

**Town of Swansboro**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**June 4, 2024, Special 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. The purpose of this special meeting was for consideration to provide funding for the Tunnel 2 Towers Event, SwanFest, One Place, and Carolina Museum of the Marines.

Mayor Davis reviewed the following considerations:

*Tunnel to Towers Event:* 5K run/walk typically held around September 11th, with staff support required. It was noted that the financial cost of supporting this event had not been explicitly documented because the support was in kind by providing staff to support. The cost of staff support was estimated to be around \$3,200.

*SwanFest:* Funding had been provided annually for approximately 14 years. Recent information suggested that funding might be at risk, however, \$6,500 had been allocated in the budget for FY 24/25 and had not been removed.

*One Place and Carolina Museum of the Marines:* One Place supports abused children in Swansboro and impacts around 1,000 children. The museum had received significant support from Jacksonville, the state, and the county. Discussion focused on whether the town should consider a one-time donation to both organizations.

Mary Pat Smey, Tunnel 2 Towers event organizer, shared her desire for the event to continue as it had in the past, without any cash transactions. She hoped for ongoing support similar to previous years, and if the town could no longer sustain this support, she was willing to seek sponsorship elsewhere. She noted that none of this had been communicated with her, and the idea of in-kind sponsorship using public resources was not discussed with her until recently. Ms. Smey expressed that she wanted a clear commitment from the town to support the event this year, and if necessary, she was open to exploring other options if the town could not continue its support. She emphasized the need for some sort of commitment for this year to avoid further delays.

In response to inquires from the board Ms. Smey clarified the following details:

- Launch of announcements was scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup> but was paused due to getting the notice the town would not fund the event

- Donations/Funds come from fee that is paid to participate in the 5K, business sponsorships either monetary or in-kind
- The primary mission of the Tunnel 2 Towers event was to remember those lost in the 9/11 tragedy and support those still here
- The foundation covers cost for bibs, shirts, finisher medals, timing company, signage, and porta johns
- The estimated amount of people in attendance of the event last year was around 1,500

It was suggested that funding for Tunnel to Towers and SwanFest as recurring events should be processed through the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). The rationale was that the TDA is designed to support non-profits and events that promote tourism. The potential for in-kind support or cash value contributions through the TDA was discussed.

Finance Director Sonia Johnson clarified that the TDA operates with an annual budget similar to the town's. Grant requests must be submitted 30 days prior to a meeting, with the schedule available online. She offered assistance with the application process and noted that any financial matters related to the TDA or town could be addressed to her. She also pointed out that contributions to agencies were listed under the governing body section of the budget.

A one-time donation was suggested for the One Place and Carolina Museum of the Marines organizations, given their unique contributions to the community and their need for support. Recommendation was made to wait and not make a decision on funding for these until later on in the budget year, it was also noted that the Museum of the Marine was not located in Swansboro.

By consensus of the board, no funding appropriations were authorized for One Place and Carolina Museum of the Marines.

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, funding in-kind for the Tunnel 2 Towers event of \$3,200 was approved unanimously. A recommendation was given to both Tunnel 2 Towers and SwanFest representatives to apply for funding through the TDA for next year's event.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.