

**Town of Swansboro**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**June 10, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes**

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

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**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**

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board regarding items listed on the agenda. No comments were made.

**Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items**

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the consent items below and the agenda as amended to remove items *V a. Extra Territorial Jurisdiction Expansion/Re-zoning Request for 106 Belgrade Swansboro Road and V b. Re-zoning Request/1476 W. Corbett Avenue* were unanimously approved.

- Budget Ordinance Amendment #2025-11
- Audit Contract with Gregory T. Redman, CPA (July 1, 2024, through June 30,2025)

**Public Hearing**

*FY 2025/2026 Budget Ordinance, Tax Rate, Stormwater Ordinance, Fee Schedule, and Salary Schedules*

Town Manager Jon Barlow presented the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget and associated documents, highlighting several significant items influencing the budget. These included a 1.5% cost of living increase and up to a 1.5% merit increase for employees, a 0.75% increase in the North Carolina Retirement System employer contribution rate, and an estimated 10% rate rise for property, liability, and workers' compensation insurance. Additionally, there was a 15% decrease in health insurance costs due to switching to Blue Cross Blue Shield. The budget allots \$50,000 for a land use plan update, \$15,000 for a special election, \$5,000 for UDO amendments codification, \$16,000 for part-time Parks and Recreation staff, a public safety salary study implementation cost of \$136,000, and capital outlay for two police cars funded with loan proceeds at \$104,000. Capital projects totaled \$900,000, including a \$500,000 grant application for sidewalk construction.

Town Manager Barlow noted that the budget was balanced with \$634,672 from the fund balance, covering \$150,000 for pickleball courts, \$250,000 for Project Coffee Economic Development Incentive Grant, and \$234,672 for other operational expenses. Several items

were not funded, such as additional fire department personnel, EMS services, and various capital outlay components. The current tax rate remained at \$0.35 per \$100 valuation, where one cent on the tax rate generates about \$72,554 in revenue. Total general fund expenditures and revenues were balanced at \$7,242,454. The general fund balance had been consistent over the past five years, with a fund balance policy at 50%, potentially reducing to 44% if all the assigned balance was used next year.

Town Manager Barlow elaborated on the Stormwater Enterprise Fund, which was self-supporting with a \$60 fee per residential unit, raising about \$157,574. He proposed removing the \$5 early payment credit due to debt service increases for the JetVac truck. Regarding solid waste, the contract with GFL maintained current rates, even with a 2.8% increase in GFL's charges to the town.

The public hearing was opened at 6:15 pm and the following individuals spoke.

Jamie Petani of 2102 Holly Hills Court shared her concerns about the \$50,000 allocation for land use development, indicating she did not recall when it was voted on.

Vicki Brown of 601 W. Broad Street inquired if the fire department's budget of approximately \$1.6 million included a large ladder truck.

Constance Crocker of 111 Jones Road asked for clarification on the \$250,000 loan for Project Coffee mentioned in the agenda packet.

Wayne Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road inquired about the \$213,000 not approved in the fire budget.

Junior Freeman of 714 W. Corbett Avenue spoke regarding fire department budgeting, specifically questioning the necessity and expense of acquiring a ladder truck considering existing equipment and limitations within the town.

The public hearing was closed at 6:26 pm.

Following the public hearing, the board discussed potential amendments to the budget:

- Removal of the \$50,000 allocation for the CAMA land use plan update.
- Adjustment to the fire department funding from the county, with the county committing to \$302,865 instead of the initially projected \$491,847.

Town Manager Barlow explained that removing the \$50,000 for the land use plan would reduce the planning department budget and the fund balance appropriation. He also noted that the change in county fire funding would increase the fund balance appropriation by \$188,982 to balance the budget.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the FY 2025/2026 Budget Ordinance, Tax Rate (\$0.35/\$100), Stormwater Ordinance Fee Schedule, and Salary Schedules with the removal of \$50,000 for the CAMA Land Use Plan Update

and adjustment to the Onslow County Fire funding at a difference of \$188,982 was unanimously approved.

### **Business Non-Consent**

#### *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 added, however, with no business scheduled it was recommended to cancel the July 8<sup>th</sup> regular meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Lisa Maness Prakash of 532 Sabiston Drive expressed concerns about rezonings and its impact on traffic and infrastructure. She mentioned a citizen group called Common Sense Swansboro that had collected over 1,000 signatures on a petition to pause growth and protect lands.

Terri Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road shared comments from social media regarding concerns about overdevelopment, traffic, and the loss of Swansboro's small-town feel. She emphasized the need for responsible growth and infrastructure planning.

Jamie Petani of 2102 Holly Hills Court raised issues about traffic problems, police department staffing, and garbage collection concerns. She also inquired about the fire department's activity during a recent event.

Meredith Meilleur of 220 River Reach Drive defended the land use plan process for the update that occurred in 2019. She emphasized the diverse stakeholder participation and the community's desire to protect Swansboro's character while managing growth thoughtfully.

Constance Crocker of 111 Jones Road in Hubert suggested implementing measures to prevent left turns at specific intersections to reduce accidents. She also stressed the need for infrastructure planning and inquired about the details of Project Coffee.

Vicki Brown of 601 Broad Street shared her thoughts on the importance of supporting economic growth while maintaining Swansboro's charm. She suggested considering conditional uses for B1 zoning to better control development types and stressed the need for attractive businesses that support both citizens and visitors.

Wayne Herbert of 102 Oyster Bay Road emphasized the importance of considering all citizens' voices in development decisions. He urged the board to be cautious about changing Swansboro and to prioritize the opinions of current residents.

Joyce Johnson of 195 Peninsula Manor Road in Hubert, stressed the importance of collaboration between Swansboro and surrounding areas. She expressed concerns about

overdevelopment and its impact on the area's appeal to both current and potential residents.

Tim Vannoy of 105 Cormorant Drive, spoke on concerns about the appearance of the former ABC store and car wash, requesting information on cleanup efforts and prevention of similar situations in the future.

Renee Isley of Nags Head North Carolina identified herself as a potential returnee to the area and expressed disappointment in the changes occurring in Swansboro. She emphasized the need for responsible development to maintain the town's appeal for future generations.

### **Manager's Comments**

Town Manager Barlow reported on the funding approval for the culvert replacement project on Highway 24 in front of the VFW across from Shore Drive. He stated that the total project cost was \$3,140,000, with work expected to begin in fiscal year 2027. Barlow noted that the Department of Transportation is actively acquiring the right of way to make the project possible.

### **Board Comments**

Commissioners expressed gratitude to both the staff and the public for their involvement and emphasized the value of public input. They also encouraged continued community engagement with the Board and highlighted the need for addressing the cleanup of the former ABC store site.

Commissioner Doug Eckendorf acknowledged the need to balance growth with maintaining the town's character. He discussed the challenges of funding necessary projects and services while keeping taxes low. Eckendorf emphasized his commitment to public safety and explained his perspective on controlled growth to support town services.

Mayor Justice apologized for the confusion caused by last-minute agenda changes and noted that the former ABC store had been notified to clean up by the second week of June. He discussed Project Coffee as a potentially beneficial development and ongoing efforts with county and state officials on issues like roads and fire services. He assured citizens that their input was valued and encouraged them to review his voting record and engage him in discussions about his positions.

### **Closed Session**

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf and with unanimous approval, the board entered closed session 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.

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 Turner, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.