Town of Swansboro
Appearance Commission
June 18, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Cynthia LaCorte, Kim Kingrey, Claire Cole, Larry Philpott, and Doug Rogers. Linda Thornley and Nancy Palbicke were absent.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am.

Approval of Minutes
On a motion by Mr. Philpott, seconded by Mr. Rogers, the May 21, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

Business
Final Bi-Laws
Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed that at the Appearance Commission's special meeting on May 21, 2026, the draft by-laws were reviewed and approved as presented. The by-laws were provided in final format for the Commission's consideration and formal vote to recommend approval and forward them to the Board of Commissioners for final adoption.

On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Vice-Chair Rogers, approval was unanimously given to recommend the Appearance Commission Bi-Laws to the Board of Commissioners for final approval.

Diagonal Parking on Front Street Consideration
Town Clerk Fender reviewed the staff findings on the feasibility of diagonal parking on Front Street as requested at the special meeting on May 21, 2026. She clarified a detail from the previous meeting, noting that the reason diagonal parking was not feasible due to the width of Front Street being only 27 feet, not just a loss of parking spaces as originally recalled. A minimum of 18 feet was required for a diagonal parking space, which would not leave enough room to accommodate the required 10-foot travel lane. She noted that the existing parallel parking is grandfathered in under older standards, and that Front Street falls approximately two feet short of current state requirements.

In response to inquiries from the Board, Town Clerk Fender or Town Manager Jon Barlow clarified the following:

- The angle of the diagonal spaces made no difference in the ability to meet state parking requirements and travel lane size
- Parking standards were state-regulated and could not be bypassed by a Historic District code or waiver

- Emergency vehicle access would be considerably affected if the travel lane were any smaller than it was at that time.

Potential Future Projects Discussion
The Commission held a roundtable discussion on several potential future projects.

- Saltwater Grill Landscape Enhancement

Vice-Chair Rogers led discussion on a landscape enhancement project in the area near Saltwater Grill. He noted that the property in question was privately owned by Melissa Anderson, but that the space was used by the public in a manner similar to town property. He shared that he had reached out and received a positive initial response, but no further discussion had occurred. Mr. Rogers mentioned practical considerations about the type of materials to be used, including concerns about flooding in the waterfront area, salt water exposure, and the need to consider pervious versus impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff. He indicated his intent to engage one other commission member to speak directly with the property owner about her ideas and to obtain some preliminary pricing, so that when the commission moved toward fundraising, they would have a defined scope and cost.

Manager Barlow noted that if the commission wished to pursue work on private property, a formal agreement, release, or waiver from the owner would be needed. He also indicated that any funds raised for such a project would need to flow through the town's finance department, as the commission was a public body.

Mrs. Kingrey shared, based on prior experience, that when the Historic Preservation Commission had previously researched fundraising for similar purposes, they were advised that funds could not flow directly through the town and instead had to be channeled through a nonprofit organization. She indicated that an arrangement had previously been made with the local historical association to serve that function. Town Clerk Fender requested that Kingrey share whatever documentation existed from that prior research so the commission could understand what had already been explored. Manager Barlow agreed to research the specific question of whether enabling legislation for appearance commissions might prohibit or restrict fundraising activities.

Mr. Philpott raised the importance of considering flood and storm resilience for any waterfront improvements, noting that materials would need to be able to withstand high water events. He also emphasized the need for a coordinated streetscape plan to ensure that any enhancements were consistent in appearance with future improvements across the waterfront, covering elements such as lighting, signage, and paving materials. He observed that past waterfront improvements had been somewhat inconsistent due to a lack of a unified design framework.

- Holiday Lights, Solar Lights, & Signs for display on completed projects

These items were noted as future agenda topics assigned to specific commission members for follow-up at a future meeting.

Future Meeting Agenda Item Discussion

Chair LaCorte recommended that the Commission apply a structured approach to its future planning efforts. She proposed that Commission members identify their goals for the next two years, prioritize those objectives, and develop corresponding cost estimates. She noted that this approach would enable more focused and effective planning.

Mr. Philpott highlighted several unimplemented town plans, including the gateway corridor and waterfront enhancement plans, which had been affected by staff changes and shifting priorities. He suggested a series of workshops to establish target areas, align Commission activities with those existing plans, and support the Board of Commissioners through informed recommendations. Philpott also addressed the incomplete wayfinding and signage initiative, which had been aimed at creating a consistent sense of place in Swansboro through street and waterfront signage. He proposed revitalizing that effort to ensure coherence in community signage.

Discussion among the board resulted in the following future agenda topics being identified, along with assignments to individual members or staff members for gathering further details.

1. Saltwater Grill Landscape Enhancement (Doug)
2. Holiday Lights (Linda)
3. Solar Lights (Nancy)
4. Signs for Display on completed projects (further discussion)
5. Appearance Project Program (Cynthia)
6. Property of the Month or Quarter (Kim)
7. Streetscapes (further discussion)
8. Fundraising options/details (Town Staff)
9. Gardening Club (Claire)

Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Vice-Chair Rogers, the meeting adjourned at 10:18 am.