

BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES

MARCH 13, 2025, 5:30PM

TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 321 CAUSEWAY DRIVE, WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Mayor Mills. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the invocation was provided by Doug Lain, Pastor, Wrightsville United Methodist Church. The following were present:

Board of Aldermen

F. Darryl Mills, Mayor
Hank Miller, Mayor Pro-tem
Jeff DeGroote, Alderman (absent)
Ken Dull, Alderman
Vivian (Zeke) Partin, Alderman

Staff

Haynes Brigman, Town Manager
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk
Grady Richardson, Town Attorney
Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager
Matt Holland, Acting Fire Chief
Brian Murray, Finance Director
Jason Bishop, Acting Chief of Police
Katie Ryan, Recreation Programs Supervisor
Tony Wilson, Director of Parks & Planning
Robert O'Quinn, Town Planner

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sue Bulluck, representing the Chamber of Commerce, noted that the Chamber had drafted a resolution for consideration by the Board of Aldermen which would ask NCDOT to delay or repurpose funding for the Military Cutoff overpass project. Bulluck also reported that the Chamber was working with New Hanover County to begin the information and education process for property owners adjacent to Mason's Inlet regarding the dredging of the inlet and the assessment of properties in relation to the dredging project. Mills noted that there is a federal permit which allows the Army Corps of Engineers to do dredging between the north end of Wrightsville Beach and Figure Eight Island. Mills explained that the permit will expire in 2031, and the permit renewal process, which involves a multi-year effort, has begun.

CONSENT AGENDA

Prior to consideration of the Consent Agenda, the Board agreed to discuss items f, g and j. Regarding Item f, consideration of Budget Ordinance (2025) 651-B, Ryan explained that the expenses were for construction administration related to the Park and Town Hall parking lot projects. Regarding Item g, in response to a question from the Board, Brigman noted that he had asked the Town Attorney to add language to the lease with the Garden Club for the Bordeaux Cottage which would require that the Garden Club execute a sub lease with Camp Chris Stone, if such a lease were desired by Camp Chris Stone. Finally, with regard to Item j, Ryan reported that the Town had asked the contractor which is on site doing the parking lot projects to submit a bid for the paving of Bob Sawyer Dr. Upon motion by Miller, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the Consent Agenda. It consisted of: 1) approval of the open and closed session minutes of the 2/20/25 Board meeting; 2) approval of recurring special events as recommended by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee; 3) acknowledgement of previously-approved special events for April; 4) approval of an Agreement for Town Attorney services; 5) adoption of Resolution (2025) 2352 approving the FY24-25 Auditing Contract with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPA; 6) adoption of Budget Ordinance (2025) 651-B funding unanticipated expenses incurred in the Park and Municipal parking lot construction projects; 7) approval of Lease Renewal Agreements between the Town and

3 tenants and authorization for the Finance Officer to execute the agreements on behalf of the Town; 8) approval of Budget Ordinance (2025) 653-B for landscaping expenses associated with the municipal and park parking lot projects; 9) approval of Budget Ordinance (2025) 654-B closing certain project funds that are no longer needed; 10) approval of proposal for demolition and paving of Bob Sawyer drive and adoption of Budget Ordinance (2025) 652-B funding the project; and 11) approval of Rules of Order for the Planning Board.

CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF A SPECIAL USE PERMIT FROM WRIGHTSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO ALLOW FOR THE ADDITION OF A COLUMBARIUM AND MEMORIAL GARDEN AT 4 LIVE OAK DRIVE

O'Quinn stated that the project is intended to provide a dedicated space for the interment of cremated remains and burial of ashes and that the proposed project aligns with local zoning regulations and complies with environmental and aesthetic considerations, ensuring minimal disturbance to the surrounding properties. O'Quinn stated that the project was in compliance with the Town's CAMA Land Use Plan and that a Technical Review had been done on the request, with no comments from the Fire Department or Public Works. The Police Chief recommended installing a lock on the back gate near the landing to enhance security and prevent unauthorized access. O'Quinn reported that public notice had been posted on the site, letters had been sent to adjacent property owners and newspaper advertisements had been published with regard to the hearing. O'Quinn stated that staff recommended approval of the application.

The Mayor opened the public hearing at approximately 5:45pm.

David Ray, attorney for the applicant, stated that 3 witnesses would be testifying: Gwen Hawley, a realtor and Wrightsville Beach resident; Jay Landen, the owner of property immediately adjacent to the site; and Rev. Caroline Jenkins, Pastor of Little Chapel on the Boardwalk. In response to a question from Mills, Ray stated that there had been no material changes in the application since the project was first presented to the Board in a text amendment application for which a public hearing was held on 12/12/2024, noting that the application for the Special Use Permit complied with the ordinance which was adopted at that meeting. Ray stated that the applicant did not desire to install a lock as recommended by the Police Chief during the technical review process. Ray stated that the applicant did not want to create any barriers to entry or exit from the area. Instead, the applicant would rather install security cameras to assist with any security issues.

