BOARD OF ALDERMEN MINUTES

JUNE 9, 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 DeGroote, 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

Lisa Weeks, 408 N. Channel Dr., spoke in favor of the consent agenda item, the naming of the first tennis court, in honor of Jackie Jenkins, who had recently retired after conducting tennis lessons for over 36 years.

Ellen Gannon, 112 Parmele Blvd., asked the Board to adopt a resolution asking the NCDOT to postpone the Military Cutoff/Eastwood overpass project until the bridge replacement projects are complete and to conduct a public meeting regarding the project.

Nicole and Frank Perry requested a modification to the ordinance regarding ocean-related activities in order to allow umbrella and beach chair rentals to oceanfront condominiums in the same manner afforded oceanfront hotels, to begin in 2027.

Doug Wilson, 12 W. Salisbury St., asked the Board to postpone any vote until 2027 regarding any change to the dogs on the beach ordinance. Wilson stated that the Town needed more park rangers to enforce beach rules and enhanced signage—both of which would be budget issues. Wilson also: 1) said there needed to be better enforcement of dog registration; and 2) the addition of volunteer beach ambassadors to educate beachgoers.

Sue Bulluck noted: 1) the visitor's center has been updated and would have an open house on 6/25; 2) there would be a Zoom meeting for businesses regarding the bridge replacement projects on 6/25; 3) asked the Board to adopt a resolution asking the NCDOT to postpone the Military Cutoff/Eastwood overpass project until completion of the bridge replacement projects.

CONSENT AGENDA

Prior to consideration of the Consent Agenda, the Board pulled Item C, approval of the special event permit for Ironman 2027.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the remainder of the Consent Agenda was approved. It consisted of: 1) approval of the open and closed session minutes of the 5-12-26 regular meeting; 2) acknowledgement of previously-approved special events for July;

3) approval of amendments to ESA SNC Surf Contest special event permits; 4) adoption of Resolution (2026) 2373 adopting the 2026 Hurricane Operations Plan; and 5) approval of an application for the Naming of Town Assets: Tennis Court in Honor of Jackie Jenkins.

Regarding Item C, Schoen expressed concern regarding the approval of the 2027 Ironman special event due to the closure of Causeway Dr. and the scheduling for Sunday rather than Saturday. DeGroote noted that the Board had decided to go forward with special events while reserving the right to make adjustments as the actual impacts from the bridge replacement projects were known. Carus-Childers stated that she, Police, Ocean Rescue and Ironman officials had developed the proposed plan. Event organizer Sami Winter stated that Sunday was being proposed due to the timing of the tide change on Saturday. After discussion, and upon motion by DeGroote, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the special event permit with the date being changed from Sunday to Saturday.

CONSIDER A PRESENTATION ON AND APPROVAL OF THE FY26-27 MARKETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE BUDGET

Ryan Smith, Chair, introduced Megan Buchbinder, TDA Liaison to the Marketing Committee. Buchbinder stated that New Hanover County had estimated an increase in the marketing budget of 12.47% based on last year's ROT revenues. The proposed WB marketing budget is proposed at $1,176,978. Key changes were: 1) no longer being under contract with an agency of record, thereby saving agency fees; 2) adding a visitor and community engagement line item; 3) destination rebranding; and 4) increase in advertising including additional effort in the shoulder seasons. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board approved the budget as proposed.

DOGS ON THE BEACH ORDINANCE

Brigman stated that the Board of Aldermen had directed the establishment of a Working Group to discuss options related to allowances for dogs on the beach which began meeting in November 2025. The Group consisted of six residents, two staff members (Town Manager and Park Ranger), one representative from the Audubon North Carolina, and one representative from the Sea Turtle Project.

Brigman noted that the Working Group had: 1) evaluated multiple options for expanding allowances for dogs on the beach; 2) compared other beach community rules to determine what might work in WB; 3) identified the challenges and impacts to quality of life, environmental and wildlife habitats, cleanliness, and overall upkeep of the beach; and 4) discussed pros and cons, enforcement challenges, and other solutions to improve rule compliance.

Enforcement and personnel challenges were noted as: 1) current violations occur regularly; 2) limited personnel to catch violators; 3) 110 citations issued in 2025; 4) Public Works staff remove dog waste daily (5-10 waste piles a day); 5) public health concerns with dog waste on the beach and in the water; 6) Federal ADA laws impact enforcement; and 7) enforcement expectations versus reality.

Brigman reviewed the options considered by the Working Group: 1) Make no changes to the current ordinance, which allows on-leash dogs anytime, except between April 1 and September 30; 2) expand the current season when dogs are allowed on the beach. For example, allowing dogs anytime from the Tuesday after Labor Day to May 1; 3) allow dogs on the beach between the hours of 6am-9am during the current period of time when dogs are restricted; and 4) allow dogs on the beach year-round, outside the hours of 9am-6pm.

The Working Group consensus was Option 3; to allow dogs on the beach between the hours of 6am-9am during the current period of time when dogs are restricted (April 1 – Sept 30). Brigman noted that this was not unanimous, with some members wanting more allowances, and others wanting fewer.

Brigman stated that when staff brought that recommendation to the Board of Aldermen, it was directed to take the issue to the Planning Board, which considered the issue at their March and April meetings. During the March meeting, the Planning Board voted 5-2 against the recommendation from the Dogs on the Beach Working Group. The matter was discussed again at the April meeting to consider all possible options, and the Board voted unanimously to not expand the current allowance for dogs on the beach and also voted to increase the fines from $250 to $1,000.

Administrative and enforcement recommendations which resulted from both the Working Group and Planning Board were: 1) any change implemented would be done on a one-year trial basis with future action of the Board being required to make it a permanent change; 2) limit/restrict dogs from accessing vulnerable areas of the island to protect nesting and migrating birds (North of Shell Island, South of Access 42); 3) increase the penalty from $250 to $500 for dog owners who violate the ordinance; 4) add dog waste stations and baggies at more beach accesses to promote proper waste disposal; and 5) increase marketing efforts to educate the public on the rules and encourage residents to register their dogs with the Town.

Members of the Board expressed appreciation to the Working Group and Planning Board for their efforts to develop solutions to this issue. There was then a discussion among Board members, with the consensus being that the Board would consider an increase in the fine for failure to clean up dog waste at its next meeting. It was also the consensus of the Board that any other changes to the ordinance would be considered in connection with discussion of the FY27-28 budget, as the issue of adding additional park ranger positions would need to be considered with any proposed changes.

CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO THE MARKETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

It was noted that there were 3 positions available for appointment/reappointment with terms ending 6/2028. Using ballots, the Board appointed Lisa Corley, Ryan Smith and Ned Leary to the Committee. Detailed votes were as follows:

MARKETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
APPLICANT	**VOTE**
Lisa Corley	Baggett, Schoen, Dull, Partin
Ryan Smith	Baggett, Schoen, Dull, Partin
Sue Bulluck	
Ned Leary	Baggett, Schoen, Dull, Partin, DeGroote
Jan Turpin	
Tracey Himmel	

OTHER ITEMS & REPORTS:

A. **Alderman Schoen:** reported on the Ports, Waterway and Beaches Commission meeting.
B. **Alderman Partin:** noted 1) that there were 3 active sea turtle nests on the strand and urged people to be cognizant of lighting; 2) that the MPO had removed the Independence Extension project from the 10 year plan; and 3) she would be attending the TDA meeting on 6/10.
C. **Alderman Baggett:** noted that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee would be meeting on 6/16 and would be discussing the Parks & Recreation Master Plan survey.

D. **Mayor Pro Tem DeGroote:** congratulated the Police Department and Ocean Rescue on the recent successful life-saving effort on the north end; thanked the Fire Department for its response to his business location.
E. **Mayor Dull:** noted that state legislators had been contacted to seek modifications to a bill which could potentially disallow the use of ROT funds for the ocean rescue program.
F. **Town Manager Brigman**: noted 1) the Bridge Replacement Committee would be meeting on 6/15; 2) the start date for the replacement of the small bridge on Salisbury St. was announced as November 2026; 3) the Town had received approval, using Town funds, to improve the Waynick/Causeway/Lumina intersection prior to the bridge replacement projects which would involve adding 2 left turn lanes off of Waynick onto Causeway and relocating a crosswalk; and 4) the CFPUA redundant line project should be completed in the next 30 days.
G. **Town Clerk Heater**: nothing to report.
H. **Town Attorney Richardson**: nothing to report.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk