

BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES

FEBRUARY 12, 2026, 5:30PM

TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 321 CAUSEWAY DRIVE, WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Mayor Dull. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the invocation was provided by Rev. Miles Baker Hunt, Wrightsville United Methodist 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
Jason Bishop, Police Chief
Matt Holland, Fire Chief
Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager
Katie Carus-Childers, Parks & Rec. Director
Tony Wilson, Director of Planning
Bill Fay, Public Works Director
Brian Murray, Finance Officer

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Watson Barnes, 29 Lookout Harbor, expressed appreciation for the reduction in the hours of tennis/pickleball court lighting, to be shut off at 7:00pm.

Bo Wheeler, 7215 Wrightsville Ave., stated 1) that he was very active in the pickleball community; 2) thanked the Board for the facilities; 3) that 20-60 players were on the courts every evening, with 7-8pm being the peak period; 4) that he was a pickleball instructor for the Town; 5) questioned how official complaints are filed; and 5) asked that the lights remain on until 9pm or that a committee be appointed to develop an adjusted solution.

Bryant Lester, resident of Wilmington, stating he was representing the Cape Fear Pickleball Club, expressed appreciation to the Town for the creation of a top-notch facility and asked that the lighted hours for the tennis/pickleball facility be extended.

Andrew Ross, resident of Wilmington, asked for reevaluation of the decision to turn off the lights at 7pm.

Jack Bigoness, 817 Bailey Harbor Ln., Wilmington, asked that the tennis/pickleball court lights be left on later in the evening in order to provide for recreation for children and teens.

Danny Lacasse, 442 51st St., Wilmington, stated that the pickleball community was growing and asked that the lighted hours for the tennis/pickleball courts be extended.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroot and carried unanimously, the Board approved the Consent Agenda. It consisted of: 1) approval of the open and closed session minutes of the 1-7-26 regular meeting and the open session minutes of the 1-20-26 budget planning session; 2) approval of recurring special events; 3) approval of a new special event application; 4) acknowledgment of previously approved special events for March; 5) acknowledgement of departmental quarterly reports for the months of October, November and December, 2025; 6) adoption of Budget Ordinance (2026) 684-B closing Fund 52 - Pickleball Fund (PARTF Grant Project); 7) approval of an updated

Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and the Harbor Island Garden Club adding the Memorial Garden to the agreement; and 8) adoption of Resolution (2026) 2366 authorizing the sale of surplus vehicles through GovDeals.

PRESENTATIONS

The Board heard a presentation from Joseph Graziano, Sr. Public Safety Risk Consultant, of the NCLM's Risk Review of the Police Department. Graziano reviewed the risk review process and reported that the Police Department had successfully completed the Risk Review for the 3rd time, all while maintaining their CALEA accreditation. Graziano stated that the League represented 230 police departments with 80 having successfully completed the risk review, and with only 10 departments having completed it 3 times.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. (2026) 2365 AUTHORIZING EXEMPTIONS FROM THE MINI-BROOKS ACT FOR QUALIFYING PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PROJECTS

Finance Officer Murray stated that NCGS 143-64.31 (the Mini-Brooks Act) requires units of local government to select architectural, engineering, surveying, construction management-at-risk, and design-build services based on qualifications rather than price. State law provides certain exceptions to these requirements, including situations where the estimated professional service fee for a project is less than \$50,000. Murray explained that the resolution authorizes the Town Manager to exempt individual projects from the Mini-Brooks Act when estimated professional fees are below \$50,000, consistent with state law and the Town's purchasing policy. All exemptions must be documented in writing using a standardized exemption memorandum, and a cumulative list of exempted projects must be reported to the Board on at least a quarterly basis. The resolution also preserves the Town's discretion to apply the Mini-Brooks Act and a formal qualifications-based selection process to any project, regardless of cost, when deemed appropriate. Upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Resolution was adopted.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 683-B FOR THE PURCHASE OF A REPLACEMENT SIDE-BY-SIDE VEHICLE FOR OCEAN RESCUE

