

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
April 28, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Mayor William Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf, Commissioner Tamara Pieratti, and Commissioner Wayne Herbert. Commissioner Tim Vannoy was absent.

Call to Order

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 given.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, the agenda, as amended to remove the presentation of National Police Week and reschedule it to the next meeting, and the following consent items were unanimously approved.

- February 17, 2026, BOC & HPC Joint Special Meeting Minutes
- February 24, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes
- Resolution 2026-R6 in Support of Transportation Safety Projects and Initiatives Along NC 24
- Tax Refunds

Vehicle Tax

Campbell, Jade - \$40.40 - Tag Surrender

Love, Allison M & Derek Alan - \$120.09 - Military

Shoener, Chelsey E. & Michael P. - \$154.64 - Military

Shoener, Michael P. - \$63.56 - Military

Shoener, Michael P. & Chelsey E. - \$796.91 - Military

Thresher, Erik Petersen - \$46.17 - Sold/Traded

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Employee Introduction

Finance Director Sonia Johnson introduced Sean Ferguson as the newly hired Finance Clerk, sharing that he had moved to Swansboro in 2020. Sean held a bachelor's degree in Sports Casting from Full Sail University and had experience in restaurant management and finance, including a management role at Rucker John's overseeing 50 staff members and prior finance and payroll work at Red Smith Company. Mr. Ferguson expressed enthusiasm for joining the Swansboro community and was warmly welcomed by the Board.

Employee Recognition

Town Manager Jon Barlow recognized Kyle Littleton and Ryan Smith of the Town's Public Works Department. He reviewed that the department had recently undergone a

restructuring, separating infrastructure and facilities functions, and that Mr. Littleton had become the Crew Leader of Public Utilities and Mr. Smith had become the Crew Leader of Public Works.

National Public Works Week

Mayor Justice proclaimed May 17–23, 2026, as National Public Works Week, honoring the 66th annual observance by the American Public Works Association. The proclamation highlighted the crucial role of public works professionals in maintaining community health, safety, and quality of life, and called on citizens to appreciate and honor their efforts. The Board expressed appreciation to the Public Works staff in attendance for their continued dedication.

Municipal Clerks Week

Mayor Justice recognized Municipal Clerks Week, May 3-9, 2026, praising the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk as long-standing public servants. The proclamation noted the crucial role clerks played as a link between citizens, local governance, and government agencies while upholding impartiality. Mayor Justice also acknowledged Town Clerk Alissa Fender and Deputy Clerk Aliette Cuadro for their dedicated support.

Parks & Recreation 2025 Annual Review

Parks and Recreation Director Anna Stanley and Assistant Director Sara Elliott presented a 2025 annual review highlighting department accomplishments. The presentation reviewed was attached herein with the PowerPoint presentation of the meeting. Key points included an increase in daily visitors to approximately 18,000, up by 5,000 over the prior year; gym memberships nearly doubling to 78; and over 1,500 program registrations. The department introduced three new pickleball programs and added 248 new Pickleball League members. Community events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Touch-a-Truck, BarkFest, Halloweenie Roast and Trunk-or-Treat, and SantaFest all saw strong attendance, with several setting new attendance records.

The department raised approximately \$46,000 in festival sponsorships, including the addition of a new top-tier title sponsorship at \$7,500 purchased by Team Chevy. Grants of \$20,000 from Onslow County Tourism and \$6,500 from the Swansboro Tourism Development Authority were received, contingent on demonstrated economic impact. The estimated economic impact for 2025 was approximately \$170,000, lower than typical due to the cancellation of the Mullet Festival for weather. Estimated annual event attendance was 25,000, compared to a typical figure of approximately 40,000.

The presentation also highlighted expanded marketing through television partnerships with WITN and WNCT, event sponsorship packets for smaller park events developed by Assistant Director Elliott, and a variety of community partnerships supporting programming and festivals. Future plans included expanding pickleball, pursuing new grants, adding adult swings, and upgrading facilities. A successful new Walking Through

Swansboro program and expanded Safety Town initiatives were also introduced, with the Board commending the department's extensive service offerings.

Business Non-Consent

Emergency Vet Fund Program

Fire Chief Jacob Randall presented an overview of a newly established Emergency Veterinary Fund, to be named the Shelby Program. The initiative was prompted by a residential structure fire on April 14, in which a family dog was rescued, revived with donated pet oxygen masks, and transported to Swansboro Animal Hospital. The family, already facing the loss of their home, was confronted with the cost of emergency veterinary care, which the department sought to address through this fund.

