

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
February 24, 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.

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

Nancy Palbicke of 321 Foster Creek Road, spoke regarding her application for the Appearance Commission. Ms. Palbicke highlighted her background in fashion merchandising and design, and her experience with campus redesign projects at Washburn University Institute of Technology.

Amy Poe of 160 E. Ivybridge Drive, head coach of the Star Hill Torpedoes swim team, advocated for a community pool. Ms. Poe emphasized the safety and developmental benefits of swimming programs. She noted that her team trains many swimmers who compete for Swansboro High School and offered to help establish a low-cost summer swim program if a pool were built.

Janet Wade of 110 Deer Run, shared her personal experience of waiting 66 years for a public swimming facility and expressed strong support for a community pool in Swansboro, citing the growing population and need for water safety education.

Cynthia LaCorte of 220 Elm Street, requested consideration for appointment to the Appearance Commission. Ms. LaCorte emphasized her real estate background and dedication to the commission's mission of enhancing Swansboro's aesthetic appeal and economic development potential.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, the agenda as prepared and the following consent items were unanimously approved.

- January 13, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes
- January 27, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes
- Resolution Adopting the 2026-2031 Southeastern North Carolina Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Resolution for Bank Financing of Police Interceptor Vehicles
- Tax Refund Request

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Recognition of Kristin Newbold

Mayor Justice presented a proclamation recognizing Kristin Newbold, a Swansboro High School junior, for her selection to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City as part of the high school honors performance series. Ms. Newbold thanked the Board and shared her experience during the five days of intensive rehearsals and the honor of performing under conductor Jeffrey Reading.

NC Festival & Events Annual Showfest Award

Parks & Recreation Director Anna Stanley announced that the Town's 2025 Mullet Festival t-shirt design won "Best T-shirt" for medium-sized events at the North Carolina Association of Festivals and Events conference. The award recognized the partnership with What the Fin for the design.

Board Appointments

Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed the process for appointing the inaugural seven members of the newly formed Swansboro Appearance Commission, established by ordinance on January 27, 2026. The commission required six members from within Town corporate limits and one from the ETJ. The Board voted by written ballot from a pool of nine in-town applicants and one ETJ applicant. After counting, four in-town members were confirmed outright: Cynthia LaCorte, Doug Rogers, Nancy Palbicke and Claire Cole. And ETJ member Linda Thornley was confirmed outright. A tie occurred among three in-town candidates: Gary Keroack, Larry Philpott, and Kim Kingrey.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, Cynthia LaCorte, Doug Rogers, Nancy Palbicke and Claire Cole, were unanimously appointed to the Swansboro Appearance Commission.

Following this, the Board readdressed the tie. A second ballot was conducted to choose between the tied candidates, resulting in Larry Philpott and Kim Kingrey receiving the most votes.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, Larry Philpott and Kim Kingrey were unanimously appointed to the Swansboro Appearance Commission.

Lastly, the board handled appointment to the ETJ seat, and on a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, Linda Thornley was unanimously appointed to the ETJ seat for the Swansboro Appearance Commission.

Business non-consent

Presentation of Community Pool Survey Results

Swimming Pool Committee Chair Matthew Prane presented results of a community survey conducted September–December 2025 and provided background on committee

research dating to 2020. He noted that a community swimming pool has ranked as the Town's top requested amenity in multiple Town surveys since 2006. Working with Total Aquatics Programming, estimated costs were identified at approximately \$13 million for an indoor three-pool facility and \$7 million for an outdoor pool, exclusive of land costs. A modular above-ground pool was also evaluated as a lower-cost, short-term option.

The survey received 415 responses, with 76% indicating they would use a community pool. 66% cited distance to existing facilities as the primary barrier. Preferred programs included water aerobics, recreational use, learn-to-swim, and rehabilitation therapy. Respondents favored a year-round indoor facility with certified lifeguards.

Mr. Prane stated that land acquisition was the critical next step, estimating a need for approximately six acres, with about half required for parking. No potential sites have been identified. He requested Board direction on whether the Town wishes to continue pursuing the project.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mr. Prane clarified the following:

- Progress could proceed without identifying a location.
- The Swansboro High School swim team rents pool space in Cape Carteret.

During discussion, Board members acknowledged the depth of the committee's research while expressing varying perspectives on the Town's ability to advance the project at that time. Comments emphasized that land availability remains the primary obstacle and that survey results may have been influenced by distribution methods. Several members raised concerns regarding overall project scale, land acquisition costs, liability exposure, limited tax base, and competing capital priorities, while also noting that resident feedback during campaign outreach identified other higher priorities. Some members supported continued exploration citing minimal cost to the Town to date, potential regional demand, and interest in creative solutions involving land donations, grants, or nonprofit partnerships, while others supported suspending the committee but preserving its work for possible future consideration should conditions change.

On a motion by Commissioner Herbert, seconded by Commissioner Vannoy, the Swansboro Swimming Pool Committee was suspended. The motion carried 3:2.

Ayes: Herbert, Vannoy, Conaway

Noes: Eckendorf, Pieratti

Mayor Justice stated the matter may be revisited should suitable property become available and thanked Mr. Prane and the committee for their service.

Monthly Financial Report as of January 2026

Finance Director Sonia Johnson presented the January 2026 financial report. She highlighted the following points:

- As of January 31, 2026, the General Fund reflected excess revenues over expenditures of approximately \$1.04 million with encumbrances and \$1.17 million without encumbrances.
- Overall departmental expenditures were at 48.6% of budget, which was approximately 9.7% below the monthly projection of 58.3%.
- The Emergency Management Department showed the highest percentage over budget, attributable to costs related to Winter Storm Gianna; a budget amendment will be forthcoming.
- The Stormwater Enterprise Fund reported a surplus of approximately \$75,576.
- The Solid Waste Enterprise Fund reported a surplus of approximately \$3,692.

In response to an inquiry from the board, Finance Director Johnson confirmed no significant financial concerns were identified at that time.

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:

- Guidance from the Town attorney on enforcement options related to Historic Preservation Commission violations.
- Traffic light synchronization and optimization, to be coordinated with NCDOT and potentially raised at the upcoming JUMPO meeting.
- Review of the capital investment plan as part of the next budget workshop.
- Discussion on pickleball courts as a separate item from the skate park.
- Further discussion on the use of a project adviser for the public safety building construction.

Public Comment

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board for no more than five minutes regarding items not listed on the agenda. No comments were made.

Manager's Comments

Manager Barlow provided updates on several projects.

- Duke Energy would replace downtown utility poles on March 2 and March 9, causing approximately eight-hour power outages for about 36 businesses and residences, with work starting at 4:00 AM under a noise ordinance waiver.
- Contract negotiations for the Public Safety Building and EOC were ongoing, with staff finalizing the project scope and the Town Manager considering a third-party project adviser due to the project's complexity.

- A revised visitor center floor plan now includes transient boater facilities, local construction estimates were underway, and an Onslow TDA grant application was being prepared for the March 17 deadline.
- Sidewalk engineering designs covered five areas and roughly 7,000 linear feet were complete, with next steps including identifying easements, preparing construction bid packages, and pursuing grant funding.

In response to an inquiry from the board, Manager Barlow clarified that the Queens Creek school sidewalk project should involve the Onslow County Board of Education and NCDOT as potential funding partners because they were the only property owners on that segment and additional funding opportunities may be available through school- and park-connection grants as well as JUMPO funding for the corridor.

Board Comments

Commissioners congratulated Kristin Newbold, thanked staff for their work, citizens for attendance, and recognized the evening's achievements, as well as offered appreciative comments to the pool committee for the work they put into the project research.

Mayor Justice acknowledged Duke Energy for their collaborative approach to the utility work.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Vannoy, the meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.