Board of Aldermen Minutes

July 14, 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 Doug Lain, Pastor, Wrightsville United Methodist Church. 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
Evan Moriegerato, Asst. Public Works Director

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Laura King, 2400 N. Lumina Ave., expressed concern about pedestrian safety on N. Lumina between S. Ridge Ln. and Moore's Inlet St., stating that the area has high pedestrian traffic and needs additional signage, sharrows in each direction and a crosswalk at Moore's Inlet St.

Cindy Jupp, 2400 N. Lumina, on behalf of the Harbor Island Garden Club, spoke in support of the improvements to Harbor Way Garden which were to be considered by the Board later in the agenda.

Kyle Hanlon, representing the Chamber of Commerce, speaking on behalf of the non-profits occupying the Historic Square, asked for green space to be preserved in place of the 11 parking spaces planned adjacent to the Bordeaux Cottage contained in the Historic Square parking improvement project and asked that parking be reserved for use by the non-profits.

Kerri Allen, of the NC Coastal Federation, also spoke on behalf of the Historic Square non-profits, asking for adjustments to the plan for the Historic Square parking lot in order to better support events for tenants in the Historic Square.

CONSENT AGENDA

Prior to consideration of the Consent Agenda, the Board pulled Item C, Consideration of Special Event Permits, in order to discuss the YMCA Triathlon.

Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board approved the remainder of the Consent Agenda. It consisted of approval of 1) the open session meeting minutes of the 6-9-26 regular meeting: 2) acknowledgement of previously-approved special events for August; 3) Budget Ordinance (2026) 688-B implementing the 2026-27 pay scale; 4) scheduling a special called joint meeting with the Planning Board for 9-8-2026 at 4:30pm in the Town Hall Conference Room; 5) scheduling a special called meeting for September 21-22, beginning at 9:30am on 9-21 for the purpose of conducting a strategic planning workshop facilitated by NCLM, authorizing the Town Manager to execute an agreement with NCLM to facilitate the workshop, and Budget Ordinance

(2026) 689-8 funding the workshop; 6) rescheduling the August Board of Aldermen Meeting to 8-18-26 at 5:30pm; and 7) Budget Ordinance (2026) 693-B funding open purchase orders from FY25-26.

Regarding Item C, Schoen expressed concern regarding the YMCA Triathlon, as it takes place during a Saturday in September, which is considered part of the busy season. In response to a question from Schoen, Carus-Childers stated that runners would be using the Loop sidewalk, not the roadway and that the Loop would not be closed to others who wished to use it at that time. Upon motion by Schoen, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the special event permits as proposed.

PRESENTATION OF LIFE SAVING AND OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS

Bishop stated that on May 21st, at approximately 7:30 PM, officers responded to an active ocean rescue after dispatch advised that two children had become caught in a rip current and that multiple bystanders had entered the water in an attempt to rescue them. Upon arrival, officers encountered a rapidly evolving and dangerous situation with several individuals in the surf attempting to save the children.

During the incident, the children's guardian entered the water to assist but became overwhelmed by the conditions and submerged beneath the surface. Ocean Rescue Director Sam Proffitt of Wrightsville Beach Ocean Rescue located the unconscious victim underwater and began bringing her toward shore. Simultaneously, two civilian bystanders continued their efforts to rescue the two children who remained in the rip current.

While attempting to remove the unconscious victim from the surf, Ocean Rescue Director Proffitt encountered difficulty due to the challenging ocean conditions. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, he requested assistance from Corporal Jamel Cooper, Officer Eric Elder, and Officer Elle Arnold. Without hesitation, all three officers entered the water and assisted Ocean Rescue Director Proffitt in bringing the victim safely to shore.

Once ashore, the officers immediately assessed the victim and initiated CPR while additional rescue efforts continued. During this time, one of the children was successfully brought to shore by rescuers. The second child remained in the water with a civilian rescuer, prompting Ocean Rescue Director Proffitt to re-enter the surf and assist in completing the rescue.

Bishop stated that the actions of Corporal Cooper, Officer Elder, and Officer Arnold exemplify the highest standards of teamwork and dedication to public service. Faced with a life-threatening emergency, each officer willingly placed their own safety at risk to assist in rescuing a victim from dangerous ocean conditions and immediately rendered lifesaving medical care upon reaching shore. Their calm demeanor, decisive actions, and unwavering commitment to preserving human life significantly contributed to the successful management of this critical incident.

