

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
May 7, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes

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

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 discussion/direction on the FY 24/25 Budget, and discussion/direction on the Onslow County EMS Memorandum of Agreement.

Public Comment

Maureen Wells, member of the Seaside Arts Council shared that the SwanFest Concert series held each year downtown was celebrating its 15 years. She hoped that the board would still allocate funds in the upcoming budget to the Seaside Arts Council so the program can continue.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mrs. & Mr. Wells clarified the following.

- The program cannot prove “heads on beds” would be accomplished so they have not requested funding from Swansboro TDA this year
- 2 years ago, funding was provided by the TDA, and not by the Town
- SwanFest cost were approximately \$2,000 per event/concert averaged out

Finance Director Johnson recommended that they apply for funding from the TDA to be heard.

Adoption of Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the agenda was adopted unanimously.

Business Non-Consent

Discussion/direction on the FY 24/25 Budget

Interim Manager Barlow reviewed that a draft FY 24/25 Budget was prepared for discussion and further guidance. Along with the Finance Director, they had met with each department director to date in preparation of this draft and reduced department requests to provide a “net zero” option.

Funded highlights included:

- 2% COLA
- New Personnel \$72,630 (Police Lieutenant & Police Officer (Grant Submitted))

- NC Orbit Retirement: Increase .75% basis points
- NCLM Property & Casualty 17.5% increase
- NCLM Workers Comp 10% increase
- NCLM Group Health Insurance increased 4%
- Capital Outlay \$570,000-Funded using Loan Proceeds

Major budget requests that were unfunded (to date):

- Recreation Coordinator-FT: \$57,534
- Recreation Assistant-PT: \$10,851
- Dock Attendants-PT (2): April 1st – November 23rd) \$20,884
- Firefighter II-FT: (3) January 2025-June 2025: \$105,852
- Capital Reserve: \$225,000 (Fire), \$16,000 (Police), \$102,500 (Parks & Recreation)

The current draft was balanced with \$688,000 appropriation from fund balance for items requested by the Board of Commissioners at the April 23rd meeting.

- Sidewalks-\$500,000
- Christmas Lights-\$20,000
- Town Hall Digital Sign-\$18,000
- Pickleball Court-\$150,000

Manager Barlow shared that there was no training/continued education for personnel available with this budget and urged the board to consider finding a way to fund those. Additionally, there were also no funds available for emergency repairs such as failed a/c units, or emergency building maintenance. Mr. Barlow shared that any further reduction from here could end up cutting into employee benefits and/or positions.

Board members discussed the following items

- Merit raises vs. COLA
- Public safety salary improvements to be competitive, either provide pay raises or a bonus of some sort.
- Large events held using town resources should fund themselves such as the Tunner 2 Towers event.
- Software packages recently acquired should provide enough support/assistance that current personnel could get more pay instead of hiring new personnel.
- No use of Fund Balance for reoccurring expenses.
- Continue working budget toward 1 cent tax reduction

The final directive given for the budget was to work towards at least a 1 cent tax reduction by reducing the budget further, provide a merit raise increase of up to 4% instead of COLA, and provide some type of additional funding for Police and Fire personnel.

The board took a recess from 7:27 pm to 7:35 pm.

Discussion/direction on the Onslow County EMS Memorandum of Agreement

Mayor Davis reviewed that the Onslow County EMS that was previously housed in the Swansboro Public Safety Facility had moved to another location without providing written notice as required by the Memorandum of Agreement that was established. Mayor Davis along with other Board members met with the Onslow County Board of Commissioners to discuss the situation. The reasons for this relocation provided were due to cost savings and availability of storage. At the end of the discussion directions were provided that a 60-day notice would be given to the Town from the County.

In response to inquiries from the board, Chief Randall clarified the following related to the Town establishing its own EMS services.

- The process begins with having a plan in place
- There would be the need of additional personnel and to acquire state required equipment
- This process would require approval from the county
- Time to establish/get approval was estimated at 6 months or longer
- Paramedics have standards for administering medications and there should be 1 per shift which would amount to 3 paramedics on staff
- Cost recovery fees could be amended to charge county residents

With the relocation of EMS services to a location outside of Town limits, board members felt that response times to Swansboro residents would be greatly impacted. Fire Chief Jacob Randall was directed to research the option of the Town establishing EMS services and create a plan to present to the board at a future meeting, as well as amending the cost recovery plan to charge Onslow County residents.

Adjournment

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