

BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES

MAY 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. Caroline Jinkins, Little Chapel on the Boardwalk. 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
Brian Murray, Finance Director

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Lucas McLawhorn introduced his non-profit organization Well-Fed Ed, which he stated offers plant-based meals to underserved communities.

Stoney Mason, 203 Lee's Cut, noted the extension of the CFPWA water/sewer replacement project and asked that CFPWA pave and put gravel in place to limit problems relating to dust and asked for improved signage for visitors to Pelican Drive.

Jim Smith, Channel Dr., stated that the Parks & Recreation Master Plan survey was too lengthy and suggested changes to the document.

Sue Bulluck, Chamber of Commerce, 1) expressed appreciation for the Town's budget; 2) asked the Board to seek a delay of the NCDOT Military Cutoff/Eastwood flyover project until after the completion of the bridge replacement projects; and 3) provided information on Chamber activities for businesses regarding the bridge replacement projects.

Anne Allen, resident of Channel Walk, asked 1) that residents be provided weekly updates regarding lane closures related to the CFPWA water/sewer replacement project; 2) for enhanced ability for residents to be able to turn left out of Channel Walk during the project; 3) a definitive date for paving of Pelican Dr.; and 4) perhaps work to decrease openings of the Heidi Trask Bridge for private boat traffic.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by DeGroot, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Consent Agenda was approved. It consisted of: 1) approval of the open session minutes of the 4-14-26 regular meeting; 2) acknowledgement of previously-approved special events for June; 3) acknowledgement of departmental quarterly reports for the months of January, February and March, 2026; 4) adoption of Resolution (2026) 2371 proclaiming the month of May as Bike Month; and 5) approval of lease renewal agreements for Town-owned properties.

CONSIDER A PRESENTATION FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CAPE FEAR SAIL & POWER SQUADRON AND CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION (2026) 2368 DECLARING THE WEEK OF MAY 16-22 AS SAFE BOATING WEEK

Present to speak on the importance of boating safety, and particularly the use of automatic inflatable life vests, was Jim Kennedy, Executive Officer. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and by unanimous vote, the Resolution was adopted.

CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FY 26-27 BUDGET AND CONSIDER ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 686-B APPROVING THE FY 26-27 TOWN BUDGET IN ITS ENTIRETY

Brigman stated: 1) the budget development process began in January, with four budget workshops held with the Board of Aldermen; 2) the budget process followed NC General Statutes for preparing budget plans for raising and spending funds for specific programs, services, and capital during a fiscal year; 3) the budget must be balanced – revenues equal expenses; 4) the fiscal year runs from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027; and 5) significantly reduced Enterprise Fund budget this year with the merger/elimination of the Water & Sewer Department. Brigman reviewed fund accounting for the Town, noting that there were 3 types of funds – General Fund, enterprise funds (the Stormwater Fund) and restricted funds (Powell Bill Fund and Capital Reserve Fund).

Brigman listed budget priorities as: 1) create a budget that meets the current and future needs of the Town; 2) focus on quality of life factors for residents (public safety concerns, amenity improvements, and aesthetic enhancements); 3) maintain healthy reserve funds (Fund Balance) while preparing for future challenges and threats (bridge replacement projects, disaster recovery, and beach renourishment); 4) the budget is balanced, with no use of Fund Balance (reserve fund), and no increase in the property tax rate; 5) research new/enhanced services and facilities for residents through planning and community engagement efforts such as the P&R Master Plan update and Municipal Complex Master Plan; and 6) continue to plan for impacts of the bridge replacement projects.

Brigman stated that the draft FY2027 budget was prepared using a Tax Rate of \$0.0531 per \$100 valuation, which is the same tax rate utilized for the FY2026 budget following the property revaluation process conducted by New Hanover County. The Town experienced limited property value growth (+/- 1%) from the previous year, which is typical for a community with limited development opportunities and following the tax revaluation process, the Town saw a larger than normal reduction in tax values after appeals were completed with a decrease in the tax base of \$138 million.

Brigman noted that due to New Hanover County's sales tax distribution methodology, and other NHC jurisdictions potentially adopting tax rates higher than their current rates, the Town could see reduced Sales Tax collections, estimated at \$200,000. Another factor in revenue reduction is that the Town previously allocated funds from the Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund to the General Fund to offset administrative expenses resulting in a net reduction of \$230,000 in annual revenue for the General Fund compared to FY2025. Increased operating expenses included health insurance premium increase and benefit improvements and increases in expenses for contracted services.

Brigman provided an overview of General Fund revenues, expenses by department, and the Capital Improvement Plan. In summarizing the General Fund, Brigman noted: 1) no significant service delivery changes expected for FY2027; 2) no new personnel requests; 3) the budget proposed a 3.3% CPI/COLA increase and a 0-5% merit pool, with no health/dental/vision plan changes; 4) no administrative or organizational changes for departments; 5) continued technology advancements across the Town; 6) vehicle and equipment replacements for greater efficiency and operational effectiveness; and 7) significant planning initiatives across the Town for current and future needs. Brigman noted that no changes were proposed to the Town's Fee Schedule and that parking rates

were adopted prior to the current parking season. Brigman stated that the Board could consider fee schedule changes throughout the year, such as those currently being considered by advisory boards.

