

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
August 27, 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.

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

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board regarding items listed on the agenda. No comments were made.

Adoption of Agenda and Consent Items

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Conaway, the agenda, as amended to add the purchase of a building inspector vehicle and closed session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11 (a)(5) to discuss negotiating the price or other terms for the acquisition of real property, and the remaining consent items below were approved unanimously.

- May 14, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes
- May 14, 2024, Closed Session Minutes

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

True Justice International Community Presentation

Tracy Kline, Executive Director of True Justice International, presented on the widespread issue of human trafficking, particularly in Eastern North Carolina, emphasizing that trafficking often involved coercion from close contacts rather than strangers. True Justice, a nonprofit, supports survivors through long-term recovery programs focused on trauma and addiction, rather than only emergency shelter. The organization collaborates with law enforcement, conducts outreach in vulnerable locations, and offers community education on recognizing trafficking signs, particularly through school programs. Ms. Kline share that the best way to helps would be through donations, volunteering, and attending events like the annual Oyster Roast which would be held on November 22nd and extended an invitation to all who would like to attend.

Board Appointments - Swansboro Swimming Pool Committee

Clerk Fender reviewed that at its August 13, 2024, meeting, the Board approved Resolution 2024-R8 to create the Swansboro Swimming Pool Committee and appointed

Matthew Prane, Scott Evans and Brooks Barnett. It was requested that the committee include Swansboro residents, and Mr. Prane was directed to select additional members that live in Town. Mr. Prane had selected Renee Cassiano and Laura Grimes-Holland.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the recommended members were appointed unanimously.

Public Hearing

UDO Text Amendment to Section 152.179 Table of Permitted/Special Uses and Section 152.212 Use Standards

Planner Rebecca Brehmer reviewed that after a recent Board of Adjustment meeting for an appeal to an administrative decision involving boat/boat trailer storage on an empty residential lot, Staff was directed by the Board of Commissioners to present a text amendment to allow boat/boat trailer storage in Town.

The proposed text amendments included adding “boat/boat Trailer” storage to the Table of Permitted/Special Uses as a “Use Standard” which had additional criteria for the use outlined in Section 152.212 Use Standards. All boat/boat Trailer Storage would be permitted in all zoning districts, if the use meets the criteria outlined in the use standards. For B1 and M1 zone districts, the proposed addition to the Table of Permitted/Special Uses will be permitted use, as it is already allowed in our ordinance as a use. The Planning Board unanimously recommended approval with the suggestion of rewording (Y) Use Boat/Boat Trailer Storage, part (e) from Section 152.212 Use Standards to be less restrictive at their August 6, 2024, regular meeting.

The Board discussed the appropriateness of the 25% storage limit, with one member expressing concern it might be too large, while others felt it would suffice due to personal use restrictions.

The public hearing was opened at 6:52 pm, the following individuals spoke.

Doug Rogers of 406 Elm Street expressed his support for allowing boat storage without fencing or screening, sharing that he would rather see boats & trailers than fencing.

Gerald Lissette of 313 Water Street shared that he also supported removing Section E, advocating for property rights.

Tom Peratti of 708 Meeting Park Lane also supported eliminating the screening requirement entirely and suggested adding language to ensure properties remain well-maintained and orderly.

The public hearing was closed at 6:56 pm.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Brown, Ordinance 2024-O16 amending Section 152.179 Table of Permitted/Special Uses and Section 152.212 Use Standards was approved unanimously with the provision of changing (E) to read “The property is to be well-maintained in a neat and clean condition, free of overgrown grass, weeds, brush, and debris”.

Business Non-Consent

Carpet Replacement in the Community Room and Assembly Room

Manager Barlow reviewed that at the August 13, 2024, meeting, the Board directed staff to seek estimates for replacement of the carpet in both the Community Room in Town Hall and the Assembly Room in Emmerton School. Estimates were requested for both high-end and low-end products, and the proposals received ranged from approximately \$9,000 to \$50,000. He recommended opting for carpet tiles from Watkins Flooring Company due to their ease of replacement and sound-dampening qualities, recommending three additional cases for replacement needs. The high-end tiles were noted to be durable, lasting an estimated 15-20 years with proper maintenance.

Public Works Director Bates shared that he would select a color that would improve the appearance of the rooms and would also ensure that the carpet would be cleaned regularly and kept in good repair.

On a motion by Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Eckendorf, the appropriation of the necessary funds from fund balance for the replacement of the flooring material in both facilities, resulting in a budget amendment to be provided at the next meeting was unanimously approved.

Sidewalk Priority Project List

Manager Barlow reviewed that in 2020 a sidewalk project priority list was developed. In all, 9 areas were selected to focus on the construction of new sidewalks and four of which had been completed. A partnership with NCDOT and JUMPO facilitated the design and construction of several of the priority areas. Due to easement acquisition difficulties and project funding no other projects were performed. The board had allocated \$500,000 for the remaining five projects and Mr. Barlow shared that there could be potential federal funding with an 80-20 split, suggesting that this funding source could extend the town’s budget further. The board decided to shift priorities, and reorganized the priorities as follows and agreed to authorize staff to seek engineering services for the sidewalk projects, focusing on the updated priorities.

- Priority 1 – Location: Main St. Extension from One Harbor Church to Old Hammock Road, then Old Hammock Road to High Speed Gear

- Priority 2 – Location: Southside Hwy 24 from Walmart to Queens Creek Road Intersection, then Intersection to Swansboro High School/Queens Creek Elementary School entrance
- Priority 3 – Location: Hammocks Beach Road from Moore’s BBQ to Park Place, and Soccer Association to Cormorant Drive
- Priority 4 – Location: Pineland Drive parcel to connect to the existing sidewalk at the Cottages
- Priority 5 – Location: Gaps on Northside of Hwy 24 from Old Hammocks Road to Downtown

Vehicle Purchase for Building Inspections

Manager Barlow reviewed that the building inspector's truck needed replacement. Sanders Ford offered a Ford Maverick at the state contract price of \$28,892.37.

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner, purchase of a Ford Maverick at the state contract price of \$28,892.37, resulting in a budget amendment to be provided at the next meeting was unanimously approved.

Monthly Financial Report as of July 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.

- A deficient would show until the ad valorem taxes begin coming in around November.
- Governing Body and Admin Services departments appeared high due to annual dues that get paid at the start of the Fiscal Year
- Stormwater billing had been sent and a bill notifications sent via email, explaining that these were notifications of availability in the online portal rather than the invoices themselves. The online notification feature was temporarily disabled to address any confusion.
- EOC/PSB Funds and Sidewalk funds were together in the TD Bank account but delineated.

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.

Public Comment

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

Manager's Comments

Manager Barlow shared that a meeting had been held with the engineer and contractor to explore redesign options and alternative materials to lower costs for the Dockwalk Project. A final estimate was not yet available, but staff expected it by the next meeting.

The new digital sign was estimated to be installed and operational around September 11th.

Board Comments

Board members expressed gratitude to attendees, encouraging continued participation to strengthen community involvement and communication. Staff were commended for their dedication and the positive work environment they fostered.

Mayor Pro Tem Justice shared that he had concerns about the Dockwalk project specifically at the point where it crossed under the bridge. That area was not passable during high tide and sometimes became slippery.

Commissioner Eckendorf shared that he felt some police presence was needed at the High School to help with the traffic issues.

Mayor Davis shared that he had been working with the school on some changes that could help with the traffic issues at the school

Closed Session

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Commissioner Turner with unanimous approval the board entered closed session at 7:48 pm pursuant to NCGS 138.143-11 (a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege, and (5) to discuss negotiating the price or other terms for the acquisition of real property, and the remaining consent items below were approved unanimously.

Pursuant to a motion duly made and seconded in closed session the board returned to open session.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Turner, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.