

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
July 22, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

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 opening prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Doug Rogers of 406 Elm Street introduced himself as an applicant for the vacant Planning Board seat. He shared his background, including his experience with various community and non-profit organizations. Mr. Rogers expressed his desire to serve Swansboro and emphasized the need to manage growth while preserving the town's charm and character.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, with unanimous approval the below consent items and the agenda was amended to remove the *Fire Department Mid-Year Performance Report*.

- April 29, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes
- May 13, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
- May 13, 2025, Closed Session Minutes
- May 27, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
- Resolution Declaring Surplus Property and Authorizing Disposal
- Special Event Application Fee Waiver – Little Pink Houses of Hope

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Board Appointments

Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed that consideration for board appointments was needed for the planning board for 1 in-town seat and 1 ETJ seat and noted that a revised agenda memo had been provided that incorporated two new applicants received since the original publication of the agenda packet. Clerk Fender reviewed that a recent resignation on the Historic Preservation Commission also created a vacancy of HPC seat on the planning board. At the Historic Preservation Commissions June 17, 2025, the commission was tasked with selecting a member to serve in the HPC Planning Board seat. With no other members interested, Christina Ramsey agreed to move from her in-town seat on the Planning Board to the HPC appointed seat on the Planning Board, resulting in an in-town seat vacancy.

Clerk Fender reported that there were 11 applications for the in-town seat and one for the ETJ seat.

On a motion my Commissioner Pieratti, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, with unanimous approval, Doug Rogers was appointed to the in-town seat.

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, with unanimous approval, Jamie Pitani was appointed to the ETJ seat.

Business Non-Consent

NC League of Municipalities Cybersecurity Services

Town Manager Jon Barlow reviewed that the NC League of Municipalities was offering a no-cost cybersecurity support program through its ARP grant to help towns strengthen their defenses against cyber threats. The program included assessments, consulting, training, and ongoing support to improve cybersecurity readiness. To participate, the Town must adopt a resolution to authorize execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the NC League of Municipalities.

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Turner, Resolution 2025-R8 to authorize execution of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the NC League of Municipalities was approved unanimously.

Engineering Services Contract for Sidewalk Project

Town Manager Barlow requested approval to enter into a professional services engineering contract with Arendell Engineers for the sidewalk project. He explained that Arendell was selected as the engineering firm best able to provide service for the construction of new 5-foot sidewalks, infill sidewalks, curb ramps, and other pedestrian improvements to be ADA compliant in five project priority areas: Highway 24, Main Street Extension, Hammocks Beach Road, Old Hammocks Beach Road, and Queens Creek Road. The firm would handle the project from surveying through construction administration, including working with DOT for necessary approvals since much of the work would be on DOT roads. The estimated cost including third-party surveyor services was \$93,453. Manager Barlow noted that funding was expected from a \$500,000 grant application with results anticipated around August 20th, plus \$100,000 from a state grant for sidewalk construction, and potentially \$86,000 from Powell Bill reserves. The project encompassed about 7,000 feet or 1.3 miles of sidewalk construction.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Tuner, unanimous approval was given to approve execution of the Engineering Services Contract with Arendell Engineers.

Monthly Financial Report as of June 30, 2025

Finance Director Sonia Johnson presented the June 30, 2025, financial report, noting that invoices were still coming in since it was year-end. She reported the auditor would arrive

in August to begin the audit process, possibly returning in September before presenting findings to the board. Key takeaways were:

- General Fund: Excess of revenues over expenditures was \$50,088 with encumbrances or \$288,025 without; noting that several invoices remained unpaid, including one for a police interceptor.
- Total expenditures were at 77.22% of the budget, indicating a potential financial surplus.
- Stormwater Fund: Excess of revenues over expenditures was \$28,089, with depreciation considered.
- Solid Waste Fund: Excess of revenues over expenditures totals \$50,273, though June billing was pending.

Summaries were provided for the town's debt status, cash and investment accounts, and outstanding grant balances. No questions were raised by the Board about the report.

In closing, Director Johnson, reiterated the importance of considering ongoing and incoming invoices while interpreting the current financial report, as these transactions could modify the surpluses and expenditure lines once processed completely.

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. No new items were addressed.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway raised a concern about the advisory board application process, suggesting that when multiple applications come in within 48 hours of a meeting that the board should either table appointments or keep those applications for future consideration.

In response to inquiries from the board about the Visitors Center status, Manager Barlow explained that some options were dependent on interpretation from a federal funding agency regarding a grant from 2012-2013. He assured the board that the item would be on the agenda once the information was received.

Public Comment

Mayor Justice addressed the public sharing that this comment period allows comments for no longer than 5 minutes related to items not on the agenda, additionally he directed that applause or clapping after every speaker was not conducive and should be withheld until the end of the meeting.

Vicki Brown of 601 W. Broad Street expressed disappointment over limited notification for a meeting on a proposed 324-unit apartment development, noting its wide impact beyond a 1-mile radius. She urged greater community involvement and voiced concerns

about rapid growth altering Swansboro's character, encouraging citizens to attend July 28th meetings to express their views on the rezoning proposal.

Lisa Perkash of 532 Sabiston Drive expressed opposition to the Flybridge rezoning and apartment development. She questioned the necessity of laundry and shower facilities for the Visitor Center and suggested a potential collaboration between the Swansboro Historical Association and the town on combining the Heritage and Visitor Centers, proposing staffing considerations for such a merger.

Matthew Prane of 309 Baffle Court commented on police department statistics and stressed the importance of intentional planning for Swansboro's future. He advocated for a balanced approach to infrastructure expansion, public health, and wellness initiatives, highlighting the need for comprehensive planning that includes infrastructure, water treatment, public safety, and health programs as per the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Richard Galati of 535 Sabiston Drive took responsibility for a late application submission and expressed his desire to serve the community in any capacity. As a returning resident, he stated his love for Swansboro and willingness to offer his services to the commission and town.

Terri Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road addressed remarks from the preceding meeting. Firstly, she contested Commissioner Eckendorf's reading of sea level rise data in the Land Use Plan, offering a comprehensive analysis of the data and projections. Secondly, she opposed Commissioner Brown's assertion that growth must precede management, stressing that planning should precede implementation. Ms. Herbert concluded her remarks by expressing opposition to the Flybridge development.

Andrea Wilmuth also stated "no flybridge" and raised procedural concern about the 15-day advance notice requirement for peaceful demonstrations. She learned from Chief Taylor that permits must be applied for 15 days in advance, but they don't have that much time before the Flybridge presentation. She requested that such things be communicated in a timelier manner to allow citizens adequate time to prepare.

Meredith Meilleur of 220 River Reach Drive challenged the restriction on applause during meetings, stating that it was a simple and non-disruptive way for constituents to express support for speakers' comments.

Manager's Comments

Town Manager Barlow provided several updates. First, regarding the porta-potties at the visitor center, the TDA had approved \$2,000 in TDA funds at their meeting the previous week for rental of two porta-potties and washing stations, with twice-weekly service for about four months. He hoped that it would provide time to get information needed for long-term visitor center decisions.

Second, he reported that the splash pad had experienced mechanical/electrical equipment failure in the control room on June 27th. The vendor was able to get control modules replaced after about a week of downtime, and it was now back in service and being well-used at the rec center.

Finally, he reported that surplus vehicles in the parking lot were being sold through GovDeals.com. Assistant Fire Chief Stanley had posted the first five vehicles about two weeks prior, with three already purchased and removed. Two more were currently online, with plans to continue listing vehicles to clear the parking lot.

Board Comments

Commissioner Turner thanked everyone for coming out and expressed excitement about the unprecedented number of volunteers wanting to serve on advisory boards. She noted that in her 27 years of town service, half on the planning board, she didn't recall there ever being this many people interested in serving.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway thanked staff and citizens for voicing concerns, noting "that's how things change."

Commissioner Eckendorf thanked the fire chief and public works for their Sunday response to a sinkhole on Cormorant Drive, praising their quick action without any intervention needed. He defended a staff member against social media accusations of working for private developers. Eckendorf stood by his previous meeting comments and explained his election platform included responsible growth to support fire, police, and public works staff, arguing that growth spreads the tax base and reduces individual burden. He reiterated his belief that the 2019 CAMA Land Use Plan update was not a real examination of the land use plan, and advocating for a data-driven plan with proper consulting over six months rather than 20 days.

Commissioner Brown thanked staff and addressed social media posts that repeated previously addressed issues like paid parking downtown and eminent domain, both were ended weeks or a month ago. He also announced he had filed for reelection and looked forward to public forums.

Commissioner Tamara Pieratti thanked the board for their dedication in filling vacant advisory board seats and congratulated Doug Rogers and Jamie Petani for their appointments. Mrs. Pieratti specifically thanked Jacob for setting up training for firefighters and for including outside agencies.

Mayor Justice praised town staff across all departments for their efforts, specifically highlighting the first-year Safety Town camp for 4-5 year olds run by Parks and Rec, where he volunteered. Mayor Justice emphasized wanting to get along with everyone in the room and town, stating "It's not what Bill Justice wants. It's what majority of the citizens want." He noted his phone availability 24/7 and timely responses. He thanked

the volunteers and advocated for working together without being enemies or angry with one another.

Closed Session

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, and with unanimous approval the board entered closed session at 7:02 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 is 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.

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 Brown, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.