Brigman expressed appreciation to the Board and staff for their work on the budget, in particular Finance Director Murray. Dull expressed appreciation to Brigman and Town staff.

The public hearing was declared open at 6:12pm.

Lucy Gee, 19 Myrtle Ct., expressed concern regarding the potential loss of green space due to the paving of the parking lot of the Historic Square.

Stoney Mason, 203 Lee's Cut, asked Brigman the status of the Town's reserve funds. Brigman responded that there was \$11 million in the capital reserve fund and a little more than \$30 million in the General Fund to cover 3 categories: 1) disaster recovery; 2) beach nourishment; and 3) lost revenues due to the bridge replacement projects.

Sue Bulluck, speaking on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, stated that all of the Town's reserve funds were spent in recovery efforts following Hurricane Fran, therefore even though \$30 million seems like a large number, it can disappear quickly in a disaster circumstance or if the Town had to fund a beach nourishment project.

Laura King, 2400 N. Lumina Ave., asked the Board to consider using pervious surface options when considering new projects which might create more impervious surfaces.

Neal Briggi, 4 W. Henderson St., 1) thanked Murray for a good budget; 2) said that the previous budget had emphasized quality of life as a priority, but that he had not seen improvement in issues such as noise and traffic over the last year; 3) stated he had seen an increase in the Police Department budget but questioned whether there was a plan to use those funds toward quality of life improvements; 4) said he had not seen anyone take ownership of the traffic problems and that the noise heard from his deck had not abated; and 5) requested the Board develop goals regarding spending Police Department funds on quality of life issues. Brigman stated that the Town had been addressing quality of life issues as follows: 1) that 3 additional officers had been authorized by the Board to address quality of life issues, however, the Town had not been able to realize the benefit of those positions because it had not been able to fill the positions; 2) the Town had looked at instituting a noise camera, but legal issues had caused it to pause that effort; 3) the Town had removed parallel parking spaces on N. Lumina to improve biking and walkability; 4) the Town had rolled out a parking availability site; 5) the Town had worked on paving streets, installing crosswalks and working with NCDOT to improve the Waynick/Causeway intersection; and 6) the Town was working on many other efforts which have not yet been implemented. Brigman stated that quality of life issues were not just things that were stated, but that real action had been taken and would be taken to address them.

John Van Horn, 420 Waynick Blvd., asked if funds had been assigned to resurface Waynick Blvd., stating that surface issues caused noise. Brigman responded that this was an NCDOT roadway and that the Town would bring it up with the state.

Jim Smith, Channel Dr., asked the Board to spend responsibly.

There being no other persons who wished to comment, the public hearing was closed at 6:35pm.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Schoen and carried unanimously, the Board adopted Ordinance (2026) 686-B adopting the FY 26-27 budget in its entirety.

Baggett asked that the Board be cautionary regarding the multi-use path and encouraged further discussion before the project was moved forward.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION (2026) 2372 CHANGING THE CAPITALIZATION (MATERIALITY) THRESHOLD FOR CAPITAL ASSETS

Murray stated that the capitalization threshold is the minimum amount where a purchase is considered a long-term asset rather than a normal expense. The NC Government Finance Officers Association recommends that Towns have a threshold of \$10,000 to eliminate unnecessary reporting. Murray stated that the change would allow the Town to eliminate the purchase of reporting software, at an annual savings of \$6,000. Upon motion by DeGroot, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the resolution was adopted.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO PROCEED WITH THE RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Carus-Childers stated that the Board recently directed staff to update the 2020 - 2030 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. Part of the update process is to complete a needs assessment survey. She stated that the plan was to mail a postcard to Wrightsville Beach property owners and businesses that will include a QR code to access the online survey. The postcard will include directions for obtaining a hard copy of the survey for anyone who may prefer the paper copy to completing it online, with the postcard to be mailed around August 1, and the survey will remain open through October 31, 2026. Carus-Childers said the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee had reviewed the survey and voted unanimously to recommend its approval. Baggett suggested that the Board consider the comments of Jim Smith regarding the survey. After discussion, the consensus of the Board was to return the issue to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to discuss the concerns expressed.

CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REGARDING SPECIAL EVENTS OCCURRING BETWEEN MEMORIAL DAY AND LABOR DAY DURING THE PERIOD OF BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

Brigman stated that at the April meeting, in response to a recommendation of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee and the pending impacts of the bridge replacement projects, the Board approved the continuation of special events which occur after Labor Day and before Memorial Day during the period of bridge replacements (subject to adjustment based on actual conditions), but tabled consideration of events which occur in the summer months between those holidays. Brigman noted that since 2015, the Town has not authorized any new events to occur during the months of May, June, July, and August, but did allow recurring events that were active in 2015 to continue during those months. Brigman said that the Board should provide direction on special events (both recurring and new requests) for the period of time between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Brigman said the Board had three options: 1) continue the existing policy of not allowing any new special events during the peak season period, but continue to allow the recurring events that have been approved since 2015; 2) prohibit any special event from occurring during the peak season, even the recurring events that have been allowed since 2015; and 3) allow applications to be submitted for new special events during the peak season period, with each application being considered separately by the Board of Alderman.

Brigman recommended continuing with the existing policy of not permitting any new special events but allowing the recurring events to continue. As the impacts of the bridge replacement projects become more evident, the Board can make changes that are necessary and in the best interest of the Town given the impacts of the project. Upon motion by Baggett, seconded by DeGroot and carried unanimously, the Board approved Brigman's recommendation.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATIONS BY THE NC HOLIDAY FLOTILLA FOR THE DAY IN THE PARK AND THE BOAT PARADE & FIREWORKS EVENTS

Carus-Childers stated that there were no changes to the scheduled activities from prior years except for the location from which the fireworks will be discharged. This year the proposed location for the fireworks launch will be from a barge on Banks Channel. The committee would like to alternate the

fireworks launch location each year to offer viewing opportunities for different areas of the beach. In either location, a radius of 600 feet from the barge must remain clear of any other vessels. Carus-Childers stated the applications had been reviewed by staff, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee recommended that the Board approve the applications. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board approved the applications.

CONSIDER AN APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Brigman noted that a vacancy existed for an unexpired term ending January 2028 on the Board of Adjustment. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Hank Miller, on being appointed to the Parking Committee. Using ballots, the Board appointed Lisa Weeks, 408 N. Channel Dr. to the Board. Detailed votes were as follows:

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT	
APPLICANT	VOTE
Darryl Mills	Dull, DeGroot
Lisa Weeks	Baggett, Schoen, Partin

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE (2026) 1871 AMENDING SECTION 130.03 OF THE TOWN CODE REGARDING THE ALLOWANCE OF ALCOHOL SALES AT TOWN-SPONSORED EVENTS

Carus-Childers stated that at the March 24, 2026 Budget Workshop, the Board directed staff to research the requirements for the sale of alcohol at the Town-sponsored summer Concerts in the Park. Part of that process was to review the current ordinance pertaining to the consumption and possession of alcoholic beverages. Carus-Childers stated that the ordinance required several changes regardless of whether or not the Town considers the sale of alcohol at Town-sponsored events. Changes included: 1) adding the definition of Spirituous Liquor; 2) changing the definition of Malt Beverage to that of the current North Carolina State Statute for consistency; 3) removing the definition of "pedestrian" since revisions to the ordinance make the term unnecessary; 4) consolidating sections (B) 1, 2, 3 and (C) due to redundancy; and 5) adding verbiage which allows the Board of Aldermen to permit at their discretion the sale and consumption of alcohol on Town property. In response to a question, Richardson stated that he had reviewed and revised the proposal and had no objections. Upon motion by DeGroot, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Ordinance was adopted.

CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH LIGHTHOUSE BEER & WINE GOVERNING THE SALE OF ALCOHOL AT TOWN-SPONSORED SPECIAL EVENTS AND APPROVAL OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 687-B FUNDING THE PURCHASE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES FOR RESALE

Carus-Childers stated that according to the ABC Commission, the Town would be required to obtain a Special One-Time Permit for each concert event. A permit application must be submitted at least 14 days in advance of the event. Carus-Childers explained the information that would need to be detailed in the application, one of which would be the agreement with the vendor, Lighthouse Beer & Wine. In addition, there is a need to approve a budget ordinance in order to fund the purchase of alcoholic beverages for resale. Carus-Childers noted that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee was in support of the proposal. Brigman noted that the Police Department had concerns about the proposal and that the Town would be monitoring the event to ensure that there were no issues in the implementation of alcohol sales. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Schoen and

carried unanimously, the Board adopted the Budget Ordinance and authorized the Town Manager to execute the agreement.

OTHER ITEMS & REPORTS:

- A. **Alderman Schoen:** stated that he was impressed by the parking availability website which had been implemented by Pivot Parking.
- B. **Alderman Partin:** attended the Annual Travel Breakfast.
- C. **Alderman Baggett:** nothing to report.
- D. **Mayor Pro Tem DeGroot:** nothing to report.
- E. **Mayor Dull:** nothing to report.
- F. **Town Manager Brigman:** noted 1) the Meet the Manager event would be held 5/18 for the public; 2) the Parking Committee would meet on 5/28; 3) reported that NCDOT had done a press release in which it was noted that the first bridge to be replaced was the small bridge on Salsbury, with the project beginning in November of this year, with completion estimated for 2/27; and 4) he would be preparing a Q&A video on the bridge replacements.
- G. **Town Attorney Richardson:** nothing to report.
- H. **Town Clerk Heater:** nothing to report.

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 7:11pm Schoen 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 Partin and carried unanimously.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Schoen and carried unanimously, the Board returned to open session at 7:35pm.

Brigman stated that the Board had discussed the Town Manager's recommendation for settlement of the Notice of Violation regarding the Commodore Club. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Schoen and carried by a vote of 4-1 (DeGroot opposed), the Board affirmed the Town Manager's recommendation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk