



**Town of Beaufort, NC**

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**Board of Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
6:00 PM Monday, January 12, 2026  
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street**

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**Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Harker called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**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 Gillikin made a motion to approve the agenda with an amendment to remove New Business item "3. George Aswad's Request for a New Commercial Slip" from the agenda.

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

**Items of Consent**

1. Meeting Minutes: December 8, 2025
2. Personnel Policy Amendments: Section 8. Vacation Leave: Manner of Taking and Section 14. Transfer of Sick Leave from Previous Employer
3. FY 2026 Budget Amendment #3
4. USDA Capital Project Utilities Improvements Budget Amendment #3
5. Resolution: Adopting Water and Sewer System Revenue Bond Anticipation Note

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

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

Mayor Harker welcomed everyone back, including newly elected Commissioner Matthews.

## Presentations

1. Draft FY 2025 Audit: Martin Starnes and Associates

Tonya Coffee of Martin Starnes and Associates, and auditor for the Town of Beaufort's fiscal year 2025, presented audit results and key financial information for FY 2025. She presented the draft audit and reported an anticipated unmodified opinion, noting delays related to federal audit guidance for USDA loan programs and implementation of a new accounting standard for sick leave liabilities, but stating that the extended filing date of February 12, 2026 would still be met. The presentation reviewed general fund revenues and expenditures, fund balance trends, and Local Government Commission benchmarks, indicating the Town remains in a strong financial position. She discussed the Town's utility fund, highlighted increased debt obligations, and included a recommendation that the Town conduct a utility rate study to assess long term sustainability. No Board action was required.

2. 2025 Parking Season: Pivot Parking

Representatives from Pivot Parking, Tina Reid, Austin Willis, and Jared Glass, reviewed the Town's 2025 parking season, including operational changes, including an earlier season start, updated payment technology, ambassador style enforcement, increased golf cart parking, and staffing updates. Revenue performance, transaction data, visitor origins, permit sales, citation trends, and operating expenses were reviewed. The presenters attributed lower than budgeted revenue largely to weather conditions and shorter parking durations. Topics identified for future discussion included signage improvements, rate structure, parking program dates, enforcement technology, and potential residential permit options. No Board action was required.

## Public Hearing

1. Case 25-14: Request to Rezone 19.67 acres between HWY 101 and Ronnie Road, from R8MH, R-20 & R-8 to TCA

Commissioner Cooper motioned to open the public hearing at 6:49 PM.

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

Planning Director, Kyle Garner, reviewed details about Case 25-14, including public notices, staff comments, and Planning Board recommendations.

Commissioner LoPiccolo inquired about sound buffers along the Highway 70 corridor. Garner stated that this issue was very relevant, but limited discussion.

### Public Comments:

Norman Geltz: 253 HWY 101, Beaufort, NC

Mr. Geltz, an adjacent property owner, discussed concerns regarding emergency vehicle access to and from the Town of Beaufort, needs for increased roadway signage around the school zones, and the need for transportation impact analysis for multiple major interactions throughout Beaufort, and to include evaluating the need for a truck route through Beaufort. He also questioned if the burden of the transportation impact analysis should lie solely with the developer or with the Town as well. Mr. Geltz also discussed stormwater flow and drainage issues in the old crop fields of this property and debris buildup and removal.

William Yale: 201 Ronnie Rd, Beaufort, NC

Mr. Yale discussed concerns regarding traffic conditions along Highway 101 and the future roundabout, noting that increased development would significantly add to traffic volume. He stated that the area requires extensive study and questioned the feasibility of future traffic logistics, especially with an increase from 76 units to a 105 units. Mr. Yale also expressed concern that the additional traffic could increase the risk of future accidents in the area.

Ralph Mason: 209 Ronnie Rd, Beaufort, NC

Mr. Mason discussed concerns related to noise impacts in the area, including tractor trailer traffic, loud music from vehicles, and the use of J-brakes. He also raised broader traffic concerns and stated that while he is not opposed to development, he supports development that is logical and thoughtfully planned. Mr. Mason also addressed stormwater runoff issues, referencing past flooding incidents and flood insurance. He discussed the importance of preserving wooded areas as sound buffers and suggested the potential use of a constructed sound barrier or wall. He also echoed concerns about the stormwater holding pond and the safety of children in the neighborhood in light of increased traffic and development activity.

Roy Ronald Barber, Jr.: 211 Ronnie Rd, Beaufort, NC

Mr. Barber stated that he felt West Beaufort Road and Ronnie Road residents are disadvantaged when new development occurs, sighting past events, especially around the time of the airport development. He discussed mobile homes and affordable housing, describing this area as a "hidden paradise." He desired to see buffering between the new townhomes and mobile homes, and mentioned the perception of neighboring properties on property values.

Kevin Johnston: Chief Operating Officers for TAFT Family Ventures

Mr. Johnston mentioned another local TAFT project, Compass Landing in Newport. He gave some background on TAFT Family Ventures, stating that it is an 80+ year old real estate company focused primarily on market rate and affordable multi-housing communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland, managing nearly 5,300 affordable and market rate multifamily units over the years, in addition to commercial properties and student housing.

Mr. Johnston said that he appreciated the opportunity and guidance and that this project was still in its early planning stages. He restated concerns heard earlier during public comment and said TAFT plans to address each of these items as their civil engineering and architectural designs develop over the coming months, if approved. Johnston also mentioned that this development would set aside 10% of the units for workforce housing to support the local workforce such as medical, fire rescue, service, industry, teachers, local government, and military personnel, and the overarching goal to attract and retain full-time year round residents to the Town of Beaufort. He also mentioned maintaining existing trees on the property as a buffer and thanked everyone for their time.

Commissioner Cooper motioned to close the public hearing.

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

Town Attorney A.W. Grady reminded the Board that the vote was a "yes" or "no" to the rezoning of this property with no other stipulations at this time. There was general discussion about the traffic impact study, Beaufort's desire for sidewalks and affordable housing, stormwater, and other issues surrounding the rezoning of this property.

Commissioner Cooper motioned to approve Case 25-14: Request to Rezone 19.67 acres between HWY 101 and Ronnie Road, from R8MH, R-20 & R-8 to TCA.

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

## **Public Comment**

George Aswad: 108 J R S Ranch Road, Newport, NC

Mr. Aswad, a commercial operator at Beaufort Town Docks, spoke about the new contracts for commercial operators at the Town Docks and expressed concern with specific contract language, particularly the provision allowing eviction within 60 days without cause. He stated that this language creates uncertainty for commercial operators and could negatively impact business stability. Mr. Aswad urged the Board to reconsider or clarify the terms of the contracts to provide greater fairness and security for those operating businesses at the Town docks.

Shannon Dillard: 410 Front Street, Beaufort, NC

Ms. Dillard, local business owner of Windtide, commented on the Town's paid parking program, it's potential impact on local businesses, and expressed the opinion that the paid parking season should end

in mid-September. She stated that extending paid parking beyond that timeframe is unnecessary and suggested that an earlier end date would be more appropriate for the community and visitors.

## Old Business

### 1. Godette Hotel: 400 Pollock Street

Town Attorney, A.W. Grady, provided an update on the Godette Hotel, located at 400 Pollock Street. Grady reviewed the history of this property, timeline of the rehabilitation process, and stated that no improvements have been made to the property since 2021. He stated that in December 2025, the property owner requested the Town sign an encroachment agreement since a rehabilitation schedule had been provided.

Commissioner Cooper discussed the lack of movement on the property over the past three years and the need for further actions. He stated that the property owner has had a sufficient amount of time to begin rehabilitation efforts.

Grady explained that the Town essentially has three options: 1. Do nothing 2. Continue negotiations towards meaningful progress prior to encroachment agreement signing, or 3. Pursue demolition of the building as a public nuisance, similar to the process that had been started in 2021. Grady suggested that the Town pursue the third option.

Commissioner Cooper mentioned the opinions of some community members he had been in contact with and the deterioration of the building into a public eye sore, stated that he would hate to see it torn down, but mentioned that this may be the Town's only option.

Commissioner Spiegler inquired about possibly attempting to help Preserve North Carolina (PNC) facilitate the resell of the property in a timely manner. Commissioner Cooper stated that he was aware of multiple past offers on the property, but the owner has not been willing to sell at those price points.

Commissioner LoPiccolo stated that the owner, Sandy Smith, is not a Beaufort resident and has little or no ties to the Beaufort community. The Board has invited her to attend their meetings multiple times, but hasn't. LoPiccolo inquired about potential uses of the property and mentioned that there was a subdivision and sale of part of the property.

Grady confirmed and explained that in November 2025, the vacant patch on the property was transferred from Smith's LLC to another LLC. This is documented at the Carteret County Register of Deeds. Commissioner LoPiccolo called into question the acceptability of the timeline of rehabilitation given by Ms. Smith, which contained limited information and no specifics.

Commissioner Matthews inquired about the demolition process and establishing the property as a "nuisance." Grady explained that the Town could pursue a demolition through the Town's Planning and Inspections department, the route which was pursued in 2021, although this would be a lengthier process and one which the owner could appeal to Carteret County's Superior Court. He stated that the second option would be to appeal this issue to Carteret County Superior Court as a nuisance abatement issue, especially if the case is likely to end up in the Superior Court anyway.

Commissioner Spiegler asked who would own the property after demolition. Grady discussed details regarding ownership and costs of the demolition process.

Commissioner Gillikin expressed that the Board has been a fierce advocate for the preservation of this property, aiming to address misinformation on social media. She expressed sadness and sentimental feelings for the state of the property and mentioned that it is a fire hazard to adjacent property owners. She stated that the building's demolition is the last resort. Gillikin reiterated Ms. Smith's lack of ties to the community and perceived lack of motivation to rehabilitate the property, mentioning other options that Ms. Smith could

have taken. Gillikin stated that, unfortunately, the Board needs to take action on this property now.

Commissioner Cooper echoed feelings of sadness for the state of the property and that the building is a hazard which needs to be addressed. He asked about the process of noticing the property owner of demolition. Attorney Grady, explained the noticing process and that the last communications he received from Ms. Smith's attorney was in September 2025.

Commissioner LoPiccolo stated that he would love to see the property rehabilitated and that the Board wasn't targeting the current owner, but in fact, had given her ample opportunity regarding the property. He sighted the unsafe overhang and that the building is condemned, meaning that the Fire Department cannot enter the building during a fire, creating a hazard. LoPiccolo stated that the Board needs to address buildings like this in the community.

Commissioner Cooper asked about the last communications with Preserve PNC. Grady said he had communicated with them earlier that day and will relay communications from the meeting to them.

Mayor Harker stated that PNC had tried to help with the rehabilitation process and that during this process, the property owner had the willingness and support of the Commissioners, the Town, and it's community. Attorney Grady stated that this rehabilitation efforts at this property began long before 2021.

Mayor Harker expressed her frustration with the situation, stating that she believed it to be "by design" and that it puts the Town in a difficult position. She expressed concern over public perception if the Town purses the demolition of the building and explained that the family who previously owned the property entrusted PNC to choose a new owner who would successfully rehab the property, but those efforts failed, which she described as highly unsatisfactory. Harker stated that it is shameful that this piece of history may soon be gone.

Commissioner Cooper reiterated that Ms. Smith is not leaving the Board with a lot of options at this point.

Commissioner Gillikin suggested a combination of options 2 and 3 with a "short timer" on option 2. There was discussion about what the details of this option and timelines would be.

Commissioner LoPiccolo expressed his lack of optimism on any action resulting from a delayed filing.

Attorney Grady stated concerns over a potential sale of property, mentioning any new owner's rehabilitation process timeline. He recommended pursuing nuisance abatement to see more immediate action.

Commissioner Matthews, thanked Grady for his advice and insight.

Commissioner Gillikin inquired about which option would cause a higher burden on Beaufort taxpayers. Grady answered demolition. He also stated that the "best case scenario" would be if the property was sold to a buyer who was motivated to rehabilitate the building.

Commissioner Matthews inquired about costs incurred during a nuisance abatement filing and stated that he would prefer to file immediately.

Commissioner Matthews made a motion to file in Carteret County Superior Court for the abatement of the nuisance that exists at the that property, 400 Pollock Street.

The motion carried in a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Gillikin opposed.

## **New Business**

### **1. Sewer Allocation Reservation Request: 2621 HWY 70 & 100 Tiffany Way**

Town Engineer, Sam Bell, presented a request for sewer allocation at 2621 HWY 70 & 100 Tiffany Way. He reviewed the priority level 4 application, it's associated fees and requirements, and gave

an overview of the site area, which is outside of town limits, but adjacent to the Town's force main. The application for two, three bedroom houses, would have a fairly low impact on the Town's system, however, the Town should limit the number of penetrations into its force main, especially for smaller properties. Bell stated that he knows of only two other small properties connected to the Town's force main.

Commissioner Matthews inquired about other possible options for the property owner. Bell stated that most homes in that area are on septic systems, but a preliminary review of this site determined it to be unsatisfactory for septic. Bell listed other possible options.

Commissioner LoPiccolo questioned how none of the 3.5 acre land was determined suitable for a septic permit, and reiterated that those findings were only preliminary.

There was general discussion about the property owner's potential options. Bell stated that the applicant was in attendance at the meeting.

Commissioner Cooper and Commissioner Spiegler recalled other requests for sewer allocations that the Board denied in 2025.

Commissioner Matthews discussed future increases to the Town's sewer and waste water capacity.

Commissioner Gillikin thanked Bell for his presentation and information presented to the commissioners. She stated her preference to apply the Town's policy consistently and mentioned future Town plans and overarching goals.

Commissioner LoPiccolo discussed the potential taxpayer burden, options for annexation, and all of the Town's services. He stated that approving this request "doesn't make sense for the Town." Bell stated that the property owner chose to forego annexation due to other water options available at the property.

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to deny the Sewer Allocation Reservation Request at 2621 HWY 70 & 100 Tiffany Way.

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

## 2. Approval to Fund a Temporary Position in Public Utilities

Human Resource Director, Barbara Cooper, presented the need to fund a temporary position within the Public Utilities Department in the amount of \$30,000 and through June 30, 2026, to support increasing operational demands. She explained that the department is experiencing workload pressures related to ongoing USDA projects, regulatory requirements, and day to day system operations, and that existing staff capacity is insufficient to meet these demands in a timely and efficient manner. Ms. Cooper stated that the temporary position would provide short term relief, help maintain service levels, and support continuity of operations while longer term staffing and workload needs are evaluated.

Commissioner Cooper inquired about the likelihood of this position turning into a full-time position.

Ms. Cooper explained that the Town had a cost savings of \$100,000 on a project and that there was funds available for the temporary position, and possibly a future full-time position.

Commissioner Gillikin expressed her support of anything to advance the USDA roadway projects.

Commissioner Spiegler agreed.

Commissioner LoPiccolo inquired about the establishment of performance metrics for the position, especially to help if the position transitions into a full-time role.

Commissioner Cooper expressed concerns over potentially adding a new full-time position. Town Manager, Matt Zapp, briefly reviewed the staffing history in the Public Utilities department, stating that Public Utilities Manager, Donovan Willis, requested two new full-time positions, one for the Water Department and one for the Sewer Department, during last year's budget planning, both of which were not funded. Zapp reiterated that the existing team is overburdened, especially with the excess workload of current projects. He stated that requests for additional full-time positions in the Public Utilities department may appear during this year's budget discussions in order to successfully maintain the Town's infrastructure.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the funding of a temporary position in Public Utilities.

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

~~3. George Aswad's Request for a New Commercial Slip~~

This item was unanimously removed from the Agenda during the Agenda Approval.

## **Manager Report**

1. 2025 Overview by Departments

Town Manager, Matt Zapp, presented a high level overview of the Town's 2025 statistics and accomplishments by department, which included activity from January 1 through December 31, 2025. Departments included Police, Fire, Public Works, Engineering, Community Engagement and Parks & Recreation, Planning/Zoning, Public Information, Human Resources, Utilities (Water, Sewer, and Waste Water Treatment Plant), and Finance.

## **Mayor/Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner LoPiccolo thanked Town staff for all of the progress on current projects, including the Beaufort Town Docks.

Commissioner Cooper wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Commissioner Gillikin had no comments at this time.

Commissioner Spiegler thanked everyone for their participation, welcomed Commissioner Matthews, and said she was looking forward to the annual Board Retreat later that month.

Commissioner Matthews thanked the citizens of Beaufort for electing him, stating that Beaufort is a very special place and mentioning the helpful community support he experienced during his wife's recent surgery.

Mayor Harker thanked the citizens who have participated in the Town's commissions and advisory boards over the years for their dedication and involvement. She mentioned an increased focus on community engagement and Town communications, to include a new video series entitled "Porch Talks with Mayor Sharon Harker," coordinated by Public Information Officer, Rachel Johnson coordination. The first episode features F3 Marina guests, Lori Meehan and Hunter Spitzer. Mayor Harker discussed the importance of speaking from a place of abundance, instead of from a place of "lack," and that Beaufort has abundance. She also thanked Town Manager Matt Zapp for his prompt hard work, and gave a fond farewell to Fire Chief Tony Ray on his upcoming retirement. She reminded everyone that the Board Retreat will be held on Thursday, January 28 and Friday, January 29, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Belfort Hotel and that the Board's January 26, 2026, work session will be cancelled.

Commissioner Cooper acknowledged and thanked former Commissioner Oliver who was present in the audience.

## **Closed Session**

1. Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3)

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to enter into a closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3).

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

The Mayor, Commissioners, Town Attorney, Town Manager, and Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk, entered into a closed session from 9:45 to 10:40 PM pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(3).

(Closed Session minutes are Sealed & Confidential under NCGS §143-318.10(e) until further notice.)

## **Adjourn**

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 PM.

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

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Sharon E. Harker, Mayor

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Jennifer L. Welborn, Deputy Town Clerk