Bishop stated that the actions of Corporal Cooper, Officer Elder, Officer Arnold, and Ocean Rescue Director Proffitt reflect the highest standards of public service and bring great credit upon themselves, the Wrightsville Beach Police Department, Wrightsville Beach Ocean Rescue, and the Town of Wrightsville Beach. Their professionalism, courage, teamwork, and unwavering commitment to preserving human life embody the core values of honor, integrity, courage, and service.

Bishop presented Corporal Cooper, Officer Elder, and Officer Arnold the Life Saving Award for their direct involvement in rescuing the victim and providing immediate lifesaving medical care. Additionally, Bishop presented Ocean Rescue Director Proffitt the Outstanding Service Award in recognition of his exceptional leadership, decisive actions, and extraordinary commitment to the successful rescue of multiple victims under extremely hazardous conditions.

All members of the Board joined in expressing appreciation and congratulations to those receiving the awards.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE PARKS & RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Carus-Childers reported that at the 5-12-26 meeting, the Board directed staff to return the proposed Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for further review specifically to consider adding text that would allow for conservation and green space preservation response data. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee reviewed the survey again at the 6-16-26 meeting, along with the consultant, and recommended the amended document be approved by the Board. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board approved the Needs Assessment Survey.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE (2026) 1872 INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO CLEAN UP DOG WASTE

Brigman stated that both the Dogs on the Beach Committee and Planning Board had unanimously recommended that the penalty for failure to clean up dog waste be increased substantially, therefore the Ordinance had been developed to increase the civil penalty for this offense from $250 to $500. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried by a vote of 4-1 (DeGroote opposed), the Ordinance was adopted. DeGroote stated that, as the Town had only written 9 citations for this violation last year, he would prefer to concentrate on issues which occurred more frequently.

CONSIDER 1) ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION (2026) 2374 EXEMPTING THE TOWN FROM THE MINI-BROOKS ACT RELATED TO ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE WAYNICK/CAUSEWAY/LUMINA INTERSECTION PROJECT; 2) ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 690-B FUNDING THE PROJECT; AND 3) AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE THE CONTRACT

Brigman stated that The Town is pursuing engineering services for the alteration and permanent improvement of the intersection of U.S. 76, also known as Causeway Drive/Waynick Boulevard, and SR 1452, also known as Lumina Avenue. The purpose of the project is to address long-standing traffic bottlenecks and coordinate the improvements with the NCDOT's upcoming Causeway Drive Bridge replacement project. The project will create two left hand turns from Waynick onto Causeway and will relocate a pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection.

Brigman noted that Resolution No. (2026) 2374 exempts these engineering services from the qualifications-based selection requirements under Article 3D of Chapter 143 of the NCGS. This exemption is recommended because the Town's current consulting engineer has already spent significant time coordinating with NCDOT on the bridge project and has developed the alternative intersection design concept. Using a new request for qualifications process at this stage would duplicate prior engineering work, create delays, and disrupt design continuity.

Finally, Brigman stated that Budget Ordinance No. (2026) 690-B provides funding for the engineering services in an amount not to exceed $90,000. The total cost of the project is estimated to be around $500,000, with the Town funding the improvements and seeking reimbursement of some or all of the costs. Upon motion by Schoen, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the 3 items.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF BUDGET ORDINANCE (2026) 691-B AND 692-B WHICH 1) ADD TWO ADDITIONAL PARK RANGER POSITIONS TO THE AUTHORIZED POSITIONS CHART AND 2) FUND THE ADDITIONAL PARK RANGER POSITIONS AND RELATED VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Brigman said that the Town continues to see a rise in visitation and beach activity annually, which unfortunately brings increased violations of beach rules and nuisance activity. Such violations include litter, smoking, dogs on the beach, alcohol consumption, loud noise, and unauthorized events. The Town currently patrols the parks and beach with two (2) full-time Park Rangers, along with limited assistance from the Police Department. Brigman stated that hours and enforcement numbers for existing staff vary due to special events, holiday and peak season demands, vacation and sick leave, and other variables, leaving enforcement inconsistent and unable to keep up with the current demands. In response to these issues, staff have created a proposal to improve overall enforcement.

Brigman reported that workload is significant for the Park Rangers during the peak season, but can be light during the off-season, therefore, if two new positions are approved, management would target potential candidates who could serve in a law enforcement or administrative capacity during the off-season to add additional value to the Police Department. The Park Ranger Supervisor position is currently vacant, with the previous supervisor, Shannon Slocum, recently retiring; however, the Town has extended an employment offer to an individual who is law enforcement certified, and can provide positional flexibility for the Police Department as needed.

Brigman stated that two additional personnel would require the Town to purchase additional vehicles and equipment for these individuals and that adding two full-time positions is a significant investment by the Town in addressing quality of life issues and concerns; however, these recurring expenses may likely require long-term revenue and financial adjustments for their continued support. Total additional costs include $190,000 for additional salaries and benefits and $120,000 for vehicles and equipment. In response to a question from Baggett, Brigman stated that with the additional positions, there would be opportunities for bicycle patrol. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the budget ordinances were adopted.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AT HARBOR WAY GARDEN

Brigman stated that Harbor Island Garden Club was requesting permission to make two physical improvements to the existing Harbor Way Garden: 1) fountain replacement – replace the existing fountain (already removed) from the center of the garden and replace it with a new fountain structure; and 2) Storage Shed Expansion – Expand the existing storage building on both sides to provide more storage space. Brigman stated that no funds are requested from the Town for either project. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by Baggett and carried unanimously, the Board approved the project.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH NEW HANOVER COUNTY FOR A BUILDING PERMITTING SYSTEM

Brigman stated that depending on the type of project, property owners and contractors must utilize both the Town and County's inspection portals for construction projects. The Town provides building and plumbing services, while the County provides electrical, mechanical, and fire services. Brigman stated that the Town's current permitting and inspections portal is no longer being supported by the provider, meaning the Town must find a new software solution. Staff recommends approving an Interlocal Agreement with New Hanover County to utilize their existing permitting and inspections portal (EnerGov) for Town services. Brigman noted that adoption of the system would 1) improve efficiency for users (property owners and contractors); 2) allow the Town and County to better track projects and communicate about projects; 3) result in no loss of control or oversight by the Town (all functions remain the same, just a new software portal); and 4) have no cost to the Town, saving over $100,000 in new software start-up, and thousands in annual service agreements. Upon motion by Schoen, seconded by Partin and carried unanimously, the Board approved the agreement.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AN APPLICATION IN RESPONSE TO THE WMPO'S SPECIAL CALL FOR PROJECTS

Brigman stated that the WMPO has issued a special call for Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP). The LAPP is the WMPO's local, discretionary funding program for various State transportation improvement funds. Brigman noted that 1) the special call for projects was opened in May, and closes on July 17th; 2) eligible projects accepted and approved by the WMPO would not be eligible for funding until 2029/2030; 3) the Town's only project that is eligible for consideration is the Loop Improvement Project; 4) despite the Town wanting to implement this project before 2029/2030, he felt it was important to get the project on the WMPO's list in case there were delays; 5) assumptions and estimates for the project were made for purposes of submitting an application, as final design and cost estimates have still not been obtained; 5) submittal of the application does not commit the Town to the project, it only allows staff to submit an application for consideration by the WMPO. Upon motion by Partin, seconded by DeGroote and carried unanimously, the Board approved submittal of the pre-application.

OTHER ITEMS & REPORTS:

- **A. Alderman Schoen:** 1) reported that the Mason's Inlet dredging project should be completed this winter; and 2) expressed appreciation to Ocean Rescue for the rescue activity during the July 4 weekend.
- **B. Alderman Partin:** 1) expressed appreciation to the Fire Department for putting up flags over the July 4 period; and 2) thanked Public Works for the flower display at the Blue Star Memorial.
- **C. Mayor Dull:** 1) noted the new app put out in beta form by NCDOT for "Projects Near Me" and 2) stated that the legislature had enacted ebike legislation to become effective 12-31-26.
- **D. Mayor Pro Tem DeGroote:** nothing to report.
- **E. Alderman Baggett:** expressed appreciation to Carus-Childers and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee for the work in getting the needs assessment survey in final form.
- **F. Town Manager Brigman**: reported that the CFPUA should complete the redundant water/sewer line project by the end of the month and that the Bridge Replacement Committee had met on 7-13; it was reported that contracts for the project should be approved in the next 30-60 days.
- **G. Town Clerk Heater**: nothing to report.
- **H. Town Attorney Richardson**: expressed appreciation to Town Staff for their responsiveness to requests from the legal department.

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 6:43pm Dull 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 7:05pm.

No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk