

CAROLINA BEACH

Planning and Zoning Commission

Thursday, October 9, 2025 - 6:00 PM

Council Chambers, 1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach, NC



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rouse announced that item 2 was withdrawn at the applicant's request and will be rescheduled for the November meeting.

Chairman Rouse called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PRESENT

Chairman Wayne Rouse

Vice Chairman Jeff Hogan

Commissioner Melanie Boswell

Commissioner Ethan Crouch

Commissioner Todd Piper (*arrived during item 3*)

Commissioner Bill Carew

Commissioner Lynn Conto

ALSO PRESENT

Senior Planner Gloria Abbotts

Planner Haley Anderson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. September 11, 2025 – P&Z Minutes

ACTION: Motion to approve the minutes as written

Motion made by Chairman Rouse, seconded by Vice Chairman Hogan

Voting Yea: Chairman Rouse, Vice Chairman Hogan, Commissioner Boswell, Commissioner Crouch, Commissioner Carew, Commissioner Conto

Motion passed 6-0

STAFF REPORT ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Ms. Abbotts reported the following:

Permitting

- 52 permits (renovation, repair, grading, additions, fences, etc.)
- 12 residential new construction
- 1 certificate of occupancy

Code Enforcement

- 37 complaints received
- 10 resolved
- 27 open

Demos

- 312 Atlanta Avenue (single-family home)
- 314 Spartanburg Avenue (single-family home)
- 418 Raleigh Avenue (single-family home)
- 311 Carolina Beach Avenue South (single-family home)
- 1213 Carolina Beach Avenue North (single-family home)
- 1621 Pinfish Lane (mobile home)

New Businesses

- Sound Wave Consignment Shop, 120 North Lake Park Boulevard Unit 104

House Moving

- 707 Ocean Boulevard (mobile home)

Past and Upcoming

- Board of Adjustment September 15: denied right-of-way materials appeal 101 Delaware Avenue
- Technical Review Committee (TRC) October 7: Portside Village speed limit, miniature goats text amendment, beach services, side setback exceptions, Saint Joseph Street right-of-way parking
- Council October 14: Wilson Avenue one-way ordinance, beach cleanup baskets, rezoning 205 Cape Fear Boulevard from MX to CBD

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Consider a Subdivision Modification of 4 Additional Lots for a Total of 13 Lots Located at 1215 Saint Joseph Street
Applicant: Big Bird Land Development, LLC

This item was withdrawn at the applicant's request and will be rescheduled for the November meeting.

3. Consider a Conditional Zoning for a Hotel Located at 223, 225, 227, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239 Carolina Beach Avenue North in the Central Business District
Applicants: Page and Amy Johnson, Carolina Beach Land – East, LLC, Carolina Beach Land – West, LLC

Applicants Page and Amy Johnson of Carolina Beach Land – East, LLC, and Carolina Beach Land – West, LLC, applied for Conditional Zoning (CZ) for a 140-room hotel, restaurant, and meeting space project in

the Central Business District (CBD) located at 223, 225, 227, 234, 235, 236, 237, and 239 Carolina Beach Avenue North.

The project area consists of SeaWitch Café and its associated parking lot along with parking lots currently being leased by the Town for public parking. The property is surrounded by the CBD, and the adjacent uses include a motel, restaurant, gas station, Town parking lots, condos, and single-family homes.

SeaWitch Café at 227 Carolina Beach Avenue North consists of an existing one-story frame restaurant, dining area, and tiki bar. The restaurant structure was built in 1961, and the tiki bar was built in 2001. The property was previously used as a motel; 223 and 225 Carolina Beach Avenue North currently serve as the parking lot for the restaurant.

Arcadius, a large-scale project, was approved in October 2004. The 140-foot-tall project included 278 residential units, 56,811 square feet of retail space, and two parking garages. The project included redevelopment of 11 parcels between Carolina Beach Avenue North, Canal Drive, and Pelican Lane. The Conditional Use Permit expired in 2009 after three extensions were granted by Council. The project was never completed because the owners filed for bankruptcy.

The Town purchased property along the east and west sides of Carolina Beach Avenue North in 2009. The goal was to build a 1,000-foot-long pier for the North Carolina Aquariums system and eventually an aquarium nearby. Guy Johnson Motel and Surfside Motor Lodge were on the properties until they were demolished in 2019.

