

**Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners
March 10, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes**

In attendance: Mayor William Justice, Mayor Pro Tem Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf, Commissioner Tamara Pieratti, and Commissioner Wayne Herbert. Commissioner Tim Vannoy was absent.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm and Mayor Justice 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 Pieratti, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, the agenda as prepared and the following consent item was unanimously approved.

- January 13, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes (Corrected)

Appointments/Recognitions/Presentations

Oath of Office for Officer Daniel McLaughlin

Mayor Justice administered the oath of office to Officer Daniel McLaughlin. Police Chief Dwayne Taylor welcomed Officer McLaughlin, noting he came from Carteret County and was a graduate of West Carteret High School.

Police Department 2025 Annual Report

Police Chief Dwayne Taylor presented the 2025 annual report, highlighting how the department managed safety across neighborhoods, businesses, and major roads with a team of sworn and reserve officers. They responded to numerous incidents including break-ins, disturbances, and traffic accidents, and actively engaged in community programs such as National Night Out. Recognition was given to the Officer of the Year, Cadet of the Year, and an officer who received the Purple Heart for a duty-related injury. The department added three officers in 2025 and offered services like vacation checks and wellness calls. Improvements included new vehicle graphics and donated gym equipment. Future goals focused on recruitment, risk assessment, accreditation, grant seeking, and enhanced community and social media engagement. The PowerPoint slides he reviewed are attached to the minutes herein.

Board members expressed strong support for the police department, highlighting effective community engagement, increased visibility, and positive relationships with

residents. They recognized the department's workload, professionalism, and improved staffing, and praised leadership and team morale while showing interest in supporting future goals.

Public Hearing

Rezoning Request- Parcel ID 012535 (Swansboro Loop Road)

Town Planner, Rebecca Brehmer reviewed that Pinnacle Construction and Development, LLC, on behalf of property owners, Family Freedom, LLC had submitted a rezoning request for a property on Swansboro Loop Road from RA - Residential/Agricultural to R10SF - Residential. The property was located in Swansboro's ETJ, and was further identified as tax parcel ID 012535, and the total acreage requested for rezoning was +/- 1 acre.

Planner Brehmer explained that the applicant was under contract to purchase the property contingent upon approval of the rezoning request, with plans to subdivide the parcel for construction of single-family homes. She noted that under the existing RA zoning, which required a minimum lot size of one and a half acres, subdivision of the one-acre parcel was not feasible; however, an R10 designation would have allowed for 10,000-square-foot lots and made subdivision possible. Planner Brehmer stated that although residential use was permitted within the RA designation, the request was determined to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Area Management land use plan, despite nearby properties being zoned R10SF and R20SF. She further reported that the Planning Board initially reviewed the request on December 2, 2025, and did not recommend approval due to this inconsistency, and after the Board of Commissioners returned the matter for reconsideration at its January 27, 2026 meeting due to a potential voting error, the Planning Board reviewed the request again at a special meeting on February 12, 2026, and maintained its recommendation against approval. Planner Brehmer also provided additional context on surrounding properties, noting that several nearby parcels had been rezoned over time from RA to other residential or planned classifications, including adjacent and nearby developments now zoned R10SF, R20SF, or designated as planned unit developments.

In response to inquiries from the board, Planner Brehmer clarified the following:

- The adjacent properties at 233 and 229 Swansboro Loop Road were confirmed to remain zoned RA, and both currently contained existing dwellings under that designation.
- Additional development on the adjacent parcel zoned R10 was not anticipated and it was further explained that due to the presence of existing structures on the property would make subdivision difficult.

- The future land use map was clarified as a general, forward-looking planning tool rather than a direct reflection of current zoning, which explained why some previously rezoned properties were not shown as such on the map.
- The timing of nearby rezonings was confirmed, with the Sand Dollar Homes property having been rezoned to R20SF in 2024, while the adjacent R10 parcel had maintained its zoning designation since at least 2007 based on the earliest available zoning records.

The public hearing was opened at 6:48 pm and the following individuals spoke.

Vicki Brown, 601 West Broad Street, expressed concern that repeated rezonings inconsistent with the land use plan had weakened its reliability and noted that much of the surrounding area had already transitioned from RA to residential subdivisions. She urged denial of the request but suggested that, if approved, it include conditions addressing density, environmental impacts, access, and infrastructure, while also raising concerns about past enforcement of such conditions.

Jamie Petani, 2102 Holly Hill Court, identified herself as a Planning Board member who voted against the rezoning. She noted that the area contains many small one- to two-acre plots, and she felt that approving this request could create a precedent making it difficult to deny future similar requests and urged the Board to follow the Planning Board's recommendation.

Tom Pieratti, 708 Meeting Park Lane, also identified himself as a Planning Board member, acknowledged the land use plan's importance but stated that the surrounding area no longer reflected what the map showed, citing a mix of nearby uses. He questioned relying on an outdated plan and encouraged the Board to consider current conditions and update the plan rather than use it as the sole basis for denial.

Lisa Maness, 532 Sabiston Drive, urged the Board to deny the rezoning, citing concerns about setting precedent, difficult site conditions due to water and runoff, and the potential for increased traffic similar to issues experienced on Queens Creek Road.

The public hearing was closed at 6:58 pm.

Attorney Rasberry clarified that the hearing had been noticed as a standard rezoning and could not be changed to a conditional rezoning and added that ordinance requirements would likely limit the property to no more than two lots. Planner Brehmer noted that the rezoning did not determine what would be built, as any subdivision would require a separate review under town regulations.

Mayor Justice stated that only a limited number of homes would realistically fit on the parcel and noted the recent approval of a larger subdivision nearby, expressing support for the request while acknowledging the importance of preserving green space and confirming that conditional rezoning was not an option. Commissioner Herbert voiced opposition, citing inconsistency with the land use plan, the Planning Board's recommendation, and concerns about setting a precedent, while Commissioner Eckendorf supported approval, noting the area already included a mix of zoning types and raising fairness concerns for the applicant.

Commissioner Herbert made a motion to deny Ordinance 2026-O1 to rezone parcel ID 012535 (Swansboro Loop Road) from RA - Residential/Agricultural to R10SF - Residential, with a second from Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, and the motion tied 2:2.

Ayes: Herbert, Conaway

Noes: Eckendorf, Pieratti

In the instance of a tie, per Town Code § 3.7 (A) the mayor shall vote in case of equal division among the board. Mayor Justice voted no to break the tie and the motion failed 2:3.

Commissioner Pieratti made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-O1 to rezone parcel ID 012535 (Swansboro Loop Road) from RA - Residential/Agricultural to R10SF - Residential, with a second from Commissioner Eckendorf, and the motion tied 2:2.

Ayes: Pieratti, Eckendorf

Noes: Herbert, Conaway

In the instance of a tie, per Town Code § 3.7 (A) the mayor shall vote in case of equal division among the board. Mayor Justice voted yes to break the tie and the motion passed 3:2.

Business Non-Consent

Lease Renewal for 106 Church Street (Cigar Shop)

Town Manager Jon Barlow presented a recommendation to renew the lease for the town-owned property at 106 Church Street with the current tenant for an additional five-year term at a monthly rate of \$1,880.23, subject to annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index. In response to an inquiry from the board, Manager Barlow clarified that this amount would serve as the starting rate under the new lease and explained that staff reviews the Consumer Price Index each January to adjust the rent, allowing for potential yearly increases.

On a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Pieratti, Resolution 2026-R5 was unanimously adopted approving the lease extension of 5 years to George El-Asmar for the property at 106 Church Street.

Amending the Town Code § 130.02 No Smoking in Town Buildings or Vehicles
Town Manager Barlow reviewed a proposed ordinance amendment to remove an existing exception in Town Code Section 130.02 that had previously allowed smoking in town vehicles when the driver was the only occupant and no non-smoker was present. The amendment would prohibit smoking in all town-owned or leased vehicles, with no exceptions.

On a motion by Commissioner Pieratti, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, Ordinance 2026-O2 effectively amending Town Code section §130.02 by removing the smoking exception for Town vehicles was unanimously approved.

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. The following items were addressed:

- Recognition of Cadet Telesforo Seymon

Public Comment

Citizens were offered an opportunity to address the Board for no more than five minutes regarding items not listed on the agenda. No comments were made.

Manager's Comments

Manager Barlow reported submitting a grant application for the visitor center project and noted that work would begin once funding is secured. He also updated the Board that the budget is currently unbalanced, with staff reviewing requests and planning upcoming work sessions.

Board Comments

Board members generally expressed appreciation for citizens who attended and participated in the meeting, as well as for staff efforts across various projects, departmental work and budget preparations and welcomed Officer McLaughlin.

Commissioner Eckendorf commended the town manager for navigating a complex budget process and reminded the Board that the primary purpose of government is to protect the rights of individual citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem Conaway acknowledged the difficulty created by an inconsistent land use plan and expressed the view that the plan needs to be updated to accurately reflect existing conditions. She noted the Board should wait for clarity from the state regarding ETJ authority before investing in a full land use plan update.

Commissioner Herbert thanked Chief Taylor for the detailed annual report and expressed anticipation for upcoming reports from the fire department and Parks and Recreation. He reported attending the Onslow County Commissioners meeting the prior week, where Swansboro Commissioner John Davis raised concerns about the pace of growth and traffic impacts in the Queens Creek and Sand Ridge areas. Commissioner Herbert expressed agreement with those concerns and stated that development in the ETJ and in Hubert collectively impacts Swansboro, reinforcing his reasoning for voting against the rezoning. He encouraged residents to enjoy the spring weather and participate in upcoming town events.

Commissioner Pieratti reiterated the need for an accurate and updated land use map, and noted that the rezoning approved this evening was consistent with surrounding development patterns even if not reflected on the current map.

Mayor Justice thanked Commissioners Herbert and Conaway for their engagement with county officials, and noted that he, Town Manager Barlow, and County Commissioner John Davis were scheduled to meet with the county's interim manager in the near future to discuss matters of mutual concern. He commended local resident Jim Hamrick's fire mitigation and long-leaf pine restoration work on nearly 100 acres near the center of town. Mayor Justice noted that Major Capers was close to receiving the Medal of Honor, with approval having passed both the House and Senate and now awaiting a presidential signature. Mayor Justice also shared Swansboro United Methodist Church's upcoming summer literacy program, involving Silverdale School, and encouraged town staff and citizens to volunteer.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Eckendorf, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Conaway, the meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.