Chief Randall noted that Swansboro Animal Hospital was the only 24-hour emergency veterinary facility in the region spanning from Hampstead to Havelock and extending toward LaGrange and Kinston, making the program regionally significant. The fund would operate on a donation basis and was not budgeted. Initial contributions from Wild Child Dog Training LLC, Kinston Kennels, and one anonymous community member covered the bill from the April 14 incident. The Swansboro Firefighters Association also committed to contributing.

In response to inquiries from the board, Chief Randall confirmed that a donation tab would be added to the Town website payment portal, and that donations by check should reference "Emergency Vet Fund" in the memo line and confirmed the region truly lacked additional 24-hour veterinary coverage, with reference to a national veterinary shortage affecting the area, noting that the Jacksonville facility now refers after-hours cases to Swansboro.

No formal action was required. The Board expressed strong support for the initiative.

Agreement for Seaside Arts Council Swan Project

Town Manager Jon Barlow presented a proposed agreement related to the Seaside Arts Council Swan Project. He explained that the Town had previously purchased three fiberglass swans as part of a community arts initiative organized by the Seaside Arts Council. Two swans are currently on display, one at Town Hall and one at the Visitor Center, with a third being prepared for installation at the Recreation Center. Over the course of the project, questions arose about the roles and responsibilities of the three parties involved: the Seaside Arts Council, the Town of Swansboro, and the artists. No formal agreement had been made to address those questions.

The proposed agreement established clear guidelines for all three parties going forward, including a provision that the Town and the artist would collaborate on a concept from the beginning and that the Town had to approve the design before production began.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, the Agreement for the Seaside Arts Council Swan Project was unanimously approved.

Monthly Financial Report as of March 31, 2026

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

- Revenues over expenditures showed a surplus of \$758,013
- Total departmental expenditures were at 61.21% of the budget, 13.79% below the monthly projection
- Stormwater Enterprise Fund reported a surplus of \$66,891, while the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund showed a surplus of \$11,382. Director Johnson noted that there could still be a need for a budget amendment for the Solid Waste Fund, which was being monitored closely.
- Outstanding debt and cash account balances had interest rates ranging between 3.4% and 3.5%

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:

- Schedule for Teacher of the Year presentation to Mr. Justice
- Schedule for Helen Gross to provide a presentation about her community farm

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

Town Manager Barlow updated the Board on several items:

- The Visitor Center renovation with RWS Construction had begun the previous week and was expected to take 4-6 weeks. Interior framing was nearly done. Public Works staff had started preparations to complete exterior painting before Pirate Fest.
- An upcoming sewer project on Hammocks Beach Road scheduled for May 5-6 would involve road open-cutting and temporary traffic detours.

Board Comments

Commissioner Pieratti thanked the public works team for their broad support across all departments and expressed appreciation to the clerks for their assistance.

Commissioner Herbert thanked all those in attendance and watching from home, expressed appreciation for staff, and highlighted the NC 24 signal synchronization initiative, noting its expected benefits for traffic flow and safety. He also commended the Swansboro Historical Association for the successful Historic Homes Tour and thanked the homeowners, volunteers, and supporters. Commissioner Herbert noted that the newly

formed Swansboro Appearance Commission had held its first meeting, with members expressing enthusiasm for their work.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway thanked all staff and reiterated his personal support for the Emergency Vet Fund, noting his personal affinity for the program's mission and emphasizing that animals were voiceless members of the community deserving of care.

Commissioner Eckendorf gave a special acknowledgment to the police department for National Police Week. He commended the clerks and Town Manager for managing a high volume of complex work and praised the Parks and Recreation presentation for demonstrating meaningful improvements to quality of life in Swansboro and the surrounding area, including residents of Hubert who also use town facilities. He also praised the Fire Chief's initiative with the Emergency Vet Fund, characterizing it as reflective of the strong community character represented in Swansboro's government.

Mayor Justice expressed overall pride in town staff and the community. He shared observations from the Historic Homes Tour, including a visit to the town cemetery and its historic trees. He commended the Parks and Recreation Department for drawing visitors from across the county. He also mentioned a regional initiative called the Bucket Brigade, aimed at helping disadvantaged residents learn to grow their own food, and expressed interest in potentially bringing the program to Swansboro in partnership with a local church and master gardeners.

Closed Session

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, with unanimous approval, the board entered closed session at 7:11 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; 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. 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 Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Herbert, the meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.