

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Tourism Development Authority
February 6, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Chairman Randy Swanson, Jack Harnatkiewicz, Preston Patterson, Steven Overby and Linda Thornley. Michael Diehl was absent.

Call to Order

Chair Randy Swanson called the meeting to order at 2:34 pm.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Thornley, seconded by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, the minutes for April 11, 2024, Regular Meeting, May 9, 2024, Special Meeting, October 1, 2024, Special Meeting, and October 10, 2024, Regular Meeting, were unanimously approved.

Business

Financial Report-(2nd Qtr. FY 24-25)

Sonia Johnson, Finance Director, presented the financial report for the second quarter of the fiscal year 2024-2025. She reported that the beginning fund balance as of December 31, 2024, was \$215,760.91. Revenues were \$74,001.26, and expenditures were \$42,176.37, resulting in a cash balance of \$247,711.45. Mrs. Johnson noted that there was still \$30,000 verbally committed for the town's Visitor's Center that remained in the fund, pending direction from the Board of Commissioners.

Marketing & Advertising Status Update/Discussion

In response to inquiries from the board about the Marketing & Advertising details from the packet, Mrs. Johnson shared that those inquiries could be directed to Mr. Anne Marie Bass with Front Row Communications who would be present at the next meeting. Until then, members could send their inquiries directly to Mrs. Johnson and she would have them addressed.

Funding Request/Budget Amendment #2025-2

- Town of Swansboro-Parks & Recreation-Festival & Events/Piratefest

Anna Stanley, Parks & Recreation Director, presented two funding requests to the Tourism Development Authority to support the Town's events. First, she requested \$6,500 annually to assist with marketing and promotion for the Town's four signature festivals: Arts by the Sea, the Independence Day Celebration, the Mullet Festival (which was set to celebrate its 71st year in 2025), and the Swansboro Christmas Flotilla. Mrs. Stanley highlighted the growth in sponsorships—up 218% since 2019 with five new sponsors added in 2024—and noted the continued value of in-kind sponsorships, which totaled \$36,350 in the previous year. She also emphasized the strong partnerships that

were in place with media outlets, including Curtis Media, which contributed over \$50,000 in advertising value, and Front Work Communication, which supported digital outreach beyond Coastal North Carolina. In 2024, the Town began a new partnership with WITN for digital and video ads and planned to expand into TV commercials for Arts by the Sea and the Mullet Festival in 2025. Additional support included a \$10,000 contribution from Onslow County and collaboration with the local Hampton Inn to provide accommodation booking links for festival vendors and attendees. A new title sponsorship level had been created and was already sold.

In addition to this request, Mrs. Stanley sought \$2,000 specifically for PirateFest, a growing event that was in its 14th year and included historical reenactments, educational activities, and live entertainment, drawing 6,000–7,000 attendees in a six-hour span and generating overnight stays for performers. With a total projected cost of approximately \$13,600, PirateFest had traditionally been more than 50% funded by Onslow County.

On a motion by Mr. Swanson, seconded by Ms. Thornley, the funding request for \$6,500 for Town of Swansboro Festivals was approved unanimously.

On a motion by Ms. Thornley, seconded by Mr. Patterson, the funding request of \$2,000 for PirateFest was approved unanimously.

- Swansboro Military Affairs Committee

Catherine Madison with the Swansboro Military Affairs Committee reviewed the funding request of \$2,000 for the 2025 Military Appreciation Day event. The previous year's event attracted around 5,000 attendees, including 225 out-of-town visitors and hotel bookings. The event was viewed as beneficial for tourism and community engagement. Organizers highlighted expanded plans for 2025, which included a Veterans Day sock hop and a rock-paper-scissors competition.

On a motion by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, seconded by Mr. Patterson, the funding request of \$2,000 for Military Appreciation Day was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mr. Swanson, seconded by Ms. Thornely, a Budget Ordinance Amendment \$2025-2 to fulfill the approved funding requests was approved unanimously. Ms. Thornley recused herself from voting due to her involvement with the Military Affairs Committee as the committee's president.

Grant Application Review

Linda Thornley reviewed a new, simplified, and more user-friendly grant application. It consolidated redundant information, clarified funding sources, and included yes/no questions and disclosure items for transparency.

On a motion by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, seconded by Mr. Swanson, the revised grant application was approved unanimously.

Future Agenda Items Discussion

The board discussed a new process for collecting agenda items to guide future planning and emphasized using funds more strategically for community benefit. Financial trends and economic uncertainties were reviewed, and members agreed on the need for clearer communication with town commissioners regarding board activities.

Review & discuss outcome of December 9, 2024, Joint Meeting held with Board of Commissioners

The board members reflected on the recent joint meeting with the Board of Commissioners and the Tourism Development Authority. During this meeting, an agent from Onslow County presented an overview of how the TDA functions, including its statutory responsibilities, funding structure, and the importance of aligning projects with tourism goals. The presentation helped clarify the TDA's purpose and fostered a shared understanding between the board and commissioners regarding expectations and collaborative opportunities moving forward.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, seconded by Mr. Overby, the meeting adjourned at 3:55 pm.