Motels and hotels are permitted with CZ in the CBD. The proposed development consists of two eastern parcels and six western parcels along Carolina Beach Avenue North that will be combined prior to the issuance of a building permit for a total of 1.75 acres or 76,230 square feet. The project will consist of a hotel on the western parcels with a pedestrian skybridge connecting the hotel to an oceanfront restaurant and meeting space. The properties are located within VE16 and AE11 flood zones, and the proposed buildings must be designed to meet the minimum requirements for flood damage prevention. The CBD does not have minimum setbacks, maximum lot coverage, or maximum impervious surface coverage. There is a maximum height of 50 feet that staff can permit; the maximum height limit may be exceeded for sprinklered structures subject to CZ approval. The proposed height of the hotel is 67 feet to the top of the parapet wall and 73 feet to the top of the elevator/stair tower. The proposed height of the oceanfront restaurant and meeting space is 39 feet.

Details about the following aspects of the proposal may be found in the agenda packet:

- Parking
- Landscaping and sidewalks
- Stormwater and utilities
- Refuse and loading zone
- Traffic
- Public improvements

As part of the application process, a community meeting is required. The applicant held meetings in March 2024 and March and May 2025. Based on the comments from the meetings, the applicant can make changes and place conditions on the project to help mitigate impacts and concerns from the neighboring properties. As a result of those meetings, the applicant has scaled back the project from the original proposal.

The Commission may recommend that the applicant add reasonable and appropriate conditions to the approval of the petition.

Proposed conditions

1. Provide for an easement or maintenance agreement for the portion of the sidewalk on private property.
2. Provide lighting for the streets and sidewalks on the side of the building.
3. Lighting shall be angled downward so as not to present a hazard to drivers, pedestrians, or sea turtles and so as not to create a nuisance to neighboring properties.
4. Electrical lines shall be buried.
5. A total of 13 street trees is required.
6. Install recommendations from the Traffic Impact Analysis.
7. Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Major Permit, State Stormwater Permit, and Soil and Erosion Control Permit required.
8. Pave oceanfront portion of Pelican Lane right-of-way and provide two public golf cart parking spaces.
9. Provide 5-foot sidewalks and crosswalks around the entire project, including the oceanfront portion of Pelican Lane.
10. No parking spaces, fences, walls, posts, signs, lights, shrubs, or trees shall be permitted in the sight-distance triangle.
11. All proposed signage requires a sign permit and shall be compliant with the dimensional and location requirements per the Town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).
12. Recombination plat is required prior to building permit issuance.
13. The building shall be designed to meet VE16 and AE11 standards.

The project is in general conformity with the 2020 Land Use Plan. The properties are shown in the Downtown Business area on the Future Land Use Map. This character area contains the Boardwalk commercial area and central recreation district of town. Three- to four-story buildings are recommended and maintain a pedestrian-scale environment with active ground floor uses, residential, and other uses permitted above with limited on-street parking.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions.

Ms. Abbotts presented the details. She reviewed former uses and approvals, adjacent properties, and the CZ process.

Commissioner Conto asked if the crosswalks would have flashing light requirements. Ms. Abbotts said she doesn't think they do, but that could be added as a condition.

ACTION: Motion to open the public hearing

Motion made by Chairman Rouse, seconded by Vice Chairman Hogan

Voting Yea: Chairman Rouse, Vice Chairman Hogan, Commissioner Boswell, Commissioner Crouch, Commissioner Piper, Commissioner Carew, Commissioner Conto

Motion passed unanimously

Mr. Johnson of Harmony Hospitality, developer of the proposed project, spoke briefly. He agreed that the crosswalks should have flashing lights and said he thinks there is adequate capacity for water now without improvements. Mr. Johnson also introduced other members of his team.

Zach Brigman, General Manager of Embassy Suites in downtown Wilmington, owned and managed by Harmony Hospitality, gave a detailed presentation, which included how the proposed project evolved from a 100-foot-tall Embassy Suites to the current proposal modeled after SpringHill Suites based on community feedback. He emphasized that the hotel height is lower than nearby properties such as the Hampton Inn and Courtyard by Marriott and that the project will beautify currently impervious lots with pedestrian corridors and landscaping.

Mike Nichols, Landscape Architect and Land Planner with Paramounte Engineering, explained the technical details of the project, including plans for underground storage of stormwater for both buildings, which he said is an improvement over what's there today. He said they are only asking for 10 parking spaces at this point because they were able to move around some things.

Chairman Rouse asked if anyone from the public wanted to speak.

Natalie Evans of 1205 Saint Joseph Street said the project looks great overall and would be an asset to the Town, but she asked that the developer consider more environmentally sustainable features and native plantings rather than palm trees.

No one else requested to speak.

Chairman Rouse asked how much event space is in each building, and Mr. Brigman gave square footage details.

Commissioner Conto asked if the renovation schedule for SpringHill Suites is comparable to Embassy Suites. Mr. Brigman said he doesn't know the details of the renovation schedule for SpringHill Suites but explained that Embassy Suites replaces soft goods every seven years and soft goods plus case goods every 14 years.

Commissioner Crouch asked if the applicant has any concerns about meeting the 13 proposed conditions. Mr. Brigman said the project can accommodate all the proposed conditions.

Commissioner Piper asked what occupancy expectations are for the event spaces. Mr. Brigman didn't have a specific answer but said after the project was announced, they started getting phone calls inquiring about bookings. Commissioner Piper asked if they foresee considerable desire for this project during the shoulder season, and Mr. Brigman said absolutely.

Commissioner Conto asked for specifics about the stormwater management plan. Rob Balland of Paramounte Engineering, engineer of record for the project, said rain would be contained on site in the underground system, and the water would have a chance to infiltrate into the ground in a controlled manner.

Commissioner Carew said Pelican Lane has a tendency to flood and asked if there is a plan to mitigate this. Mr. Balland said there is not a plan to put any infrastructure in there, but they can look at that system if they make any connections to it.

ACTION: Motion to close the public hearing

Motion made by Chairman Rouse, seconded by Vice Chairman Hogan

Voting Yea: Chairman Rouse, Vice Chairman Hogan, Commissioner Boswell, Commissioner Crouch, Commissioner Piper, Commissioner Carew, Commissioner Conto

Motion passed unanimously

Commissioner Carew said he feels positive about this plan and how it suits the area. He said he's a bit disappointed there are not a few more rooms, but he thinks the meeting space is sizable and will contribute to the shoulder season, so he is in favor of the proposal.

Commissioner Conto said she loves the project and is impressed by the rendering. She also praised the event space and how it will contribute to the local economy.

Commissioner Crouch said he is generally in favor of this version of the project and commended the developer for insightful consideration of community feedback. He said he likes the orientation of the smaller building on the ocean side with the taller building set back from the water so it won't cast a large shadow on the beach, and he added that he thinks the conditions staff has imposed help ensure the community's needs are met.

Commissioner Piper said he is in favor of the project and thinks it fits the area much better than initial proposal. He said this is private land that does not belong to the Town, so something is going to be built on it, and he thinks the applicant carefully considered public input and made subsequent adjustments.

Commissioner Boswell said she is in favor of this version of the project and appreciates that the developer listened to feedback. She said she feels better that they have been assured that there is water capacity for this, and she thinks it will be a great asset to the area.

Vice Chairman Hogan said local businesses need things that will attract visitors in the shoulder season, so he is glad to see so much event space and thinks it will be a great asset to the community.

Chairman Rouse said he is in favor of the project and appreciates an investor willing to put money into the community. He said the developer would not offer so much meeting space if there wasn't a high comfort level that it would be used. Chairman Rouse said he will vote to approve the proposal with the conditions staff added and recommended that the Commission add crossing signals to the conditions.

ACTION: Motion that whereas in accordance with the provisions of the North Carolina General Statutes, the Commission does hereby find and determine that the adoption of the Conditional Use District to allow for a hotel located at 223, 225, 227, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239 Carolina Beach Avenue North is consistent with the goals and objectives of the adopted Land Use Plan and other long-range plans and the potential impacts on the surrounding area are mitigated by the approved conditions with the addition of adding flashing lights to the crosswalks

Motion made by Vice Chairman Hogan, seconded by Commissioner Boswell

Voting Yea: Chairman Rouse, Vice Chairman Hogan, Commissioner Boswell, Commissioner Crouch, Commissioner Piper, Commissioner Carew, Commissioner Conto

Motion passed unanimously

Chairman Rouse said tonight's vote is a recommendation, and the proposal now advances to Council for final approval.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Rouse adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.