

**Town of Swansboro**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**September 10, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes**

In attendance: Mayor John Davis, Mayor Pro Tem William Justice, Commissioner Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Joseph Brown, and Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf.

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**Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Mayor Davis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comment**

Lisa Prakash and Andrea Wilmoth thanked Chief Taylor for his support in starting their Neighborhood Watch initiative in the downtown area, expressing hopes to have signs installed soon. They shared plans for workshops on bike safety and reporting suspicious activity. Chief Taylor shared that Officer Amanda Hipps would serve as the police liaison for the program.

Jerry Seddon of 210 Walnut Street shared that he had concerns about speeding issues downtown, with narrow streets and the proximity of homes to the road, there was little reaction time if a child or pet were to enter the street. He suggested reducing the speed limit to 15 mph and adding speed limit signs, as the current ordinance of 20 mph was not enforced due to lack of signage. He also proposed making Walnut Street one-way to improve traffic flow and potentially alleviate speeding issues.

Board members agreed to explore options for a one-way street and Police Chief Taylor would study and determine the feasibility of the changes.

Kim Kingrey of 212 Elm Street commented on congestion downtown, sharing that an incident had recently occurred involving a weapon due to a blocked street. She emphasized the difficulty for emergency vehicles to navigate the streets when cars were parked on both sides and advocated for one-way streets as a possible solution, though she acknowledged it could encourage speeding. Additionally she shared she was tired of picking up dead ducks and signage about not feeding might help.

**Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items**

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, the agenda and following consent items were approved unanimously.

- May 23, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes
- May 23, 2024, Closed Session Minutes

- May 28, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes
- May 28, 2024, Closed Session Minutes
- Budget Ordinance Amendment #2025-2

### **Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations**

#### *Onslow United Transit System Presentation (OUTS) Update*

Danny Ferucci, Executive Director of OUTS, provided an update of their transit services, including door-to-door transportation for the elderly, disabled, and Medicaid patients. He outlined the organization's growth since its founding, current ridership, and available services. Mr. Ferucci also highlighted recent developments, such as the resumption of limited out-of-county medical transport and a new Down East Express service in partnership with Carteret County. Board members asked questions about the program's trends and COVID-19 impacts, as well as options for increasing community awareness of the service.

#### *Board Appointments*

Clerk Fender reviewed that due to a resignation, there is now a vacancy for an ALT seat on the Historic Preservation Commission. There were two interested applicants, Tim Vannoy and Tom Pieratti, both currently serving on other boards (Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, respectively). Mrs. Fender shared that call for applications is sent several times throughout the year through Constant Contact, posted to Facebook and is always available on the Town's website. After discussion the board tabled appointments to allow more community members to apply, expressing a desire for fresh representation from the town's 4,000 residents.

### **Business Non-Consent**

#### *EOC/PSB Site Selection Committee Update*

Committee member Melissa Anderson reported on the progress of the Emergency Operations Center and Public Safety Building. The project received a \$3 million state grant for land improvements and acquisition, with the Rotary property as the primary option, now offering six acres including Ireland Avenue. Due to grant restrictions, Municipal Park property could not be used, and St. Mildred's property was no longer available. Efforts were underway to resolve ingress/egress issues, including discussions for a potential land swap to widen Ireland Avenue and consultations for Highway 24 access with the Rotary Property. Preliminary maps show no wetlands on the Rotary property, though formal confirmation may be sought. A portfolio with a feasibility study,

design-build schedule, and example projects were also being prepared. The committee will consider a new property option at its next meeting.

#### *Swansboro TDA Overview*

Finance Director Johnson presented an overview of the TDA and reviewed the current enabling legislation with the board. She shared that TDA Chairperson Randy Swanson, was available to answer questions.

Board members discussed the need to ensure that events, such as Tunnel 2 Towers and Swan Fest, were funded appropriately, potentially through tourism dollars rather than direct taxpayer funds. The board referenced a past resolution outlining TDA funding guidelines but noted that it may impose restrictions beyond what is mandated by state statute. Some members expressed a desire to review and possibly amend this resolution to allow greater flexibility in using TDA funds for local events that attract tourism.

The board proposed scheduling a workshop to review the resolution in detail, with guidance from the Town Attorney, to align it with North Carolina's general statute and to clarify TDA's role in funding decisions. Mr. Swanson expressed support for updating the resolution, requesting clarity on the TDA's responsibilities and boundaries. He noted that anyone is welcome to submit a grant request for TDA funding, which the board will review within 30 days of submission, either in a regular or special meeting.

The board agreed to proceed with scheduling a workshop for further discussion on this matter.

#### *CPSE – Community Risk Assessment-Standards of Cover Adoption*

Fire Chief Randall reviewed that the Town of Swansboro Fire Department was 1 of 10 agencies selected to participate in the Center for Public Safety Excellence's Beta Testing for the Community Risk Assessment (CRA) / Standards of Cover (SOC) Certificate Program. The CRA/SOC is a significant component of completing the Agency Accreditation process. An 86-page report detailing fire and non-fire risks in the Swansboro and White Oak River districts and requested the board's formal approval to validate their assessment methods and data was included in the documentation provided to the board. This program would position the department among the first 12 agencies internationally to achieve certification, enhance service quality and accountability.

Fire Chief Randall highlighted key report findings, including increased EMS and fire incidents linked to population and commercial growth, and a shift to 90th percentile response metrics for more accurate performance evaluation. Additionally, he outlined

plans for monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting to improve transparency and support ISO ratings and accreditation goals.

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Turner, with unanimous approval Resolution 2024-R9 was adopted approving and accepting, the Community Risk Assessment-Standards of Cover document and performance metrics for the Swansboro Fire Department.

#### *Visitor Center Repair and Maintenance*

Manager Barlow reviewed that the Visitors Center located at 203 Church Street had evidence of mold growing on the walls, ceiling, cabinets and outlets fixtures. This condition necessitated the need to close the building until the problem could be remediated. Right Coast Solutions responded to assess the problem and they estimated a remediation cost of \$15,250.

Board members expressed concerns about ongoing expenses and maintenance issues in the building, including poor ventilation, lack of vapor barriers, and inadequate insulation that contributed to mold growth. Several voiced frustrations over the continuous taxpayer-funded repairs on the building, which had received substantial investments after Hurricane Florence in 2019. They discussed the possibility of selling the property, given its low visitor numbers and maintenance challenges, with options for protective deed restrictions to preserve its historical significance. However, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the remediation plan, and some officials suggested seeking additional evaluations to identify the specific mold types and ensure proper treatment methods.

Overall, the board agreed to proceed with remediation but will consider further analysis and potentially moving forward with selling the property as a fiscally responsible decision.

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Turner, unanimous approval was given to authorize staff to enter into a contract with Right Coast Solutions to remediate the mold at the Visitors Center.

#### *Bicentennial Park Dockwalk Extension Project Update*

Manager Barlow reviewed that on August 13, 2024, bid results were presented to the Board for the Bicentennial Park Dockwalk Extension Project. Carteret Marine submitted a bid for \$233,200. This bid was significantly over the total grant project award of \$158,350. The Town Manager was directed to work with the Project Engineer and Carteret Marine to look for ways to lower the cost of the project. On September 9th, John

Wade, Project Engineer, submitted a list of design changes resulting in a reduction to \$226,200, leaving a deficit of \$67,900. With the last grant extension set to expire in April 2025, Mr. Barlow shared that he had concerns about potential delays from re-bidding and their impact on funding.

Board members discussed the value of the project for local tourism and business, with positive input from both community and tourism advocates.

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, the bid was awarded for the Dockwalk Extension Project to Carteret Marine in the amount of \$226,200. Appropriating \$67,900 from fund balance for the costs not covered by the original grant award. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### *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:

- One-way street considerations for Walnut & Elm

#### **Public Comment**

Linda Thornley of 104 Elizabeth Way, voiced concerns about the allocation of \$68,000 for the Bicentennial Dockwalk Extension Project, emphasizing that insufficient attention had been given to a visitor center. She highlighted the importance of having a downtown visitor center as a hub for directing tourists to local attractions, restaurants, shops, and other businesses, which could have boosted the community's economy. Thornley urged the commissioners to reconsider the need for a downtown visitor center, particularly in a historic building, as a crucial component of supporting tourism and addressing the community's needs.

Fred Schachter of 148 Smallwood Road in Hubert and President of Friends of Hammocks Beach informed the board that the Hammocks Beach Park campground had officially opened, which would bring a new influx of tourism. He provided a construction update on the island bathroom repairs, stating that the drainage field was complete, tanks were awaiting delivery, and water lines were being installed, with the island expected to be operational by mid-winter. Regarding the building that was being renovated, it was estimated to have a November completion date but expressed doubts it would be finished on time. He shared plans for a February event coinciding with Black History Month to honor former members of the Black Indigenous Association and other parks, which would serve as the building's presentation.

Schachter suggested that the board consider Mr. Woodard's centrally located building downtown as a potential visitor center, noting its suitability as office space. He encouraged them to explore this option as a great addition for the town.

Junior Freeman of 714 West Corbett Avenue, recounted the history of the visitor center building, indicating it was originally intended to address parking needs and provide public bathrooms for downtown merchants. Mr. Freeman suggested the building could still serve as a visitor center with self-guided tours and tourism information. He noted that a recent flood variance might complicate redevelopment due to potential costs exceeding 50% of the building's value.

### **Board Comments**

Board members expressed their appreciation for various public safety efforts, the quality of staff work, and the participation of the community in the meeting.

Mayor Davis suggested that the Visitor Center could be relocated at Old Town Hall, expressed his thoughts about changing the funding capabilities of the TDA, and invited all those interested in attending the September 11<sup>th</sup> ceremony at 8:30 am at the public safety building.

### **Closed Session**

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner with unanimous approval, the board entered closed session at 7:55 pm pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(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 amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract 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.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.