In response to a question from Richardson, Ray asked that the application materials contained in the agenda packet be labeled as Exhibit 1 as well as the slide presentation presented in connection with the text amendment application of 12/12/2024.

Ray noted that, as the applicant, they had the burden of producing competent, material, and substantial evidence that they are satisfying the conditions in the ordinance necessary to grant the Special Use Permit.

The Clerk then administered the oath to the witnesses identified by Ray.

Ray introduced Gwen Hawley, who stated she was a licensed real estate broker with Intracoastal Realty. Hawley stated she had been in the real estate profession for over 42 years and was a previous resident of Wrightsville Beach who had sold many properties over the years in Wrightsville Beach. She stated that part of her job was to perform a competitive market analysis for clients, providing necessary data for either buying or selling. She stated that she had received the top producer award consistently throughout her career. Hawley reported that, in the last year, there were 69 sales on Wrightsville Beach with an average time on the market of 65 days. Hawley stated that she had visited two areas in which there were neighboring columbarium/memorial gardens such as that which is being proposed: the Windemere Community and Greenville Sound. Hawley stated that, in each case, there were no negative effects from the presence of these facilities on the property values of the surrounding areas. Hawley stated she believed that, due to the high demand and lack of

supply on Harbor Island and Wrightsville Beach, there would be no decrease in property values or in the enjoyment of property in the neighborhood near the Church if the memorial garden and columbarium are built according to the specifications contained in the application.

Ray introduced Jay Landen, who stated that he resided at 20 Live Oak Dr., the property immediately adjacent to the proposed columbarium and memorial garden. Landen stated that the Church had been transparent from the beginning and that he had submitted a written affidavit in support of the project. Landen stated that the project would actually increase the privacy of his property.

Ray introduced Rev. Caroline Jinkins. Jinkins stated that she was Pastor of Little Chapel on the Boardwalk and that she had served as pastor of churches which have such facilities. Jinkins stated that these types of facilities enhanced the properties and had the effect of encouraging family members of the deceased to assist in maintaining the areas. Jinkins expressed support for the approval of the application.

Ray stated that this project would result in no detrimental harm to the public health or general welfare, which was demonstrated in the testimony of Landen and Jinkins. Ray stated that the evidence presented was competent, material and substantial in support of the application. Ray stated that the columbarium and memorial garden would not impair the value or use and enjoyment of property in the neighborhood. Ray stated that Hawley's testimony demonstrated that these facilities do not impact the value of neighboring properties. Ray stated the ordinance required that the development not impede the development of surrounding properties. Ray stated that all of the surrounding properties were already developed, but that the proposed development would not impede anyone from improving their properties. Ray noted that the columbarium would be constructed of the same brick of which the Church was constructed. Ray stated that no additional parking would be required and would not result in any increase in traffic or noise. Ray added that the development would be consistent with the Town's CAMA Land Use Plan, noting the Plan's emphasis on quality of life, community cohesiveness and unique sense of place.

In closing, Ray asked that the Board vote in favor of granting the Special Use Permit.

Upon motion by Miller, seconded by Mills and carried unanimously, the public hearing was closed at 6:05pm.

Individually, members of the Board expressed support for the process which the Church followed and for the project.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Miller and carried unanimously, the Special Use Permit was approved.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION (2025) 2345 APPROVING A POLICY FOR THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGE BOARDS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ryan stated that the Parks & Recreation office had received several requests from special event permit holders and local non-profits to add a message to the digital signs regarding events or other private activities. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee discussed the use of the EMBs including the possibility of charging a fee for use. However, the Committee voted unanimously in support of a policy that limits the messages to Town-related activities only as identified in the draft policy under consideration. Dull noted that the EMB located on Salisbury Street was in a difficult position for drivers to notice and suggested that it be relocated. Brigman stated that he would investigate relocating the board after the park construction projects were completed. Upon motion by Dull, seconded by Miller and carried unanimously, the Resolution was adopted.

OTHER ITEMS AND REPORTS

A. Town Clerk Heater: nothing to report.

- B. Alderman Partin:** noted that she had attended the Carolina Beach Centennial celebration kickoff representing the Town.
- C. Alderman Dull:** stated that he was excited to have Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager, on board.
- D. Mayor Pro Tem Miller:** reported on MPO activities relating to the Memorial Bridge project and also welcomed Hartsell.
- E. Town Manager Brigman:** 1) noted Grady Richardson's first meeting as the new Town Attorney; 2) also recognized Hartsell; 3) thanked the residents for their patience as the repaving of Causeway Dr. and N. Lumina have taken place; 4) reported on progress regarding the pickle ball courts and parking lot projects; and 5) reminded the Board of the budget workshop scheduled for April 15 at 9:00am.
- F. Town Attorney Richardson:** stated he was excited to be working for the Town and that it was an honor to be given the opportunity.
- G. Mayor Mills:** welcomed Hartsell and Richardson.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:29pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk