

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES**

FEBRUARY 17, 2026 9:00AM

TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM, 321 CAUSEWAY DRIVE, WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

A duly noticed special called meeting of the Board of Aldermen was called to order at 9:00am by Mayor Dull. The following were present:

**Board of Aldermen**

Ken Dull, Mayor  
Jeff DeGroot, Mayor Pro-tem  
Margaret Baggett, Alderman (via Zoom)  
Todd Schoen, Alderman  
Vivian (Zeke) Partin, Alderman

**Staff**

Haynes Brigman, Town Manager  
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk  
Matt Holland, Fire Chief  
Jason Bishop, Police Chief  
Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager  
Tony Wilson, Planning & Inspections Director

**BUDGET PLANNING SESSION**

Brigman reviewed the agenda for the session as: 1) revenue projections; 2) capital improvement plan; 3) merit/CPI and benefit discussion; 4) budget priorities for FY27; 5) employee satisfaction survey results; and 6) open discussion.

**REVENUE PROJECTIONS**

Brigman noted that: 1) total revenue projections for FY27 are near neutral to those for FY26; 2) limited revenue growth stresses operating and capital expenses as services expand and costs increase; 3) environmental variables can significantly impact revenue generation with regard to sales tax, room occupancy tax and parking revenue; 4) sales tax revenue could be reduced by as much as \$250,000 if other New Hanover County municipalities increase ad valorem taxes; 5) reduced revenue from the Water/Sewer Fund due to the transfer of water and sewer facilities to the CFPUA in that transfers from the Water/Sewer Fund are reduced by \$230,000 due to the loss of cost allocation revenues; and 6) there has been no ad valorem tax rate increase since 2010.

Brigman then reviewed revenue projections by line item. During that discussion, the Board asked that the Town review stormwater fees versus the actual costs to administer the stormwater program. There was a discussion regarding trash collection fees, with it being noted that the fees charged do not cover the actual cost of the trash collection contract. Brigman stated that the Town had 4 main pillars of revenue: property tax, sales tax, parking and room occupancy tax.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Brigman reviewed projects for FY26 that are not complete and rolling over into FY27: 1) the multi-use path at WB Park; 2) Town Hall Renovation; and 3) dune walkover structure replacement at Access 3. The following CIP projects for FY27 were listed: 1) Public Works truck replacements (6) - \$280,000; 2) Town Hall Remodel (Phase II) - \$400,000; 3) Street Paving (Phase II) - \$115,000; 4) Modular for Fire Dept. Sleeping Quarters - \$400,000; 5) Jack Parker Restroom Installation - \$400,000; 6) Bulkhead Projects - \$950,000; 7) Ocean Rescue - Side-by-Side - \$18,000 (Completed); 8) Ocean Rescue - ATV - \$8,000; 9) WB Park Sign Replacement - \$24,000; and 10) Police Vehicles (3) - \$150,000.

In discussing these projects, the consensus of the Board was: 1) to locate any modular unit for the Fire Department at the Public Works location; 2) to defer the Jack Parker restroom facility in favor of Access 1; and 3) to keep the bulkhead projects in the CIP with the understanding that grant funds may be received to offset those costs.

Projects not included in the CIP were listed as: 1) Historic Square Parking Lot; 2) Wynn Plaza Improvements; 3) Loop Improvements (Construction Costs); 4) Municipal Complex Master Plan Costs; 5) HVAC/Roof Replacements for Aging Buildings; and 6) Downtown Beautification.

With regard to the Historic Square parking lot, Brigman stated that it had been deferred due to the CFPWA water/sewer project and recommended that it be added back to the FY27 CIP. Brigman recommended that Wynn Plaza improvements be delayed until the impact of the bridge replacement projects could be assessed.

Brigman emphasized that the CIP would be re-prioritized in the final budget document to reflect changes and current progress.

### **MERIT/CPI AND BENEFITS DISCUSSION**

Brigman reviewed the compensation and benefits improvements which had been implemented in FY26, including a 2.6% cost of living adjustment, 0-4% merit increase, salary improvements resulting from the compensation study, and benefit enhancements. Brigman noted challenges in the upcoming budget as being health insurance premium increases (estimated at 10%) and market challenges due to other localities doing compensation studies. Brigman recommended the FY27 budget include a CPI adjustment (currently 2.6%) and a 0-5% merit increase.

### **FY27 BUDGET PRIORITIES**

Brigman reviewed last year's budget priorities as quality-of-life improvements for residents and improvements in the overall workplace environment for employees. Brigman noted that 9 additional positions were added in the past year to focus on quality-of-life issues, adding a significant annual budget expense.

In reviewing one quality-of-life issue, a mobile noise camera, Brigman stated that the Town Attorney was still reviewing legal issues surrounding its implementation. It was the consensus of the Board to proceed with implementation while these issues were being explored. Bishop detailed the Police Department's quality-of-life improvement efforts, with additional officers being assigned to concentrate on these areas.

In response to a question from Baggett, Brigman reviewed possible traffic and pedestrian improvements to Waynick Blvd.

Schoen asked Brigman to review the issue of providing curbside residential recycling.

In response to a question from Baggett, Bishop stated that bicycle and pedestrian patrols would be utilized as part of the quality-of-life initiatives.

### **EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS**

Brigman reviewed the results of a recent employee satisfaction survey, stating that the purpose of the initiative was to utilize a candid survey to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the Town's workforce. The survey reflected that 89% of respondents stated they would recommend the Town as a good place to work (0 stated they would not recommend) and 91% of respondents stated they agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Town was moving in a positive direction (0 stated they did not agree).

Brigman noted that the survey showed strengths as: supervisor support, compensation issues were reasonably addressed, employee morale is improved, trust is improving. Weaknesses were increased workload, low staffing levels, communications between departments, compensation/benefit challenges. Opportunities identified were: better collaboration between departments, enhanced employee recognition, and keeping up with pay and compensation changes.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

Regarding possible improvements to the Loop, Brigman stated that the Town was working with a consultant to develop a project whereby amenities would be added to the Loop. He noted that the rebuilt bridges would be constructed with bike lanes along with multi-use paths. There was discussion regarding separating bicycle and pedestrian usage, with Brigman stating that a multi-use path would provide access for both pedestrians and bicycles. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that bicycle and pedestrian uses should be separated as much as possible in any improvements.

There was a discussion regarding the formation of a parking committee, with the consensus being that it would be an administrative rather than a Board-appointed committee, but which would be composed of 8-10 members selected by Brigman with suggestions of appointees being provided to Brigman by the Board. It was the consensus of the Board that it consist of a balanced representation of the Town. Schoen and Baggett expressed interest in serving as Board liaisons to the committee.

The Board discussed the possible underground location of power lines as an aesthetic improvement for the Town.

It was noted that the next Budget Workshop will be held on 3-2-26 at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk