



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Board of Commissioners Work Session

4:00 PM Monday, July 27, 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 Gillikin made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Cooper requested to amend the agenda to move Item #4 Voluntary Annexation Applications/Resolution: Beaufort Crossing to the August 10, 2026, regular meeting to allow for more time for information review.

Mayor Harker explained that the purpose of this item on this agenda was to gather more information.

Commissioner Spiegler asked if the Board was required to vote on this item today to which Mayor Harker indicated that it wasn't required.

Commissioner Matthews said that he didn't see any reason not to move forward tonight.

Mayor Harker called for the vote.

The motion carried unanimously with a (4-1) vote, with Commissioner Cooper opposed.

Presentations

1. Duke Engage: Public Spaces, Transportation, & Community Events

Dr. Liz DeMattia, a professor at the Duke University Marine Lab and coordinator of the DukeEngage program, explained that she was presenting on behalf of the DukeEngage students, who were unable to attend because their summer program had already concluded. She provided background on what she described as a year-long study conducted in partnership with the Town of Beaufort, which grew out of an idea about "third spaces" that Commissioner Spiegler and Commissioner Cooper had brought back from a Main Street Conference roughly a year and a half prior.

Dr. DeMattia explained that the first group of students conducted research into the social and economic benefits of green infrastructure, focusing on John Newton Park. Their work included a preliminary observational study of the park and a robust survey methodology. Key observational findings from Fall 2025 included that most people used the park to pass through, sit, or "hang out," with a strong preference for shaded areas even in autumn months. The parking occupancy data collected at that time revealed that the only periods of near-full occupancy were Friday nights and Saturdays. Survey results showed that respondents expressed interest in more green space downtown. Qualitative responses highlighted desires for expanded seating, children's amenities, more greenery and less pavement, free parking for residents, and a possible shuttle service.

The Summer 2026 students were tasked with a broader question posed by Town Manager Matt Zapp and the commissioners: What role do Beaufort's public transportation systems and community events play in driving downtown economic activity, and how can the town make data-informed decisions? The students created a comprehensive parking survey covering transportation mode, difficulty finding parking, length of stay, resident status, and asked respondents about two specific policy options: (1) expanding John Newton Park by removing approximately 30 parking spaces from the adjacent premium West Lot and (2) satisfaction with the town's parking permit system.

Dr. DeMattia highlighted that the majority of out-of-state visitors and Beaufort residents found parking to be easy or neutral in difficulty. Carteret County non-Beaufort residents expressed the greatest dissatisfaction. She noted that while there were "some really loud voices" asserting that parking was a major problem, the survey data did not broadly support that characterization. She concluded that the issue was primarily a matter of perception and awareness rather than actual capacity. Most respondents were either somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, or neutral regarding the parking permit system. The qualitative nuances that emerged included comments about good walkability reducing the need for permits, a desire for more household permits, and the concern that a three-hour limit was insufficient for employees. Using parking pivot data, students found that the premium lots were at or near capacity primarily on Saturdays, while other lots across town were significantly underutilized. Dr. DeMattia pointed out that the county courthouse parking lot and the lot across from the DSS office are free and open to the public on weekends and evenings, just two to three blocks away, and suggested that better signage and awareness could alleviate much of the perceived parking pressure.

The proposal to remove 30 parking spaces from the premium West Lot to expand John Newton Park, visitors were very supportive, Carteret County residents were the most opposed, and Town

of Beaufort residents were more than 50 percent either strongly in support or neutral, with only approximately 26-28 percent strongly opposed.

The Summer 2026 students recorded 5,000 visitors, 1,700 minutes, and 178 hours of observational data around John Newton Park. Groups were typically found passing through, resting in shade, and approximately 20 percent carried purchased items. The evening hours saw the highest use of the park. Of particular significance, the weekly Rock the Docks event brought 2.8 times more people into the area than any other night and 2.7 times more groups carrying purchased items. Dr. DeMattia used this data to directly counter the argument that converting parking to public space would decrease economic vitality.

Dr. DeMattia then summarized the student research findings as:

1. Downtown activity grows at night.
2. Visitors increase on evenings and weekends.
3. Parking availability remains sufficient and the issue is awareness rather than capacity.
4. Public spaces drive economic activity.
5. There is measurable public support to create more green space, specifically at John Newton Park.

She closed by acknowledging the full list of student contributors: Conner Ennis, Gianna Rodriguez, Tori Newton, Alice Daeschler, Meredith Langmuir, Mason Ibrahim, Jeremy Sabol, Anna Marie Hunt, Allison Cato, Jackson Kitts, Charlie Ratterree, and Dylan Wang.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the audience responded with applause.

Commissioner Spiegler offered an extended statement of thanks to Dr. DeMattia and the students, noting the tremendous amount of work that had gone into the year-long project. She reflected on how the data confirmed that more people want green space downtown and gravitate toward shaded, unpaved areas even during events like Rock the Docks. She expressed her strong support for beginning a formal planning process with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to pursue conversion of the parking lot area adjacent to John Newton Park into a third-space green area. She also highlighted the importance of awareness efforts regarding the county's free parking availability, adding a personal note that even she, as a former downtown employee of nearly ten years, had not been aware that the county lot was available to her on weekends, stating that that would have made a difference to her as an employee.

Commissioner Matthews thanked Dr. DeMattia for a presentation consistent with what he had heard anecdotally about parking availability. He asked whether the survey had addressed the availability of handicapped parking or parking for individuals with mobility challenges. Dr. DeMattia acknowledged that this was not specifically addressed in the survey, and that no free responses mentioned a lack of accessible parking, though she noted the absence of data on the topic did necessarily not mean that it was not an issue.

Commissioner LoPiccolo thanked the presenters and expressed that he had long felt the downtown space next to John Newton Park was "meant to be open, free public space," noting a missed opportunity after fuel tanks were previously placed and the lot repaved. He asked about surge parking conditions and whether any data addressed specific hours of peak demand, noting that it was those concentrated periods that most affected visitors' perceptions. He also asked about public openness to shuttle services or off-site parking alternatives. Dr. DeMattia noted that some survey respondents had requested shuttle service, and that walking and biking had emerged as common transportation modes in the survey data. She further observed that the

visitor profile for Beaufort had shifted with the addition of two hotels, resulting in more year-round foot traffic from walkable and bikeable distances, a change that had likely contributed to increased dissatisfaction among longtime Carteret County visitors accustomed to easier parking access. Commissioner LoPiccolo agreed, emphasizing the importance of open public spaces in downtown areas and expressing appreciation for the data supporting that concept.

Commissioner Cooper commended the students' work, having attended their presentation at the Duke Marine Lab earlier in the month. He raised the question of whether workers from downtown restaurants had been surveyed or engaged. Dr. DeMattia stated that they had not been specifically targeted due to the students' time limitations, though a draft business survey had been prepared for potential future use. Commissioner Cooper shared that a constituent had contacted him about employee parking and reiterated the importance of finding solutions for it.

Commissioner Gillikin asked whether the data addressed the perception, held by some downtown businesses, that ferry riders exit straight to their cars after disembarking from the ferries, instead of spending time in the downtown area. Dr. DeMattia explained that obtaining survey data on purchases was challenging, as the students sought to avoid making assumptions in their research. Instead, they relied on direct observations, reporting that 21% of individuals observed downtown were carrying visible purchases, and this included ferry passengers.

Mayor Harker thanked DeMattia, as well as the DukeEngage students, and commented on the importance of children's activities, families, and a diverse community. She expressed that the data would be tremendously helpful for future planning. Dr. DeMattia stated that she had been on the Beaufort Parks & Recreation Advisory Board in the past and had helped design John Newton Park into the well-utilized space it is today.

Commissioner Spiegler asked whether the upcoming fall semester class might be engaged to continue working with the town, and Dr. DeMattia indicated that was a possibility, suggesting they speak further about scope and timing.

There was no formal action taken on this item.

2. Arts in Beaufort "Menhaden Tales" Statue Placement

Jennifer Welborn, Community Engagement Director, introduced a proposed gift to the Town from Arts in Beaufort, a local nonprofit, which included a sculpture, accompanying bench, and audio narrative which could be accessed via Quick Response (QR) code. The gift aimed to highlight Beaufort's historical menhaden fishing industry, "Fishtowne" nickname, and African American contributions, while providing a unique photo opportunity to the public. Welborn stated that this item was presented by Arts in Beaufort at the June 17, 2026, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting, where the board voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend the Board of Commissioner's acceptance of the gift and its placement in John Newton Park at "Position 1" as referenced in the subsequent presentation. She then invited the Arts in Beaufort representatives in attendance to address the Board.

Vic Fasolino, representing the board of the local nonprofit Arts in Beaufort, presented alongside President BJ Vincent to propose donating a bronze sculpture to the Town of Beaufort for placement in John Newton Park. Fasolino described the sculpture as a figure of a fisherman seated on a bench, whom Arts in Beaufort named "Samuel." The sculpture is already in their possession, having been cast. Its dual purposes are to provide an interactive photo opportunity for visitors and to educate the public on the cultural and historical contributions of African

Americans to Beaufort's menhaden fishing industry. A QR code accompanying the sculpture would link users to an audio recording in which the character of Samuel (voiced by Wardell Johnson, a former local fisherman and choir member) narrates the story of Beaufort as "Fishtowne" and the role of Black workers in the menhaden industry.

Fasolino explained that the script was developed with historical accuracy as a priority. Local historian Steve Goodwin, who has written extensively on the menhaden fishing industry, verified all factual content. Local anthropologist Barbara Garrity-Blake also reviewed the script. Mayor Harker was noted to have provided additional input and guidance during the revision process as well.

A brief excerpt of the audio was played for the board. Fasolino noted the full recording runs approximately seven minutes and covers Black culture and community leadership in Beaufort.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked for a full account of how the sculpture was created for the public record. Fasolino explained that the original concept was to photograph a local fisherman named George, take the images to a sculptor, and have the figure cast in bronze using the traditional lost-wax process. However, the first sculptor found that George was not dressed in period-appropriate clothing, and an early mock-up was unsatisfactory. After setting the project aside briefly, Fasolino discovered a foundry in Florida that could create bronze sculptures from photographs using computer animation and 3D wax printing, the same technology used for video game character creation. The team sent the foundry photographs of George alongside circled details from multiple historic photographs showing period clothing, boots, hats, overalls, and other aspects. Afterwards, the final 3D image was printed in wax and cast in bronze.

Fasolino presented two candidate locations within John Newton Park. Location 1, unanimously recommended by both Arts in Beaufort and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, is the mulched area where the current picnic table sits. The advantage of this location is that a photograph taken there would capture the waterfront and live oak trees as a backdrop. Location 2 was near the area formerly occupied by an ice machine during Big Rock week. Both locations offer a strong visual background, but Location 1 was preferred for its shade. Fasolino noted that a key criterion for placement was that visitors needed to feel comfortable sitting for seven minutes to listen to the full recording, which made a shaded location preferable.

Arts in Beaufort formally requested acceptance of the sculpture donation, confirmation of "Location 1" in John Newton Park, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with the Town, and coordination with the Town's Public Works Department for placement details.

Commissioner Cooper expressed genuine appreciation, emphasizing the importance of formally recognizing the contributions of Black fishermen to Beaufort's heritage.

Commissioner Gillikin said the presentation "made her heart flutter," and asked whether the sculpture and script had been shared with African American families whose relatives had worked in the menhaden industry and who still had relatives living in Beaufort. Fasolino confirmed that Wardell Johnson, the narrator, had personal experience as a former local fisherman and fully supports the project, but acknowledged that the broader community of menhaden fishing families had not been formally engaged. Gillikin also asked whether "Samuel" was based on a specific historical person. Fasolino clarified that the visual form was drawn from historic photographs of menhaden fishermen generally, and that the narrative content was drawn from Steve Goodwin's historical research, but that "Samuel" is a composite, not a specific individual.

Commissioner Spiegler asked about the accessibility of the QR code and noted that visitors could continue listening to the recording on their personal devices after leaving the bench, making the experience flexible for users who did not have time to remain seated for the entire recording.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked whether the town had a formal agreement process for accepting donated artwork, potential future relocation of the sculpture, ownership of intellectual property rights, the ability of Arts in Beaufort to reproduce images of the sculpture, and other details. Town Attorney Arey Grady advised that an MOU would be the appropriate vehicle to address issues such as intellectual property rights, the digital data file, and reproduction rights. BJ Vincent stated that Arts in Beaufort would like to retain the ability to reproduce images of the sculpture for their five-dollar postcard fundraisers.

Commissioner Matthews expressed support for the project, recognizing the historical importance of Beaufort's menhaden fishing industry and the contributions of African American workers. He also noted the cultural significance of the traditional fishing chanties, to which Fasolino responded that the audio narrative includes a portion of one of those songs.

Commissioner LoPiccolo also thanked Arts in Beaufort for their broader beautification work across the community.

Mayor Harker offered personal remarks, recalling having spoken to two of the last surviving Chanteymen and hearing them sing the chanties firsthand. She noted the spiritual dimension of those songs, which had been sung in churches, recorded, and even performed at Carnegie Hall. She noted that the sculpture highlights the people behind Beaufort's menhaden fishing industry, by emphasizing the men, women, and families, and preserves an important part of the Town's cultural history.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to accept the sculpture, confirm the location, and to allow Arts in Beaufort (AIB) to coordinate with the Public Works department for placement details.

Mayor Harker explained that the Board hadn't yet determined the location for the statue.

Town Attorney Grady advised that the motion should include authorization for Town staff to negotiate the terms of an appropriate MOU with Arts in Beaufort.

Mayor Harker raised concerns over the statue's empty cup, asking if it had drainage and speculating if people would put trash in it. Fasolino explained that the statue included an authentic rendition of a metal Stanley cup, which had a with hole in the bottom of it to allow for drainage, but admitted that members of the public may be inclined to place items in it.

The Board came to a The Board reached consensus in support of "Location 1" in John Newton Park.

Commissioner Cooper restated his motion to accept the sculpture, confirm "Location 1," and to allow Arts in Beaufort (AIB) to coordinate with the Public Works department for placement details pending an MOU agreement with Town staff.

Commissioner Spiegler clarified for the record that she supported either proposed location in John Newton Park, noting that because the QR code allowed visitors to listen to the audio recording on their phones without sitting on the bench, she did not believe that the bench needed to be placed in a shaded area.

Mayor Harker stated that the motion was for “Location 1” and called for the vote.

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

Vincent added that the audio narrative was currently available for listening on the Arts in Beaufort website, www.artsinbeaufortnc.org.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

1. UDO Module 1: Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) Grant Closeout

Town Planner Michelle Eitner clarified that this item was not a request to approve or adopt any ordinance language. Rather, she was seeking board direction on whether to proceed with the closeout of the Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) grant, which had supported the first module of the town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) update.

Eitner then provided a detailed history: At its October 27, 2025 work session, the Board of Commissioners reviewed the completed draft Coastal Resilience Overlay District developed through Module One of the Unified Development Ordinance Update Project. Following discussion of the draft, applicable state legislation, potential impacts on affected properties, and the need for additional public outreach and revision, the Board unanimously directed staff to request a twelve-month extension of the \$100,000 Resilient Coastal Communities Program Phase 3 grant. The extension was subsequently granted until November 18, 2026, and further consideration of Module One was deferred while work continued on the remaining UDO modules.

On April 20, 2026, Division of Coastal Management staff advised the Town that the completed planning process and draft ordinance technically satisfy the grant's scope of work. DCM explained that formal adoption is not required for grant closeout because adoption of a draft ordinance cannot be guaranteed, provided the Town remains committed to advancing resilience-related changes. To date, \$86,638 of the \$100,000 grant has been received, with the remaining \$13,362 (\$10,000 contingency plus other remaining balance) still owed.

Because the Board previously directed staff to seek the grant extension and has been closely involved in consideration of Module One, staff is returning to the Board for direction before taking final action. Closing out the grant would conclude the grant requirements but would not approve or adopt the draft Coastal Resilience Overlay District or commit the Board to its specific provisions. Attached you will find supporting documents.

Commissioner Spiegler offered warm thanks to the Division of Coastal Management (DCM) for their flexibility and extended a particular acknowledgment to Michelle Eitner for her extensive work leading the effort over more than a year, responding patiently to questions and providing detailed feedback throughout. She also thanked Commissioners Gillikin and LoPiccolo for their service on the UDO Subcommittee. Spiegler stated that she thought the timing was appropriate for closeout, given that the remaining UDO work would continue for another year or two.

Commissioner Gillikin similarly praised Eitner and expressed gratitude for the grantor's flexibility in allowing the town to pivot when the statutory 160D issues arose.

Commissioner Matthews sought clarification that the remaining \$13,362 would be forthcoming from the state upon closeout. Eitner confirmed this.

Commissioner LoPiccolo asked whether there was urgency to close out the grant at this meeting or whether it could be deferred until the fall. Eitner confirmed that waiting was feasible but noted the matter had been brought forward as soon as the spring guidance from DCM was received. LoPiccolo also asked whether closing out the grant would result in forfeiture of the remaining funds. Eitner confirmed the town would receive the remaining balance upon closeout. He additionally confirmed there was no clawback provision related to non-adoption of the draft ordinance. Eitner explained that DCM understood the town could not move Module 1 forward due to statutory concerns, and that resilience work was already being incorporated through other sections of the UDO, including subdivision regulations and the flood damage prevention ordinance.

Commissioner Spiegler made a motion to close out the Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) Grant with the Division of Coastal Management (DCM).

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

2. Beaufort Town Docks Financial Report: June 2026

Lori Meehan, General Manager of F3 Marina, presented the June financial report and fiscal year-end summary for the Town Docks. She began by sharing photographs documenting the municipal marina transition, including the fuel tank installation, the official fuel service ribbon cutting, the Big Rock Tournament, and recent improvements to the marina. Meehan also introduced Sara Bell, who assumed the role of Administrative Manager on July 1, 2026, and Dock Master Jacob Naegelen, noting that the leadership structure provides complementary skill sets and management redundancy.

Meehan reviewed budgeted versus actual revenue for July. Sara Bell presented month-to-date financial results. Actual revenues exceeded budget projections across multiple categories, including slip rentals, fuel sales, electric charges, and credit card surcharge fees, resulting in a gross profit well above budget expectations. Meehan also reported that fuel sales surpassed projected volumes and commended the marina staff for consistently exceeding operational goals while completing additional capital improvements, including fuel carts and commercial dock enhancements, within the fiscal year. She concluded by reporting that fiscal year-end revenue and net operating income both exceeded budget projections.

Jacob Naegelen provided an operational update, reporting strong transient occupancy throughout July, a notoriously slow month for transient boaters, and noting that several visiting boaters extended their stays to monthly rentals. Pulling from his more than eight years of experience at the docks, he attributed the increased activity to improved marketing efforts, enhanced customer service, and ongoing improvements to the marina experience.

Commissioner Cooper thanked the Beaufort Town Docks team for the comprehensive report and asked questions regarding credit card fees and a marketing expense from Beaufort Grocery. Meehan explained that credit card fees are paid by customers who choose to use credit cards and that purchases from Beaufort Grocery were part of the marina's welcome bag program, which provides arriving boaters with locally made items as a way to promote local Beaufort businesses. Commissioner Cooper commended the F3 team for its work and the marina's performance.

Commissioner LoPiccolo inquired about commercial slip occupancy and the process for transferring marina revenues to the Town. Meehan explained that the budget assumed full occupancy and noted that there were currently three commercial slips available. She also described the monthly financial review and fund transfer process, with Finance Director Christi

Wood confirming that monthly transfers to the Town are underway. Wood further reported that sufficient cash is available to cover upcoming insurance and debt service obligations in September.

Commissioners Spiegler and Gillikin welcomed Sara Bell and Jacob Naegelen to their leadership roles and commended the F3 Marina team for its strong financial and operational performance. Commissioner Spiegler noted that July is typically a slower month for transient boating traffic and expressed encouragement that the marina's success demonstrates its ability to attract visitors during the summer season.

Commissioner Gillikin also recognized the marina's successful transition to Town management and thanked the F3 Marina team, Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance Committee (BWOF) members, and Town staff for their contributions. She acknowledged recent criticisms about the marina's management transition but stated that the strong financial performance demonstrated the success of the operation.

Following Commissioner Gillikin's statement, the audience responded with applause.

Commissioner Spiegler also thanked the Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance (BWOF) committee members, some of whom were in the audience.

There was no formal action taken on this item.

3. FY 2027 Budget Amendment #1

Finance Director Christi Wood presented FY 2027 Budget Amendment #1, describing it as a standard roll-forward amendment to reappropriate funds for goods or services that were ordered or contracted in FY 2026 but not received or completed by June 30th.

The budget amendment totaled \$184,216 in the General Fund and \$301,626 in the Utility Fund. General Fund appropriations included engineering services for Fire Station No. 2, the purchase of a generator for the Police Department, and funding for the Campen Road widening project, which had been previously approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Utility Fund appropriations included funding for generators, pumps and pump repairs associated with previously authorized emergency repairs, and contracted services for sewer point repairs and a valve repair at Lift Station No. 9. Staff noted that these projects were either underway or nearing completion.

There were no questions or comments from the Board at this time.

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion to approve FY 2027 Budget Amendment #1 as presented. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

4. Voluntary Annexation Applications/Resolution: Beaufort Crossing

Town Clerk Elizabeth Lewis explained that, following the presentation by Mr. Jeff Baren during the Board of Commissioners' June 22 Work Session regarding the proposed Beaufort Crossing development, the associated property owners had submitted voluntary annexation petitions for the four parcels associated with the proposed project. The parcels included 404 Highway 101, 550 Highway 101, 374 Highway 101, and 388 Highway 101, approximately 16.78 acres combined.

The voluntary annexation petitions, maps, and supporting documentation submitted by the applicants were included in the agenda packet for the Board's review.

Lewis emphasized that the Board was not being asked to consider the annexation itself at this time, but only to take the first procedural step in the voluntary annexation process pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 160A-31, which directs the Town Clerk to investigate the sufficiency of the petitions and report findings back to the Board. Following the Clerk's investigation, the Board could then choose to proceed with scheduling a public hearing to consider the proposed annexation. Lewis requested direction from the Board on how to proceed.

Commissioner Cooper asked Lewis to restate the parcels included in the voluntary annexation petitions, which she did, and requested additional clarification on the annexation process.

Commissioner LoPiccolo noted a minor acreage discrepancy between the town's GIS figure of 16.78 acres and the county's figure of 16.79 acres. Lewis clarified that the metes-and-bounds survey from the engineer would govern and the GIS figure was preliminary. He also noted that a preliminary map referenced the "Beaufort Town Council" rather than the "Board of Commissioners." Town Attorney Grady confirmed this would not be significant at this stage.

Commissioner Gillikin asked when adjacent property owners and the public would have an opportunity to provide input. Lewis explained that public participation would occur during the public hearing, should the Board ultimately choose to schedule one following the Clerk's investigation. Gillikin stated that she had received several comments from citizens requesting that the Board delay directing the Clerk to begin the investigation until a regular meeting.

Commissioner Cooper commented that he had received similar feedback from members of the public. Lewis explained that delaying the item would not result in any additional information being available at the next meeting unless the Clerk was authorized to begin the investigation.

Commissioner Spiegler stated that she would support moving the item to the next regular meeting because it would allow for a public comment opportunity, even though the information presented would be the same.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to table the item to the August 10, 2026 regular meeting.

Commissioner Matthews expressed support for proceeding with the resolution, stating that authorizing the Clerk's investigation would provide the Board with additional information prior to the public hearing without eliminating future opportunities for public input.

Commissioner LoPiccolo agreed, noting the parcels were relatively small, that the item had already come before the Board, and citing future opportunities for public comment later in the process.

Commissioner Cooper reiterated the importance of receiving public input before taking any action, referencing the recent Jim Dandy Gas Station development proposal in which comments from the public had provided additional information about FHA loan requirements for the Board's consideration.

Mayor Harker clarified that moving the item to the August meeting would allow for public input prior to the vote, but that the information presented to the Board would be no different. She called for the vote on Commissioner Cooper's motion.

The motion carried with a (3-2) vote, with Commissioners LoPiccolo and Matthews opposed.

Staff Comments

Town Manager Matt Zapp provided an update on the Campen Road widening project, advising that due to the contractor's existing workload, construction is not expected to be completed before the start of the school year. He noted that the contractor intends to expedite the project by reallocating crews and, if necessary and authorized, working weekends. The Board discussed the anticipated four- to five-day construction timeline and the importance of minimizing traffic impacts during school operations.

Zapp then presented a proposed stormwater infrastructure repair project for the 100 block of Queen Street, explaining that recent inspections identified a failed and blocked stormwater pipe, effects of which could be seen at the street surface level. Staff recommended a targeted repair, including replacement of the failed section, slip-lining of the remaining pipe, and full roadway resurfacing. He reported that competitive bids had been received and that funding was available through existing stormwater and roadway reserves without dipping into general fund resources. Board members discussed the project's scope, long-term durability, and potential impacts to existing utilities and trees. Zapp asked that the item be placed on the August 10th Board of Commissioners meeting agenda for formal action.

The board reached unanimous consensus and agreed to place this item on the August 10, 2026, meeting agenda.

Zapp informed the Board that the History Museum of Carteret County had requested that three Town-owned artifacts currently on long-term loan be permanently donated to the museum. He stated that staff had inspected the items and suggested the Board consider donating them to the museum in perpetuity, given the museum's curatorial capacity and its public accessibility. He indicated a formal transfer of ownership form was included in a prior email to the Board and asked for general direction. Board members discussed the proposal, including long-term ownership considerations.

No formal action was taken. The Board directed staff to continue evaluating the request for future Board consideration.

Zapp delivered what he described as extremely positive news on the USDA water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure project, reporting that bids had been received for comprehensive roadway resurfacing. He explained that, rather than completing only patch repairs following the utility work, the Town pursued a strategy of combining available USDA patching funds with the Town's asphalt reserve funds to maximize roadway improvements. Five bids were received, with the apparent low bid coming in significantly below the engineer's estimate. Staff was reviewing the bids to verify quantities and compliance details before presenting a recommendation to the Board.

Manager Zapp stated that, if the bid is awarded, paving work could begin as early as September, with the majority of resurfacing anticipated to be completed by the end of the year and the remaining work, primarily in areas still impacted by ongoing utility construction, expected by spring 2027. He also reported that the USDA utility project, subcontracted to TA Loving Company, continues to progress ahead of schedule. He then sincerely thanked all residents and visitors for their patience with this extensive and necessary project, noting a "light at the end of the tunnel."

The audience responded with applause.

Commissioner LoPiccolo acknowledged that the board had collectively chosen to delay interim patching through the project and emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and long-term planning when allocating Town funds.

Commissioner Matthews expressed appreciation for Zapp's diligence in reviewing the low bid versus the clustered higher bids.

Commissioner Cooper asked about Rivers & Associates review process, and Zapp confirmed all five bids were being reviewed for completeness and accuracy, indicating that they would be ready for Board review at the August 10, 2026, meeting.

Mayor Harker celebrated the news with enthusiasm, noting that residents, particularly those on Broad Street with perpetually dusty vehicles, had been extraordinarily patient. Zapp reviewed the potential timeline of bids and contract execution. He indicated that by Spring 2027, Beaufort's roadways should be substantially improved, especially in the downtown area.

No formal action was taken. The Queen Street project and USDA paving contract authorization were confirmed for the August 10th Board of Commissioners meeting agenda.

Closed Session

1. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (6)

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to enter into a closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (6) at approximately 5:55 PM. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote.

Adjourn

The meeting returned to an open session at approximately 7:25 PM.

Once in open session, Commissioner Cooper raised the issue of another setting for workshop meetings, particularly the use of the east side of the Train Depot. The Board discussed previous attempts to hold meetings in that room, noting that the arrangement was not practical due to the lack of audio and video capabilities required for live streaming.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously with a (5-0) vote and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:29 PM.

Sharon E. Harker, Mayor

Jennifer L. Welborn, Deputy Town Clerk