

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
June 25, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Mayor Pro Tem Tursi 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 Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the agenda, as amended to move the *Budget Ordinance Amendment #2024-11* out of consent for discussion, and the remaining below consent items were approved unanimously.

- March 12, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes
- March 14, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes
- Ordinance Amendment #4 to the Swansboro Bicentennial Park Boardwalk Extension with Public Day Docks Project
- Tax Refund Requests
- Audit Contract with Gregory T. Redman, CPA (July 1, 2023, thru June 30,2024)

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Several recognitions were presented, with Commissioner Conaway reading the proclamations:

Swansboro Historical Association: Commissioner Conaway began by acknowledging the Swansboro Historical Association for their efforts in preserving the town's heritage. He read a proclamation that praised the association for successfully organizing the 2024 Historic Homes Tour, which took place on April 27, 2024. This event allowed the public to explore eight to ten historic homes, offering insights into the community's history and cultural legacy. The board expressed gratitude to the members, volunteers, and supporters for their dedication, which contributed to the event's success and enriched the cultural fabric of the town.

Teacher of the Year: Commissioner Conaway also read a proclamation recognizing Marissa Bape from Swansboro Middle School as the 2023-2024 Onslow County Teacher of the Year. She was honored for her nine years of dedication, innovation, and compassion in teaching. Her commitment to mental health and serving the less fortunate was also highlighted. Marissa was acknowledged for her exceptional contributions to the academic and personal growth of her students, and her recognition as Teacher of the Year reflected her excellence in education.

Assistant Principal of the Year: The final proclamation, read by Commissioner Conaway, honored Gary Cassidy, also from Swansboro Middle School, as the 2023-2024 Onslow County Assistant Principal of the Year. His leadership, dedication, and positive impact on students, staff, and the community were highlighted. His innovative approaches and compassionate guidance were noted as key factors in his success. The board expressed appreciation for his contributions to education and acknowledged the legacy he was building within the school and the broader community.

Presentation – Ricky's Retreat

Wendie Kidwell presented information on Ricky's Retreat, a non-profit she founded after losing her son to suicide, provides free, 24/7 mental health support for young people aged 14-24 through peer-led services. The organization, started in her backyard, focused on reducing suicides and overdoses in the community, offering a safe space where individuals feel heard and supported. With a team of board members and a mental health advisory committee, Ricky's Retreat has made over 70 contacts, saving lives through its outreach and partnerships, including a collaboration with the Swansboro Police Department.

In response to inquiries from the board, Ms. Kidwell provided the following information.

- Age ranges of individuals vary greatly
- Utilizes a peer support model, where individuals with lived experiences provide guidance and emotional support to those facing similar mental health challenges, fostering healing through shared understanding
- People seeking help often contacted Ricky's Retreat through their website, social media platforms, or by messaging directly, with some preferring in-person visits while others opted for phone or online communication.

Arts by the Sea, Taste of the Town Winners

Anna Stanley and Deb Pylypiw presented awards for the 2024 Taste of the Town event, recognizing local restaurants for their contributions. The Burrow won Best Appetizer for their crab dip, represented by manager Aric Oostra on behalf of Randy Swanson.

Preston's Corner won Best Entree for their tropical pork chops but could not attend the event. Lastly, Il Cigno Italiano received the award for Best Dessert with their key lime cheesecake.

Business Non-Consent

Monthly Financial Report as of May 31, 2024

Finance Director Johnson reviewed details from the monthly financial report, attached herein with the power point presentation of the meeting.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mrs. Johnson clarified the following.

- The projections were considered on target based on last year's data
- Auditor would be onsite to conduct the annual audit in mid-September

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. There were no new agenda items introduced.

Items moved from consent

Budget Ordinance Amendment #2024-11

Commissioner Eckendorf requested the budget amendment be pulled for discussion. He inquired about the timing for the budget's readiness for board and mayoral signatures. Town Clerk Fender clarified that the budget for FY 24/25 had already been adopted after required the public hearing on June 11, 2024, with the mayor having signed the ordinance. Commissioner Eckendorf then expressed he wanted a focus on future budget planning and suggested to schedule a special meeting with commissioners to discuss a strategic approach and identify tools for improving efficiency. He reiterated his commitment during his political campaign to reducing property taxes, stressing the need for thorough examination and the use of available tools to ensure efficient town operations and government. He also acknowledged the challenges ahead and emphasized the importance of making progress on these issues before moving forward, while remaining dedicated to fulfilling campaign promises and ensuring effective town management.

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, Budget Ordinance Amendment #2024-11 was unanimously approved.

Public Comment

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board regarding items not listed on the agenda. No comments were given.

Manager's Comments

Manager Barlow provided an update on the status of Shore Drive resurfacing, sharing that worker encountered obstacles as they worked to complete the milling task. Notices were sent out to the residents on Shore Drive informing them that the pavement company would be arriving on Friday and Saturday to complete the project.

Additionally, he shared that the sidewalks were completed at the One Harbor Church property connecting to Municipal Park. The Morganser Road patchwork had also been completed.

Board Comments

Commissioner Eckendorf commented on the recent special meeting covering funding for Tunnel to Towers, and SwanFest, and the TDA. He referenced the TDA charter, amended in May 2014, which authorized expenditures for tourism promotion, including publishing materials and attracting tourists. He addressed concerns from the Arts Council about potential budget cuts, emphasizing that the town had consistently funded them for years. Commissioner Eckendorf noted that travelers that come to local events contribute to retail taxes, which support tourism-related funding through occupancy taxes. He planned to attend the next TDA meeting to discuss whether property taxes or general funds should contribute to the TDA and hoped to receive feedback beforehand.

Mayor Pro Tem Justice brought up a longstanding issue regarding building codes and enforcement, which had been unresolved for nearly five years. He expressed frustration about the lack of progress and emphasized the need for consistent adherence to building codes for everyone. He suggested that town staff should work with Randy and other local officials to develop and implement a code. Mayor Pro Tem Justice highlighted the importance of following ordinances and codes and hoped that the situation could be resolved soon.

Aric Oostra, manager with Il Cigno Italiano and the Boro, addressed the board and shared that the process involved working with architects and other professionals to finalize the plans for the proposed property. Additionally, different engineers addressed the town's concerns, ensuring that all documentation for various jobs was handled appropriately.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Brown, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.