

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES**

*MARCH 24, 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 DeGroote, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Margaret Baggett, Alderman  
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  
Evan Morigerato, Asst. Director of Public Works  
Brian Murray, Finance Officer  
Katie Carus-Childers, Parks & Rec. Director

**BUDGET PLANNING SESSION**

Brigman reviewed the agenda for the session as: 1) budget overview; 2) capital improvement plan overview; 3) operating budget review; and 4) open discussion and follow-up items.

**DRAFT BUDGET SUMMARY**

Brigman summarized the draft budget as follows: 1) the budget was created using the same ad valorem tax rate as FY26 (\$.0531 per \$100 in valuation); 2) no fee schedule changes proposed; 3) no major service changes or adjustments were proposed across departments; and 4) revenue impacts and increased service delivery costs continue to pressure the financial position of the Town. Brigman noted that appeals in tax valuation resulted in a reduction in the total tax base of \$135 million, with a \$70,000 drop in resulting ad valorem revenues. Brigman stated 1) that the Town's sales tax revenues could be negatively impacted by other New Hanover County municipalities increasing their ad valorem tax rates; 2) there will be an increased cost in utility services due to the Town paying for water and sewer service to the CFPUA; 3) that contract costs continued to rise; and 4) employee costs continue to increase.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW**

Brigman reviewed capital reserve fund expenditure adjustments that had been made since the last budget workshop as follows: 1) decrease in Police Department vehicles of \$230,000 as a result of replacing 6 vehicles rather than 9 vehicles; 2) removal of \$100,000 in Police records software due to the project being completed in the current year; 3) net reduction of \$50,000 for beach access improvements due to some work being completed in the current year; 4) removal of the Salisbury St. digital sign relocation (\$37,000 decrease) due to there being no alternative site; 5) modification of Ocean Rescue vehicle replacement (a \$9,000 reduction); 6) reduction in holiday lighting of \$340,000; and 7) increase in IT projects of \$44,000 for enhanced security. The total proposed CIP budget was \$5,255,712. The Board also briefly reviewed the proposed 5-year CIP.

**OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW**

Brigman noted that the only revenue change was a decrease in property tax revenue of \$57,000 due to updated information from New Hanover County which indicated a higher than anticipated volume of high value assessment appeals.

Expenditure adjustments were as follows: 1) increase in salaries and benefits of \$49,725 due to the allowance of a 0-5% merit increase; 2) adjusted governing body stipends to incorporate the prior year COLA of \$6,020; 3) IT contract and system cost adjustments of \$27,000; 4) increase in facilities maintenance of \$10,000 for water costs; 5) increase in Flotilla contribution to support event operations of \$25,000; 6) increased funding for storage, installation and removal of existing holiday decorations of \$47,000; and 7) \$15,000 for a landscaping project.

Total operational expenditures were \$18,301,447, with an \$869,653 contribution to the CIP for a total expenditure budget of \$19,171,100. The Mayor and members of the Board expressed appreciation to Town department managers for their work on the budget.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW UP**

The Board discussed weekend traffic and congestion issues, with Brigman reporting that he had asked NCDOT to adjust the traffic signal timing at Waynick and Causeway Dr. from winter timing to summer timing in an attempt to alleviate congestion at that intersection. Brigman stated that the Town's traffic consultant, GFT, was working on proposals to improve the intersection.

The Board discussed noise enforcement, with Bishop reporting that officers were using concentrated enforcement to effect citations for noise violations.

The Board discussed the sale of alcohol at Town sponsored special events, with the consensus being that Brigman would bring back a policy for the Board's consideration.

Brigman reported that he had discussed a strategic planning workshop with the NC League of Municipalities. Brigman stated that the League could either do a session for the Town and open to other jurisdictions or do a session for the Town alone. It was the consensus of the Board that a session be scheduled for the Town alone, with the dates being either 9/21-22 or 9/14-15.

The Board agreed to move forward with the Historic Square parking lot project in the current fiscal year, which had been paused due the CFPWA water/sewer line project impacting the area.

Brigman reported that he and Carus-Childers would be meeting with Balfour Beatty regarding the contract for the multi-use path.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:29am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk