Swansboro, urged the Board to uphold the land use plan and reject the Flybridge development, stating that many residents appreciate Swansboro's small-town atmosphere and do not want additional growth. Additionally, she also shared her concern regarding the perceived disengagement of some board members during the meeting, taking issue with their frequent cellphone usage, which she believed distracted them from actively listening to constituents' heartfelt concerns about the Flybridge development.

Ralph Kohlmann of 60 Pickett Court in Swansboro, cited multiple violations of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in the Flybridge plan, particularly regarding parking requirements. He noted that per UDO section 152.292, the development would need at least 600 parking spaces for 300 units, but the plan only included 569 spaces. He urged the board to vote against the request.

Junior Freeman, owner of 714 W. Corbett Avenue in Swansboro, spoke in support of the Flybridge development, suggesting it would provide housing for local workers and first responders. He expressed concern about potential legal fees if the town rejected the request.

Lee Shuller of 140 Front Street in Swansboro, shared results from a 2010 visitor questionnaire that revealed tourists valued Swansboro's quaint, quiet character and small-town charm. He quoted statistics indicating Swansboro's population had grown 208% in the past 25 years.

Lisa Perlash of 532 Sabiston Drive, shared that the proposed development could increase the town's population by 25% and spoke about her lifelong connection to Swansboro, stating the project was not right for the town at this time.

Walter Hancock of 129 Hilltop Drive in Swansboro, a former board member with development experience, praised the site plan's technical aspects but questioned why the developers chose Swansboro. He suggested they saw the rural agricultural zoning as a mistake, while it was actually an intentional decision in the land use plan, and urged the board to reject their request.

Manager's Comments

Town Manager Jon Barlow provided several updates:

- NCDOT paving projects on Swansboro Loop Road and Main Street Extension were nearing completion.
- NCDOT's traffic plan was released that two pedestrian improvement projects, one at Norris Road/Highway 24 and another at Phillips Loop Road/Highway 24 intersections.
- The town received a public beach access grant from DEQ for the replacement of the Main Street dock, with an estimated cost of \$170,000 and a local match of \$42,000.
- Duke Energy contractors will be in town for approximately 12 months, replacing poles and upgrading wires to increase capacity and resilience.
- An update on the sidewalk project was provided, noting that surveying was underway for approximately 7,000 linear feet of sidewalk in five project areas. Easements would still need to be obtained from property owners.
- There were also ongoing efforts to improve waterfront areas, including potential future projects to create a continuous dock walk.

Manager Barlow also recognized staff members Rebecca Brehmer and Jacob Randall for their commitment to local government and pursuit of further education in their respective fields.

Board Comments

Commissioner Turner expressed her appreciation to all 19 public speakers who attended the meeting. She emphasized that she listened attentively to each speaker and diligently took notes on the comments made by the attendees.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway thanked Rebecca for quick information turnaround and reminded the public that the Flybridge project process was ongoing.

Commissioner Eckendorf emphasized the need to improve Queens Creek Road due to increased traffic from Hubert, referencing a discussion with Wyatt Gable on making it a divided highway like Piney Green to ease congestion. He stressed the importance of the town communicating this priority to the Department of Transportation and supporting measures to reduce traffic problems. Eckendorf also called for an update to the town's land use plan, which he found outdated. Based on recent planning board feedback, he advocated for revising the plan to better address current and future development needs, urging collaboration to keep it aligned with Swansboro's growth strategy.

Commissioner Brown highlighted the importance of attending school board meetings to ensure the community achieves desired outcomes. On his recent visit to Sanford, Brown assessed Flybridge-related facilities, finding that the 10-year-old facilities were exceptionally maintained, which counters doubts about the developers' commitment. He

discussed Flybridge's thorough engineering of their sediment catch basin for environmental safety.

Commissioner Pieratti informed everyone that the fire department would be holding a strategic planning meeting, set for September 11th at 6 PM. Encouraging attendance, she highlighted the importance of community participation in the planning process.

Mayor Justice thanked the public and Flybridge representatives for participating, praising community professionalism amid heated development discussions. He emphasized the value of diverse viewpoints in understanding the town's prospects. Mayor Justice shared efforts to address road and transport challenges through potential Jacksonville Urban Metropolitan Planning Organization projects and affirmed his dedication to sourcing funds for infrastructure improvements. He urged ongoing public engagement, recognizing its importance in shaping growth strategies. Mayor Justice concluded by thanking town staff and commissioners for their commitment to Swansboro's welfare and proactive solutions.

Closed Session

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, and with unanimous approval the board entered closed session at 8:00 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 between the attorney and the public body, which privilege was hereby acknowledged; 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; and (6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.

Pursuant to a motion duly made and seconded in closed session the board returned to open session with nothing to report.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.