

# BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES

JANUARY 7, 2026, 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 Caroline Jinkins, Pastor, Little Chapel on the Boardwalk Presbyterian Church. The following were present:

## Board of Aldermen

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

## Staff

Haynes Brigman, Town Manager  
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk  
Grady Richardson, Town Attorney  
Brian Nague, Police Lieutenant  
Jason Bishop, Police Chief  
Tosha Campbell, HR Officer  
Matt Holland, Fire Chief  
Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager  
Katie Carus-Childers, Parks & Rec. Director  
Tony Wilson, Director of Planning  
Bill Fay, Public Works Director

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

James Smith, 54 Pelican Dr., 1) expressed opposition to the location of the proposed multi-use path through the Wrightsville Beach Park, noting potential erosion problems due to its location near the edge of the wetlands; 2) supported an alternate path; 3) expressed appreciation to Brigman for responding to concerns regarding tree damage caused by a contractor for CFPUA installing water and sewer mains; and 4) supported the proposed Harbor Island Garden Club project to be discussed later on in the agenda.

Sue Bulluck expressed appreciation to the Town for joining the Chamber of Commerce as a member and noted the Chamber's Annual Meeting scheduled for 1-29-26. Bulluck also expressed support for a delay to the NCDOT's project to create an overpass at the intersection of Eastwood Road and Military Cutoff.

Jeff Turpin, 105 Island Dr., expressed appreciation to the Board for sidewalk installation along Causeway Blvd. from Live Oak to Island Dr. and advocated that a sidewalk be constructed from Island Dr. to Seacrest Dr., suggesting that it would be economical and would eliminate the need to cross Causeway Dr.

## CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroot and carried unanimously, the Consent Agenda was approved. It consisted of 1) approval of the open session minutes of the 12-11-25 and 12-17-25 Board of Aldermen meetings; 2) approval of recurring special events; and 3) acknowledgment of previously approved special events for February.

## PRESENTATIONS

The Board heard a presentation from Elsa Swenson, of Martin Starnes & Assoc., of the 2025 Audited Financial Statements. Swenson stated that the report has been submitted to the LGC and that the auditor had issued an unmodified opinion which is that the financial statements are presented, in all material respects, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. Swenson noted

the following highlights: 1) total available General Fund Balance was \$31.29 million vs. \$28.18 million for FY24; 2) available fund balance as a percentage of expenditures and transfers out was 174% vs. 185% in FY24; 3) General Fund revenues consisted of 47% sales and service, 18% ad valorem taxes; 16% unrestricted intergovernmental and 19% other; 4) ad valorem taxes were \$3.592 million vs. \$3.571 million in FY24 with a collection rate of 99.94%; 5) sales and services were \$9.38 million vs. \$9.47 million in FY24; 6) unrestricted intergovernmental revenues were \$3.07 million vs. \$2.96 million in FY24; 7) General Fund expenditures were 52% public safety, 23% general government; 13% environmental protection and 12% other; 8) general government expenses were up 13% mainly due to an increase in salaries and benefits; 9) public safety expenses were up 4%; 10) environmental protection expenses were up 16% primarily due to a change to daily trash barrel pickup on the beach; 11) water and sewer fund revenues increased 2%, with expenditures increasing 98%, primarily due to the transfer of funds to implement the CFPUA merger; and 12) water & sewer fund quick ratio (current assets to current liabilities) was 111.98. Swenson noted that the Town had met the performance indicators examined by the LGC. Swenson further noted that the LGC also looks at a formula which calculates the remaining useful life of the assets, which it prefers to be 50% or better. The Town's formula indicated a ratio of 28.99%. Swenson stated that the Town had been proactive on this measure and was actively working on it. However, due to this ratio, there would need to be a letter of acknowledgment signed by the Board and sent to the LGC. Swenson reiterated that this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in at least the last 5 years that there was not a financial statement finding for the Town. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board accepted the audit report as presented.

**CONSIDER A REQUEST BY THE HARBOR ISLAND GARDEN CLUB TO DEVELOP A GARDEN TO HONOR FIRST RESPONDERS, ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERANS**

Carus-Childers reported that the Harbor Island Garden Club was seeking approval to develop and maintain a garden to honor first responders, active military, and veterans in the area between the Public Safety Building and the Recreation Center parking lot. The proposal was presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee at their December 22, 2025, meeting where the committee voted unanimously in favor of the project and to recommend approval by the Board. Carus-Childers stated that Town staff would work closely with the Garden Club during the project's development to ensure adequate power and water supply, appropriate low maintenance plantings, and to provide support throughout the project as necessary. Kay Morgan, representing the Harbor Island Garden Club, was present to support the request. In response to a question from Dull, Brigman stated that the Town could modify its existing MOU with the Garden Club to include the new garden. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board approved the request.

**CONSIDER WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND AN APPLICATION FOR A PARTF GRANT**

Carus-Childers stated that the 2026 Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant call for projects had been announced, with several improvement projects in Wrightsville Beach Park that meet the criteria for funding. Carus-Childers said the proposed projects were reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee at their December 22, 2025 meeting, at which the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board consider proceeding with a PARTF grant application for the following: 1) completion of the multi-use path from the tennis and pickleball court facility to Causeway Drive; 2) removal of the softball field, scorekeeper's cage and fence around the field and construct a multipurpose turf field; 3) construct the parking lot adjacent to the pickleball courts and Historic Square; and 4) replace Wrightsville Beach Park entrance sign, add benches, water fountain, lighting. In response to a question from Baggett, Carus-Childers stated that the only requirements regarding usage of the facilities would be that they have to be open to the public. In response to a question from DeGroote, Carus-Childers stated that there did exist a parks and recreation master plan and that bicycle and pedestrian improvements were priorities in that plan and that all of the

proposed projects could be supported by the plan. Brigman stated that the application could be fine-tuned and that, because the Town received a PARTF grant 4 years ago, it was unlikely that the Town would be awarded the grant. However, Brigman stated that the Town always wanted to participate in a grant cycle. In response to a question from Schoen, Carus-Childers stated that the Town could remove the softball field and present it as phase one of a project that would allow for a different future use of the area, rather than being committed to a multipurpose turf field in perpetuity. After discussion, the Board tabled the request, and it was the consensus of the Board to ask the Planning Board to review the projects.

**CONSIDER ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 680-B APPROPRIATING \$600,000 FOR W. OXFORD STREET AND W. FAYETTEVILLE STREET-END BULKHEAD CONSTRUCTION AND CONSIDER AWARD OF THE CONTRACT TO SPAN BUILDERS, LLC**

Brigman stated that adoption of the ordinance would fund the second phase of the Town's bulkhead replacement program. Brigman noted that the Town had become aware of federal funding which would pay for the Town's bulkhead replacement needs, however, grant award has been pushed off until 2028 and the Town needed to address bulkhead deficiencies at certain locations prior to that time. The next highest priority projects are W. Oxford and W. Fayetteville streets, as determined by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party engineering firm. Brigman asked that the Board 1) adopt the budget ordinance; 2) award the contract to Span Builders, LLC, which was the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, with a lump sum bid of \$517,300; and 3) authorize the Town Manager to execute the contract. Upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Schoen and carried unanimously, the Board adopted the budget ordinance, awarded the contract and authorized the Town Manager to execute it.

**CONSIDER ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 681-B TO CLOSE THE WATER & SEWER FUND (FUND 30) AND APPROPRIATE THE TRANSFER OF ANY REMAINING NET POSITION TO THE CAPE FEAR PUBLIC UTILITY AUTHORITY**

Murray stated that effective September 30, 2025, the Town's water and sewer system was transferred to the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority (CFPUA). As a result, the Town no longer owns or operates a water and sewer utility. Murray said the Town has completed the collection period for the final water and sewer bills and has satisfied all outstanding obligations to vendors related to the Water & Sewer Fund. Any remaining receivables that are deemed collectible will be transferred to the General Fund and collection efforts will continue, as CFPUA requested that all customer accounts begin with a zero balance at the time of transfer. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the budget ordinance was adopted.

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO THE AUTHORIZED POSITIONS BY PAY RANGE CHART AND PAY SCALE ENACTING THE PAY ADJUSTMENTS RESULTING FROM THE MARKET-BASED PAY STUDY APPROVED AT THE 11/18/25 MEETING**

Brigman noted that this would formalize the changes to the Town's Pay Plan which were approved at the November meeting. Brigman stated that there were 3 key changes that he was asking the Board to approve: 1) pay grade alignment; 2) job title revisions; and 3) elimination of the post-promotion step plan in the Police Department that has created salary compression issues. Brigman stated that the Police Department change was fully supported by the Police Chief. Several Board members expressed support for the changes and Human Resources Officer Campbell for her work on the project. Upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the changes were approved.

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF HOURLY SALARY INCREASES FOR SEASONAL OCEAN RESCUE EMPLOYEES**

Ocean Rescue Director Sam Proffitt requested the Board approve an increase in the starting pay for lifeguards from \$19.50 to \$20.50 per hour, along with \$1 per hour increases for the other

classifications of seasonal ocean rescue employees. Proffitt noted that the increase would keep the Town competitive with Carolina Beach and Kure Beach for recruiting lifeguards. It was noted that no budget increase was necessary to implement the increases. Upon motion by Schoen, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the changes were approved.

**CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO THE PLANNING BOARD**

Using ballots, the Board made the following appointments to the Planning Board for terms expiring January 2028: Adam Keen, 119 Cypress Ave.; Jeff Turpin, 105 Island Dr.; and Nathan Singerman, 17B Coral Drive. Detailed votes were as follows:

<b>PLANNING BOARD APPOINTMENTS</b>	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>VOTE</b>
Adam Keen - reappointed	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
Jeff Turpin	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin
Nathan Singerman	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
Lynne Galloway	Schoen

**CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO THE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Using ballots, the Board made the following appointments to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee for terms ending in January 2028: Tim Winslow, 900 Schloss St.; and Sami Winter, 13 W. Henderson St. The Board also made the following appointments to fill unexpired terms ending in January 2027: Joanne Allen, 140 Driftwood Court; and Tali Robich, 13 Henderson St. W., Apt. B. Detailed votes were as follows:

<b>PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS</b>	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>VOTE</b>
<b>Terms ending January 2028</b>	
Tim Winslow - reappointed	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
Sami Winter - reappointed	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
<b>Terms ending January 2027</b>	
Joanne Allen	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
Tali Robich	Dull, DeGroote, Partin

David DuPont	Schoen
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**CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**

Using ballots, the Board made the following appointments to the Historic Landmark Commission for terms ending January 2028: Amy Sweyer, 74 Pelican Dr.; and R. Henry Temple, 210 N. Channel Dr. The Board also made the following appointment to fill an unexpired term ending January 2027: Lee Williams, 146 Driftwood Ct.

<b>HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS</b>	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>VOTE</b>
<b>Terms ending January 2028</b>	
Amy Sweyer - reappointed	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
R. Henry Temple - reappointed	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
<b>Term ending January 2027</b>	
Lee Williams	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin, Schoen

**CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

Using ballots, the Board made the following appointments to the Board of Adjustment for terms ending in January 2029: Neal Braggi, 4 W. Henderson St.; and Carolyn Medley, 10 N. Channel Dr. The Board made the following appointment to the Board for an unexpired term ending January 2028: Hank Miller, 30 Greensboro St. W. The Board made the following appointment as an alternate member to a term ending January 2029: Lee Williams, 146 Driftwood Ct.

<b>BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT APPOINTMENTS</b>	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>VOTE</b>
<b>Terms ending January 2029</b>	
Neal Braggi - reappointed	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin
Carolyn Medley - reappointed	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin, Schoen
<b>Term ending January 2028</b>	
Hank Miller	Dull, DeGrootte, Baggett, Partin

Jeff Turpin	Schoen
<b>Alternate term ending Jan. 2029</b>	
Lee Williams	Dull, DeGroote, Baggett, Partin, Schoen

**CONSIDER BOARD OF ALDERMEN ASSIGNMENTS TO VARIOIUS AGENCIES**

Upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board made the following assignments to various outside agencies: 1) WMPO – Dull (primary), Partin (alternate); 2) Port, Waterway & Beach Commission – Schoen; 3) TDA – Partin; 4) Parks & Rec. Advisory Committee – Baggett; 5) Cape Fear COG – DeGroote; 6) Bridge Replacement Committee – Dull (regular), Schoen (ex-officio); and 7) Marketing Committee – Partin.

**OTHER ITEMS & REPORTS**

- A. **Town Clerk Heater:** reminded the Board of the Special Called meeting to be held 1-20-26 at 9:00am to conduct a budget planning session.
- B. **Alderman Schoen:** noted that he would attend a Ports, Waterway & Beach Commission meeting the following week.
- C. **Alderman Partin:** will be conducting meetings of the Ad Hoc Lighting Ordinance Committee in the near future.
- D. **Alderman Baggett:** nothing to report.
- E. **Town Manager Brigman:** had been working with CFPUA regarding tree protection and remediation from damage for the water/sewer line project; noted the project should be completed in April and that he would continue working closely with CFPUA.
- F. **Town Attorney Richardson:** asked the Board to go into closed session to consider an update on legal issues.
- G. **Mayor Dull:** 1) expressed appreciation to Brigman for working with the CFPUA on tree protection; 2) expressed appreciation to Murray for the audit report and Campbell for the pay study; and 3) noted that the holiday lighting had received compliments from many citizens and expressed hope that it could be enhanced during the upcoming years.

*The Mayor declared a recess at 7:00pm.*

*The Mayor called the meeting back to order at 7:08pm.*

**CLOSED SESSION TO CONSULT WITH AN ATTORNEY EMPLOYED OR RETAINED BY THE PUBLIC BODY IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE BETWEEN THE ATTORNEY AND THE PUBLIC BODY AS AUTHORIZED BY NCGS 143-318.11(A)(3)**

At 7:08pm Partin made a motion to enter into closed session for the purpose of consulting with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body as authorized by NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3). The motion was seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board returned to open session at 7:41pm, with no action being taken as a result of the closed session.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk