



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Board of Commissioners Work Session

4:00 PM Monday, March 23, 2026

Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

Call To Order

Mayor Harker called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Roll Call

Elizabeth Lewis, Town Clerk, called the roll.

PRESENT:

Mayor Harker
Mayor Pro Tem Gillikin
Commissioner Cooper
Commissioner LoPiccolo
Commissioner Matthews
Commissioner Spiegler

ABSENT: None

Agenda Approval

Commissioner Matthews made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

Presentations

1. Park Proposed Design/Concept
 - a. Beaufort Community Foundation

Mary Phillips, Chair of the newly established Beaufort Community Foundation, presented a proposal for renovating Eury Park. The foundation approved a budget of up to \$50,000 to invest in the park as their inaugural project and gift to Beaufort's parks system. Phillips emphasized that renovating the park would honor Mr. Eury and his family's generous 2009 land donation, noting that Mr. Eury wanted people to "slow down, sit, and communicate with each other and enjoy nature."

The proposed improvements included new benches and picnic tables, a brick promenade with pervious pavers matching those used on Front Street and Ann Street Park, and a potential interactive children's activity incorporating embossed bricks with nautical imagery to create a scavenger hunt experience. Phillips also announced potential plans for a QR code-accessible video featuring Mr. Eury discussing his land donation, the town's history, and natural surroundings. The presentation concluded with the Beaufort Community Foundation ready to proceed to the community input phase, pending board direction.

Commissioner Cooper expressed appreciation for the foundation's efforts while raising concerns about the picnic table placement, suggesting they be moved further from the sidewalk. He also inquired about playground equipment for children. Phillips explained that the current design preserves the park space for the annual Pirate Invasion event while noting that climbing features could potentially be added through future partnerships with organizations like Arts in Beaufort.

Commissioner Matthews thanked the foundation and inquired about formal communication from the Eury family regarding the proposed name change to "Eury Family Park." Phillips confirmed they would obtain written approval if the project moves forward.

Commissioner Spiegler praised the foundation's focus on parks and raised several questions about community engagement, shade provision, children's activities, and stormwater management coupled with educational signs. She emphasized the importance of community input sessions, similar to those conducted for Ann Street Park, and stressed that public parks require shade to use outdoor spaces effectively in the South. Phillips acknowledged these concerns, noting that while trees weren't included to preserve water views and address maintenance challenges, the foundation would be open to modifications based on community feedback.

Commissioner LoPiccolo emphasized the importance of balancing function with design, noting concerns about designing the space primarily around the one-weekend of the annual Pirate Invasion event. He stressed the need for shade given the park's constant use throughout the week and suggested trees on the borders as a potential compromise.

Commissioner Gillikin expressed excitement about the project and appreciation for the pervious pavers and noted her personal preference for viewing water through live oak trees. She looked forward to community input on shade solutions.

Mayor Harker thanked the foundation for their partnership and noted that the proposal aligns with Mr. Eury's original intent to provide citizens with water views while keeping the design clean and simple. She suggested that if additional space is needed for shaded seating, the adjacent Grayden Paul Park could serve that function. Harker also stressed the need for ADA compliance and accessibility in the park, and thanked the foundation's founder, Craig Souza, who was in the audience.

No formal action was taken, but there was consensus from the board to move the project to the next step, involving community engagement sessions coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

2. WWTP/Utility Rates and CIP Review
a. Rivers and Associates

Greg Churchill from Rivers and Associates presented a comprehensive overview of the town's wastewater and water systems, beginning with an update on a completed water effects ratio study for the wastewater treatment plant. The study produced favorable results that would allow the town to request modification of total copper limits in their NPDES discharge permit from 3.7 micrograms per liter monthly average to 12.1 micrograms per liter, and daily maximum limits from 5.8 to 18.8 micrograms per liter. This modification would allow the town to meet copper limits without plant modifications.

Town Manager Matt Zapp confirmed that this would traditionally be administratively approved, and the board provided consensus for Rivers to submit the modification request to DEQ.

Churchill then provided an extensive review of the water supply and treatment infrastructure, beginning with historical context from a 2005 comprehensive water study through current conditions. He detailed the town's four Castle Hayne Aquifer wells, aged 13 to 71 years, with current permitted capacity of 1.872 million gallons per day and actual 12-hour capacity of 1.678 MGD. The annual average daily demand is approximately 564,000 gallons per day, but summer peak daily demand reaches 947,000 gallons per day.

The presentation covered the condition of existing water treatment plants at Pine Street and Glenda Drive, noting aging infrastructure including 37-71 year old facilities, softener vessels, and pumps. Churchill explained that NPDES permits for both water treatment plants had been rescinded after the town connected waste discharge to the sanitary sewer system to address copper limit requirements.

Commissioner Matthews questioned whether it would be more cost-effective to treat discharge at new water plants versus connecting to the sewer system. Churchill clarified that while connecting existing plants to sewer was inexpensive due to proximity, new plants would require NPDES permits for concentrate discharge, preferably combined with wastewater plant discharge to acceptable receiving waters like Taylor's Creek.

Commissioner Cooper asked about metals discharge into Taylor's Creek and monitoring procedures. Churchill explained that all discharge is monitored both at the plant and in the creek upstream and downstream of discharge points, with the town being among many municipalities now required to monitor these newly regulated metal parameters.

Regarding future water supply needs, Churchill recommended updating the comprehensive water study, securing test well sites, conducting nanofiltration pilot studies, and completing NPDES engineering analysis. He emphasized that securing the five previously tested well sites would be prudent, as the town has already invested in testing these locations.

Commissioner LoPiccolo questioned whether increased copper limits would allow for increased capacity. Churchill explained that while copper limits don't directly

affect capacity, other factors like nutrient loading and shellfish sanitation requirements are the typical limiting factors for expansion.

The presentation concluded with recommendations for both of the immediate needs: monitoring aging equipment, continuing maintenance, and future planning: comprehensive study updates, site acquisition, and pilot testing. Churchill emphasized that any new water treatment plant would require approximately five years from initial planning to operational status and would necessitate securing raw water supply, proving treatability, and obtaining discharge permits before having a viable project.

3. Beaufort Town Docks Financial Report (January-February 2026)
a. F3 Marina

Lori Meehan from F3 Marina presented the Beaufort Town Docks financial report for January and February of 2026, beginning with current occupancy rates. March occupancy stood at 56.38 percent across all dock areas, with each area above 30 percent. The docks have only two remaining 17-foot beam slips available for the 2026 Big Rock Tournament, indicating a strong demand.

Meehan noted that the traditional northern migration of winter boaters may be delayed due to current diesel fuel prices, which were approximately \$4.90-\$5.50 per gallon depending on location and delivery timing. This could affect April occupancy patterns as boaters may delay departure until fuel prices stabilize, though insurance requirements typically force movement north by June 1st due to hurricane season restrictions.

The financial snapshot showed that actual revenues missed budget projections by approximately \$3,000 between January and February, but were offset by under budget expenses, primarily due to winter staffing. Overall, the operation is performing better than budgeted projections.

Commissioner Cooper requested clarification about the prepaid rents during the week of the Big Rock Tournament, which Meehan explained are currently held as deferred revenue totaling approximately \$198,000 that will be recognized in June when the tournament occurs.

Commissioner Matthews asked about the return on investment analysis for the \$68,000 commercial dock repairs previously approved. Meehan indicated that the accounting team has completed a cash flow analysis that will be presented during the budget process, as the numbers depend on rate approvals for the coming fiscal year.

Town Manager Matt Zapp clarified the enterprise fund structure, explaining that the town has approximately \$368,000 in Fund 14 (Enterprise Fund) established January 1, 2026, to handle dock-related finances. Daily operations flow through F3's account, with proceeds returning to the town at fiscal year-end, similar to the town's arrangement with Pivot Parking.

Commissioner LoPiccolo confirmed that future diesel purchases will be paid through the F3 account rather than requiring town funding upfront.

The presentation concluded with F3 projecting strong cash positive performance for the upcoming fiscal year, with budget details to be presented at the next meeting.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

1. Pivot Parking Contract Amendment

Assistant Town Manager and Town Clerk, Elizabeth Lewis, presented a straightforward contract amendment to modify Pivot Parking's paid parking enforcement season from May 5th - October 31st to May 1st - October 1st. This represents the second amendment to adjust operational timing while maintaining all other contract terms and is consistent with prior direction approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to approve the Pivot Parking contract amendment as presented. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

2. Commercial Dock Railing Design/Concept

Town Manager Matt Zapp and Public Works Director Mark Eakes presented four design options for replacing approximately 150 feet of railing in front of the commercial dock operators. Zapp emphasized that this project supports safety improvements, aesthetic enhancement, and ADA compliance while the commercial dock renovations proceed.

Eakes showed photos of four constructed examples that were currently on display at the Public Works building:

- **Option 1:** Standard 6-inch wooden posts with three aluminum handrails, estimated at \$7,500-\$8,000 for materials
- **Option 2:** Similar design with flat rail on top and potential gusset board, estimated at \$6,500-\$7,000
- **Option 3:** Standard 2x6 vertical railing with flat board on top, estimated at \$6,500-\$7,000
- **Option 4:** Basic split rail fence similar to Randolph Johnson Jr. Memorial Park, estimated at \$4,000

Commissioner Cooper appreciated the safety improvements, particularly noting that the tighter spacing in Option 2 would better prevent children from falling through compared to the wider openings in Option 4.

Commissioner LoPiccolo expressed strong preference for wooden materials over metal railings, emphasizing Beaufort's historic character. He stated that "historic communities tend to have used wood instead of pipe railing systems" and believed maintaining traditional materials was more important than ease of maintenance. He also questioned the necessity of additional lighting given existing illumination.

Commissioner Gillikin strongly agreed with the wooden railings, having researched historical photos from 1907-1930 showing the boardwalk's evolution. She noted that while

early boardwalks had simpler designs, code requirements necessitated horizontal boards over time. She opposed decorative caps and rope lighting due to concerns about light pollution, particularly given existing boat lighting.

Commissioner Spiegler supported the traditional wooden aesthetic while raising concerns about safety spacing near water areas. She noted that on other sections of the boardwalk where water contact is possible, closer rail spacing would be more critical for child safety.

Commissioner Matthews preferred wooden materials and asked for cost clarification on the all-wood option, learning it would be the least expensive at approximately \$4,000. Eakes explained that natural wood surfaces can be pressure washed while painted surfaces require annual maintenance, consuming significant staff time. Aluminum handrails can be cleaned with chemicals in 30-40 minutes annually.

Zapp outlined additional features including potential solar-powered caps for ambient lighting, electrical outlets at 75-foot intervals, and an ADA-compliant opening in the center of the 150-foot span to provide equitable access to all commercial vendors.

Commissioner Spiegler raised concerns about increased pedestrian traffic in areas where people could fall into water, noting that from her past operational experience, having entrances only at ends provided better crowd control and safety.

Lori Meehan from F3 suggested that the new floating dock configuration with gangways would allow repositioning dock boxes to create barriers between walkways and water, improving safety without additional cost.

After discussion about post cap preferences, with Commissioner Gillikin noting that historical boardwalks were flat without decorative elements, the board decided to let the Historic Preservation Commission make recommendations on whether post caps should be included or not.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to advance Option 3 to the Historic Preservation Commission and allow them to make a decision regarding post caps. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

3. Live Oak Trees: Located at 123-127 Front Street

Town Manager Matt Zapp presented a detailed analysis of four live oak trees located in front of 123-127 Front Street, using a map to illustrate the situation. The issue was raised by residents Gordon and Beverly Smith at 125 Front Street, who requested removal and relocation of all four trees, with support from 123 Front Street residents. However, the property owners at 127 Front Street wanted their trees to remain.

Zapp explained the historical context: the 127 Front Street property owners underwent renovation 8-9 years ago with Historic Preservation Commissioner-approved plans showing a single tree placement. However, they deviated from approved plans, planting two trees (numbers 3 and 4) in front of their property instead of one, while the town planted

trees 1 and 2 based on volunteer-placed stakes. Based on the town's Land Development Ordinance (LDO) requirements, trees must be 35 feet from intersections and 50 feet apart. Staff measurements revealed:

- Tree 4 is only 17 feet from Moore Street intersection (violates LDO)
- Tree 3 is 32 feet from intersection (close to compliant, likely moved east to avoid water meter)
- Tree 2 is 32 feet from Tree 3
- Tree 1 is 19 feet from Tree 2

Town Attorney Grady indicated that Tree 4 clearly violates LDO and could be removed, while Tree 3 could be defended as substantially compliant given utility conflicts and HPC approval intent. If Tree 3 were removed, Tree 2 would also need removal due to 50-foot spacing requirements, but Tree 1 could remain.

Zapp noted that professional tree spading services quoted approximately \$3,500 for moving five trees (including one additional tree), though this isn't a direct per-tree cost due to mobilization requirements. The quote were obtained by Public Works Director, Mark Eakes.

Commissioner Cooper visited the trees and found them well-maintained and not large by live oak standards. He questioned whether they qualify as "large trees" under current size versus mature potential, supporting removal of only Tree 4 for LDO compliance while keeping the healthy trees 1, 2, and 3.

Commissioner LoPiccolo emphasized the importance of following the LDO as "rule of law" that the community agreed to uphold. He noted that property owners make decisions based on these regulations, and the board is elected to uphold them.

Commissioner Spiegler agreed about LDO importance while noting that the ongoing UDO update process recognizes that some past practices need revision. She referenced consultant input during UDO development suggesting that live oaks don't always grow to full size and can thrive in groves.

Commissioner Gillikin expressed concerns about setting precedent for other tree removal requests and the risk of losing trees during transplanting. She worried about "flushing money down the toilet" and suggested that if action is taken, it should occur at a regular commissioner meeting due to community interest in tree issues.

Commissioner Matthews requested additional information about potential downsides of leaving Tree 4 in place regarding intersection safety, and clarification about impacts on adjacent Yaupon trees. He suggested potentially involving Cooperative Extension for independent assessment.

Commissioner Spiegler noted that as part of the UDO update process, the board is working to improve ordinances to better serve community needs and avoid future similar situations.

The board recognized the need for more time to consider the complex issues involved, including safety implications, legal requirements, community precedent, and environmental impacts.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to table this matter until the May 11, 2026 board meeting to allow time for additional information gathering and expertise consultation. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

Staff Comments

Town Manager Zapp provided several positive project updates. Turner Street concrete pouring was scheduled for that week, including curbing and elevated pedestrian walkways, weather permitting. Asphalt installation would begin March 30th through April 3rd in two sections, with potential street opening as early as April 6, 2026. Full completion remains on target for the original four-week closure timeline, well ahead of the upcoming Beaufort Wine and Food Festival.

Zapp continued that the fuel station project was ahead of schedule and on budget. Concrete has been poured for the delivery lane, new sidewalks installed, brick pavers reinstalled, and the fuel tank concrete cap was in position. Thomas Simpson Construction completed civil work and parking lot preparation, with asphalt was scheduled for completion that week. The Fuel system components were tracking well, with meters potentially arriving that Tuesday or Wednesday. The first fuel cart would be assembled and tested before replicating additional carts. Pressure testing was underway, with potential for operational fueling as early as the following week, maintaining the April 1st target date. Zapp thanked the collaborative team including Oaks Grading, Jim Davis, Thomas Simpson Construction, CAMA permitting assistance from Planning Director Kyle Garner, the Beaufort Fire Department inspections, and F3 Marina for the coordinated effort.

Commissioner Spiegler requested advance notice of the first gallon of fuel pumped, which Zapp promised to coordinate with Lori Meehan.

Commissioner Cooper added information about the Goodwin Hotel, clarifying that yellow caution tape around the building is for safety due to concerns about the underpass' structural integrity, not demolition. Public Works installed sidewalk closure signs and boards to address the unsafe condition identified by the town's Planning Department.

Mayor Harker concluded by thanking the Beaufort Community Foundation, the leadership of Commissioners Gillikin and Spiegler on the BWOF dock committee, and all staff and community members who contributed to the various projects' success.

Adjourn

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 PM. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

Sharon E. Harker, Mayor

Jennifer L. Welborn, Deputy Town Clerk