



Town of Beaufort, NC
701 Front St. - P.O. Box 390 - Beaufort, N.C. 28516
252-728-2141 - 252-728-3982 fax - www.beaufortnc.org

Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
6:00 PM Monday, June 09, 2025
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harker called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and welcomed everyone present and those joining online. She asked all to rise and join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Elizabeth Lewis, Town Clerk, conducted the roll call:

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

None

Agenda Approval

Mayor Harker requested two changes to the agenda, first to move "Wastewater Allocation Request- 2303 Highway 70 Beaufort" to follow the Voluntary Annexation item and next, to remove the item associated with the fuel farm installation (represented on the agenda under presentations).

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

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

Items of Consent

1. Meeting Minutes
2. NCDR General Records/Program Records Schedule
3. Capital Project Budget Amendment #1- Professional Park Drive Area Stormwater Project
4. Fourth of July Parade Event

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the Items of Consent.

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

Public Hearing

1. Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

Town Manager, Matt Zapp, presented the proposed FY2026 budget, outlining a balanced financial plan totaling approximately \$20 million. He provided overall highlights of the proposed budget, which includes nearly \$15 million allocated to the general fund and \$5 million designated for utilities. He noted implementation of a revenue-neutral tax rate of 28.84 cents, a significant decrease from the previous rate of 46 cents. He shared the budget also introduces a new enterprise fund specifically for managing operations of the Beaufort Waterfront and Marina. He explained to enhance public safety, funding is included for six new full-time firefighters, which will enable 24-hour coverage at both fire stations. Mr. Zapp noted the budget aims to deliver essential services and emergency response capabilities for FY2026.

There were no questions for the Town Manager.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to open the Public Hearing.

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

There were no public comments related to the proposed FY26 Budget.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to close the Public Hearing.

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

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and corresponding Budget Ordinance as presented.

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

2. Voluntary Annexation- 2303 Highway 70 Beaufort

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to open the Public Hearing.

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

Ms. Lewis presented the final stage of the annexation process for 2303 Highway 70. She noted proper public notice was given and reminded the audience that only Town residents or property owners could speak during the hearing.

Chairman Chris Chadwick of the Carteret County Board of Commissioners presented the County's preliminary plans for a proposed development site. The proposed project includes the construction of a comprehensive public safety complex that would house the Sheriff's Office, a 300-bed detention center to replace the existing overcrowded facility, a 911 communications center, an emergency operations center, and other related County services. The facility is envisioned as a two-story structure approximately 20 feet in height.

Chairman Chadwick reported that the County has received \$5 million in state funding for the project, with \$2 million already allocated for the purchase of the property. The County is currently in the process of engaging an architectural firm to conduct site work and advance planning efforts. As part of the development strategy, the County has requested annexation by the Town and access to municipal sewer services to avoid the need for an on-site package treatment plant.

Sheriff Asa Buck provided additional context, noting that the project remains in the early stages. He emphasized the County's intent to maintain government offices within the Town of Beaufort, consistent with its status as the county seat. Sheriff Buck also

confirmed that all current facility management contracts are being renewed at a 100% rate, and there are no plans to sell or alter the ownership structure of the complex.

Mayor Harker opened the floor for public comment.

Jeff Lick: 412 Taylorwood Drive, Beaufort NC, had questions and concerns related to the noise level after hours.

John Tulloss: 125 Windswept Lane, Beaufort NC, spoke about ambient lighting, and questioned if any other properties were considered, or if there would be a public comment period related to approval of the future site plan.

Kristeen Dolan: 411 Taylorwood Drive, Beaufort NC, spoke about ingress and egress of Beaufort Club, a neighboring subdivision to the proposed site.

Maria Davis: 111 Snap Dragon Circle, Beaufort NC, shared concerns related to increased traffic effects of the potential project on Highway 70.

During the discussion, members of the Board raised questions regarding potential impacts related to noise, lighting, and vegetative buffers. In response, both Mr. Chadwick and Sheriff Buck assured the Board that the facility will generate minimal noise despite its 24/7 operations. They further noted that the design will incorporate dark sky compliant lighting and a 20-acre wooded buffer to mitigate visual and auditory impact on adjacent properties. Mr. Chadwick shared NCDOT will be involved in any future traffic plans related to the project.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the voluntary annexation request of 2303 Highway 70 Beaufort and to adopt the corresponding ordinance as presented and provided in the meeting packet.

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

3. Wastewater Allocation Request- 2303 Highway 70 Beaufort

Town Engineer, Sam Bell, presented the wastewater allocation request for 24,000 gallons per day for the county facility, representing 1.6% of total capacity. This would increase usage from 76.2% to 77.8% of capacity.

The Board discussed whether credit was given for existing jail usage.

Manager Zapp later clarified that no credit was given for the existing 116 beds, providing a buffer in the allocation. The request covers the capacity for administrative staff as well as the current usage at the jail.

Commissioner Oliver made a motion to approve the Wastewater Allocation Request at 2303 Highway 70 Beaufort, subject to review of the math by the Town Manager and Town Engineer.

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

Presentations

1. Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee

Commissioner Spiegler provided an update on the progress of the Beaufort Waterfront Plan, focusing specifically on the marina management component. She reported that the Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in December for a professional marina management firm, with the submission period closing on February 28, 2025. The review committee evaluated four submissions and conducted interviews with two finalist firms.

Mr. Barry Slade made a presentation and provided additional detail on the selection process and discussed each firm who submitted. He shared that in addition to the selection committee, the Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee

unanimously recommended F3 Marina to assume management of dock operations effective January 1, 2026. He discussed their qualifications and noted that F3 Marina brings extensive experience in managing municipal marinas and overseeing operational transitions. The firm is supported by well-established core teams in human resources, accounting, marketing, and operations. He shared that F3 Marina also has demonstrated expertise in managing mooring fields and executing marina redevelopment projects. He noted positive references were received from other municipalities and properties currently managed by the firm. Mr. Slade highlighted F3 Marina's commitment to hiring local talent and fostering strong community relationships as a key factor in the committee's recommendation.

Commissioner LoPiccolo had questions about outside vendors utilizing the Town's docks for services and so forth.

Hunter Spittler from F3 Marina answered questions about allowing outside vendors and what types of services might be provided. He suggested he was familiar with these kinds of situations and had no problems managing that type of need in the community.

Commissioner Oliver discussed time constraints and shared it was his belief that the fuel tank decision must be made first. He said he fully supported F3 Marina if they were willing and able to commit to a design build for the fuel system, nominally at a million-dollar level. He suggested there were other alternatives for the fuel farm installation.

Commissioner Spiegler noted the importance of having a marina management firm that is ready to take over January 1, 2026. She discussed the need to address the fuel tank installation separately from marina management piece. She asked the Board to first consider the recommendation from the Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee to move forward in selecting F3 Marina as the marina management company.

Commissioner LoPiccolo agreed it would be helpful if F3 Marina could help with the fuel situation but noted the importance of moving forward to select a firm.

Commissioner Spiegler made a motion to begin contract negotiations with F3 Marina for a (3-5 year) term beginning January 1, 2026.

The motion carried with a (4-1) vote. Commissioner Oliver voted in opposition.

Quasi-Judicial Proceeding

1. Case #25-09 Beaufort Bar SUP Outdoor Operation 410 Live Oak Street

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to open the evidentiary hearing for Case #25-09.

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

Mayor Harker explained the quasi-judicial nature of the case, the standards that apply and the appropriate ways of participating. She shared that all decisions must be based on competent material and substantial evidence in the record. She asked the Town Clerk to administer the oath for all individuals who intend to provide witness testimony.

Ms. Lewis administered the oath to Michelle Eitner, Town Planner, and to the applicant, Michael Thagard.

Mayor Harker confirmed that none of the Board members had ex parte communication, which would cause them to be bias or have any potential conflicts of interest in the case.

Michelle Eitner, Town Planner, presented an overview of the case and formally entered the presentation materials and meeting packet documents into the record. She explained the request for a Special Use Permit was to allow outdoor operations at Beaufort Bar, an existing establishment located within the B-1 zoning district. Specifically, the request included the addition of a covered outdoor patio area. Ms. Eitner explained that the proposed outdoor patio would be enclosed with a 42-inch fence and covered by a roof

canopy, both of which met the design requirements of the Live Oak Street Corridor Overlay District. She noted that the business currently operated under a permitted indoor use and that the proposed outdoor use constituted a “special use” under the Land Development Ordinance (LDO), thereby requiring approval from the Board of Commissioners. She went on to explain the outdoor patio would comprise less than twenty percent of the building’s gross floor area, which meant no additional parking would be required.

Ms. Eitner stated that staff reviewed the site plan and found it compliant with all applicable design standards. She added that the applicant proposed buffering sound through the use of fencing and vegetation. She concluded by stating that there were no concerns regarding neighborhood density or open space compatibility under the Town’s LDO. She explained the required findings that must be met to grant a Special Use Permit.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked if the outdoor area changed required parking.

Ms. Eitner confirmed it did not due to its limited size.

Commissioner Cooper asked about the property’s exact location.

Ms. Eitner pointed out the site on the future land use map.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked about occupancy limits and fire review.

Ms. Eitner noted this would occur at the building permit stage.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked about the fence material and any noise attenuation built into the design.

Ms. Eitner explained that the applicant intended to use fencing and landscape buffers to reduce sound and would speak more about that.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked about surrounding properties in the area.

Ms. Eitner said that while the surrounding area was primarily commercial in nature, the presence of some residential properties located across Live Oak Street.

Commissioner Oliver inquired whether adjacent property owners were contacted.

Ms. Eitner confirmed they were and noted one informational email was received from a resident that was not a surrounding property owner inquiring about the Quasi-Judicial Proceeding.

The applicant, Michael Thagard, introduced himself as the owner of Beaufort Bar, a lifelong Beaufort resident with 15 years of hospitality experience. He provided visual slides which are also incorporated as part of the record.

Mr. Thagard stated that Beaufort Bar had been open since July 2024, operating within a 1,200 square foot indoor space and currently employing seven staff members. He emphasized that the establishment had operated responsibly and had garnered strong support from the local community. The request for a special use permit involved converting an underutilized paved area, currently used for staff parking, into a patio space. He explained that the proposed outdoor area was intended to expand seating capacity, allow for pet-friendly access, and accommodate family-friendly events.

Mr. Thagard reiterated that no live music was planned for the patio. Instead, any future music would consist of low-volume background sound via small wall-mounted speakers. He stated the proposed fence was 42-inches tall. Additional mitigation strategies would include vegetation buffers, a self-closing door to reduce sound transmission from the interior, and continued staff training on the local noise ordinance. Lighting for the area would consist of soft, downward-facing string lights designed to prevent light spillovers onto adjacent properties.

Commissioner Gillikin asked if there had been any noise complaints related to the music inside.

Mr. Thagard said not to his knowledge.

Commissioner Oliver urged the applicant to consider his vision for amplified sound in the proposed area.

Mr. Thagard shared he did not want to have live music outside, rather than two small speakers that played music controlled by staff.

Commissioner Gillikin discussed a previous SUP in the area, particularly the conditions that were placed on it related to outdoor speakers. She noted the importance of consistency.

Mr. Thagard shared that any outdoor speakers would be tucked underneath the canopy to help trap the sound. He noted he was very mindful of his neighbors and would comply with the Town's noise ordinance.

Commissioner Spiegler thanked the applicant for being respectful of his neighbors in the area.

Mayor Harker asked if there was anyone with standing that wished to comment on the case.

Brian Gillikin, resident of 415 Live Oak Street, testified as a witness but was not granted standing in the case. He stated that he had experienced no issues with the current operation of Beaufort Bar. However, he expressed concern about the potential for increased late-night noise should outdoor speakers be installed or if conversations associated with alcohol consumption extended into the outdoor area. Mr. Gillikin also suggested that a six-foot fence, rather than the proposed 42-inch barrier, would be more effective in containing noise and would offer improved visual aesthetics for the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Thagard shared to address concerns about potential noise, he was willing to install a six-foot fence to enhance noise reduction, if it was permissible in the Town's LDO.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to close the evidentiary hearing.

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

Commissioner LoPiccolo noted that while Mr. Thagard had proven himself a responsible business owner, SUP's run with the land and not the applicant. Therefore, any approval should anticipate potential future owners who may not be as conscientious. He emphasized that noise would be the central issue, citing proximity to residences across Live Oak Street and recalling that the Board had previously imposed outdoor speaker restrictions on similar permits. He proposed a time-restricted trial period and specific limits on outdoor amplified sound. He also shared safety issues related to the additional capacity of the proposed area.

Commissioner Gillikin supported the idea of limiting outdoor sound and putting a time limit on the initial SUP.

Commissioner Cooper noted there was a noise ordinance in place and the Police Department would handle any complaints.

Commissioner Spiegler expressed appreciation for Mr. Thagard's commitment to community standards and agreed with setting clear expectations to avoid future conflicts. She asked for clarification of the specific noise ordinance related to that area.

Mr. Grady clarified that conditions more restrictive than the ordinance were permissible and enforceable through the permit itself.

Police Chief, Paul Burdette, informed the Board that the town's noise ordinance limits sound levels to 75 decibels between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and midnight, and to 60 decibels from midnight to 7:00 a.m.

Commissioner Cooper shared he did not see the need to put further noise restrictions on the SUP.

Manager Zapp suggested a normal conversation falls between 50-70 decibels.

Ms. Eitner confirmed a six-foot fence was allowable under the LDO, and the applicant agreed to this adjustment

Commissioner LoPiccolo shared he would also like to see it as a noise reduction fence.

Commissioner Gillikin suggested there might be noise reducing paint that could be applied to the fence to help reduce noise.

Mayor Harker proposed a 12-month trial period, allowing time to assess the effectiveness of the conditions and permit compliance.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the SUP for Case #25-09 with the following conditions:

The motion carried with a (4-1) vote. Commissioner LoPiccolo voted in opposition.

Public Comment

Pat Wesson: 1539 Ann Street, Beaufort NC, addressed the Board to introduce a new initiative titled the *Summer Kids Feed* program. The program is designed to provide food and enrichment activities for approximately 20 to 30 children each Friday, running from June 13 through August 15, at Randall Park. Ms. Wesson noted that the effort is being coordinated in partnership with local housing authorities and community organizations to ensure outreach to families experiencing food insecurity. She extended an open invitation to members of the Board of Commissioners and Town staff to support the initiative through participation and donations of supplies.

New Business

1. Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule

Christi Wood, Finance Director, presented proposed revisions to the Town's FY2026 Fee Schedule. She shared key updates including the introduction of new fees within the Planning Department for expired permits, roof repairs, and driveway installations. She explained that modifications were also proposed for existing fees related to demolition permits and solar panel installations. She noted in the Utilities Department, the meter installation fee is recommended to increase from \$400 to \$500 to reflect current material and labor costs. Additionally, a 2.8% increase in solid waste fees was proposed, consistent with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment.

Commissioner Oliver made a motion to adopt the FY2026 Fee Schedule as recommended and presented by staff.

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

2. Case #25-03 400 Airport Road Hanger 72 - Site Plan

Planning Director, Kyle Garner, presented the site plan for Case #25-03, a proposed 8,500-square-foot airplane hangar to be constructed on Lot 72 at Michael J. Smith Airport, located at 400 Airport Road. He shared the applicant, Mr. Jeff McCann, submitted the request for site plan approval due to the proposed structure exceeding the typical 5,000-square-foot threshold that requires Board review. Mr. Garner noted that landscaping requirements are met for this project due to airport safety regulations. He also stated that the Fire Marshal will determine during the building plan review phase whether a sprinkler system is necessary.

Jeff McCann addressed questions from the Board, confirming the existence of a 25-year lease agreement with the airport authority. He also affirmed that the proposed hangar would comply with the airport's 40-foot height restriction.

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to approve the site plan (Case 25-03) as presented by staff.

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

3. Case 25-07 Site Plan – Boys & Girls Club at 497 Campen Road

Town Planner, Michelle Eitner, presented the site plan for a proposed Boys & Girls Club facility to be located on an undeveloped parcel behind Beaufort Middle School. She shared that the project includes a 21,400-square-foot, single-story building designed to serve local youth and families. It was noted the facility will feature a basketball court, playground, garden, and soccer field. Key site improvements include the extension of sidewalks and the addition of a raised crosswalk to enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity with adjacent school property. Ms. Eitner reported that the Planning Board reviewed the proposal and unanimously recommended approval, contingent on the inclusion of enhanced pedestrian access features.

Mark Holtzman, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club, and project architect Tim Oakley were present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Holtzman stated that the facility is expected to serve up to 200 children daily and approximately 400 families in total. Transportation logistics from nearby schools are still being finalized. Mr. Oakley addressed safety concerns, noting that the site plan includes perimeter fencing and a secure entry vestibule to ensure a safe environment for youth participants.

The Board expressed strong support for the project and enthusiasm about its positive impact on the community. They also reiterated the importance of ensuring safe pedestrian access, particularly given the facility's proximity to Beaufort Middle School.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the site plan (Case 25-07) as presented by staff.

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

4. Wastewater Allocation Request- Boys & Girls Club at 497 Campen Road

Mr. Bell presented the wastewater allocation request for 2,000 gallons per day for the Boys and Girls Club, representing 0.1% of total capacity. He noted the Town would not need to build additional lines to serve the site.

Commissioner Oliver made a motion to approve the wastewater allocation request for the new Boys and Girls Club at 497 Campen Road.

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

Manager Report

Manager Zapp had no additional items to report.

Mayor/Commissioner Comments

Commissioner LoPiccolo thanked the Town staff for their work on the budget. He noted the upcoming summer season and reminded the public of golf cart safety standards that should be followed throughout Town.

Commissioner Gillikin had no comments.

Commissioner Cooper had no comments.

Commissioner Oliver had no comments.

Commissioner Spiegler thanked all those participating in the meeting.

Mayor Harker reminded residents that hurricane season begins June 1st and encouraged preparedness. She announced a grant the Town received from Duke Energy Foundation for resilience education.

Adjourn

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

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

Sharon E. Harker, Mayor

Elizabeth Lewis, Town Clerk