Fire Chief Holland stated that the Ocean Rescue Director had planned to include funding for a replacement side-by-side vehicle in the FY 2026–2027 budget. However, the department's current unit has experienced a significant mechanical failure that has rendered it unreliable for continued operational use. Holland stated that due to the critical role this vehicle plays in daily Ocean Rescue operations, the replacement can no longer be deferred to a future fiscal year and must be addressed within the current budget. In response to a question from Baggett, Holland stated that the vehicles were washed on a daily basis, however, the Town had no wash station for these vehicles. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Schoen and carried unanimously, the Budget Ordinance was adopted.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 682-B FUNDING A CONTRACT FOR SERVICES TO DEVELOP A PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

Parks & Recreation Director Carus-Childers stated that at the January 7, 2026 budget meeting, the Board directed staff to update the current Parks and Recreation master plan. The update will require professional services as well as a needs assessment survey. Upon motion by Schoen, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Budget Ordinance was adopted.

CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF A NEW FIRE DEPARTMENT ENGINE

Town Manager Brigman stated that the Board had approved the purchase of a new fire engine in its current budget for the purpose of not only replacement of aging equipment, but to potentially

provide an additional piece of equipment which could be placed on the beach island during the bridge replacement projects. Upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board authorized the Town Manager to execute the contract to purchase the fire engine.

CONSIDER CHANGING THE MEETING DATES FOR THE REGULAR BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETINGS FROM MAY - DECEMBER 2026

Brigman stated that the Board had indicated a desire to change the dates for the regular monthly Board of Aldermen meetings from the second Thursday to the second Tuesday of each month beginning in May 2026. Brigman stated that the Board was aware of the need to further change the August 2026 meeting date due to scheduling issues, but that the Board would address that at a later meeting. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board approved the amended meeting schedule.

CONSIDER WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENTS AND AN APPLICATION FOR A PART F GRANT

Brigman noted that the grant application was considered at the January Board of Aldermen meeting. The projects in the application included a multi-purpose path, construction of a parking lot in the historic square, removing the existing softball field and construction of a multi-purpose field, and a new entrance sign. The Board asked the Planning Board to review the project; however, the Planning Board could not reach consensus on a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen, therefore, due to the timeframe for grant submittal, the Board of Aldermen was being asked to approve the application at the current meeting. Brigman stated that the two strongest projects for grant funding were the multi-use path and the multi-purpose field.

In response to a question from Schoen, Brigman stated that two of the projects were in the Town's approved CIP: the historic square parking lot (which was scheduled to be done in FY25-26, however the project was delayed due to the CFPUA redundant utility line project, which impacts the area) and the multi-use path which would connect Salisbury St. and Causeway Dr. Brigman stated that a preliminary design for the multi-use path had been completed by Cape Fear Engineering and work on the project had also been delayed from the current fiscal year due to the possibility of seeking grant funding.

Partin noted that grant opportunities were potentially also available through the WMPO for the multi-use path, however, the project does not score as well as other projects in the WMPO's criteria. In response to a question from Dull, Brigman stated that, once the grant application is made, individual projects cannot be pulled from it. DeGroote stated that the Town's chances for getting grant funding were diminished due to needs for western NC taking precedence. In response to a question from DeGroote, Planning Board member James Smith stated that questions raised at the Planning Board related to the proposed location of the multi-use path near the wetlands, stating that he had suggested an alternate route that does not locate it near the wetlands. Smith also noted concerns regarding e-bike use of the new path.

Brigman stated that he was leery of submitting a grant application with the concerns that the Board had discussed. After further discussion, the Board declined to take action on the grant application.

CONSIDER CHANGES TO THE 2026 PARKING PROGRAM

Dull stated that the Board had been working on finding solutions to the Town's traffic issues, a major part of which is parking. Dull said that Finance Director Murray and Town Manager Brigman had been working hard to generate data for the Board regarding potential changes to the parking program. Baggett expressed appreciation to the Staff and Board for their work and stated that there were 3 main issues: congestion, protecting small businesses and revenue. Baggett suggested that a

committee be put together to study parking issues and make recommendations to the Board. DeGroot noted the complexities surrounding the issue and expressed support for the establishment of a committee. Partin noted the difficulty in predicting whether changes to parking rates would affect the habits of those wanting to park, such as encouraging more use during the weekdays rather than weekends. In addition, Partin questioned whether residents really wanted to promote more weekday traffic, stating that some enjoy the quieter time on weekdays. Schoen stated that there were a number of great ideas discussed surrounding the issue and expressed support for the establishment of a committee.

In reviewing the 2025 parking season, Brigman noted: 1) the Town has 1,884 public paid parking spaces; 2) there were 665,599 parking transactions; 3) there were 15,220 citations issued; 4) the Town had increased the daily rate by \$5 for both premium and non-premium spaces; and 6) the implementation of license plate reading cameras for parking enforcement.

Regarding new technology, Brigman stated that Pivot Parking is expected to roll out a new user interface to provide parking information to users which is expected to begin in May 2026 in the form of real-time parking information that will be provided on the payment platform, with no need for a downloaded app. Brigman stated that transaction data will be used by the payment platform to determine areas of the island where parking may be available. This data will not reflect availability of individual parking spaces or parking lots, but the data will be mapped to show potential areas where parking may be available based on user transactions with the goal being to provide information to motorists to help them find parking more efficiently, both before traveling to the island, and while they are here.

Brigman proposed that 2026 parking rates be adjusted to lower the daily rate from \$35 to \$30 for premium lots and from \$30 to \$25 for non-premium lots. Hourly rates would continue to be \$6 per hour for premium lots and \$5 per hour for non-premium lots. Brigman stated that the increases in the daily rates last year had resulted in fewer transactions and less revenue from those sources.

Regarding parking space removal, Brigman recommended: 1) removing 11 parking spaces on the east side of N Lumina between E Salisbury Street and Mallard Street for public safety access; 2) removing three parking spaces on Waynick Blvd abutting the three crosswalks for better pedestrian visibility; 3) removing one space on Lagoon Drive in the bend of the road; and 4) removing two spaces at the crosswalk near N. Lumina Ave and Parmele Blvd for vehicular traffic safety due to the crosswalk signage.

Brigman recommended the Board establish a Parking Committee comprised of stakeholders from across the Town which will be utilized to research, discuss, and make recommendations to the Board of Alderman related to parking, review parking spaces for efficiency and safety, and investigate policy and rate change opportunities.

Brigman further recommended removing obsolete parking meters to improve aesthetics and adding new signage where necessary. Lastly, Brigman stated the Town would continue to work with NCDOT on signage outside of the Town which would provide real-time parking information to motorists.

Brigman presented Budget Ordinance (2026) 685-B which would implement the daily rate changes. Upon motion by Baggett, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the proposals outlined by Brigman, including adoption of the Budget Ordinance.

OTHER ITEMS & REPORTS:

- A. **Alderman Schoen:** noted that he had attended a meeting of the Ports, Waterway and Beach Commission, stating that Mason's Inlet dredging was beginning and also that he had accepted an invitation from Wrightsville Beach Elementary School to participate in its Reading Week by reading to students.

- B. Alderman Partin:** noted 1) that the TDA had met on 1/28 and reported that ROT collections for Wrightsville Beach had increased 10% in the November 2024 to November 2025 period, mainly due to the reopening of the Trailborn Surf and Sound; 2) that she and Mayor Dull had attended a 4-hour training session by the WMPO; and 3) that the Ad Hoc Lighting Committee had met on 2/10 and heard from a State wildlife biologist on the issue of lighting as it relates to the sea turtle population.
- C. Mayor Dull:** noted that the bridge projects had been funded and that the projects were therefore on schedule.
- D. Alderman DeGroot:** nothing to report.
- E. Alderman Baggett:** reported on attendance at the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee meeting and reported that there was a request for a speed hump in front of the WB United Methodist Church due to pedestrian issues.
- F. Town Manager Brigman:** reminded the Board of the Budget Workshop scheduled for 2/17 at 9:00am.
- G. Town Attorney Richardson:** nothing to report.
- H. Town Clerk Heater:** nothing to report.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk