

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, August 25, 2026 - 9:00 AM

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



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barbee called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

PRESENT

Mayor Lynn Barbee

Mayor Pro Tem Deb LeCompte

Council Member Jay Healy

Council Member Wayne Rouse

Council Member Vince Losito

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Deputy Town Manager Ed Parvin

Finance Director Debbie Hall

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Presentation of U SAFE Rescue Buoy Donation to Ocean Rescue by FPTower Inc.

Representatives from FPTower Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to maritime safety and coastal resilience, presented Ocean Rescue with a donated U SAFE remotely controlled rescue buoy. Carolina Beach/Kure Beach was selected as one of the recipients in FPTower's 2026 Save A Life Raffle program. The U SAFE device is designed to assist first responders and lifeguards in water rescue operations by rapidly delivering flotation support to distressed swimmers.

FPTower representatives provided a brief overview of the organization, discussed the life-saving capabilities of the device, and formally presented the donation to the Town. Council Members expressed appreciation for the gift and praised the presentation as excellent.

2. Renewal of Parking Management Agreement with Pivot Parking

Mr. Oakley presented staff's recommendation to renew the parking management agreement with Pivot Parking. Mayor Barbee asked why this particular contract was being brought before Council rather than handled administratively or placed on the consent agenda. Mr. Oakley explained that while he has authority to enter into such agreements or place them on the consent agenda, parking is a high-profile topic that he felt warranted a full Council presentation. He also noted that the existing contract

with Pivot was expiring and that, without a renewal decision, the Town would need to immediately initiate a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

Mr. Oakley provided background, noting that in 2021 the Town terminated its prior agreement with REEF Parking early due to maintenance and revenue issues, which required a payout. The Town then entered into a two-year agreement with Pivot Parking, with two automatic two-year renewal options and a 90-day termination notice provision. Since that time, Pivot has worked collaboratively with the Town to remove all pay stations and meters and transition to a fully digital system. Most recently, Pivot introduced the PivotGO! app, which allows prospective beachgoers to view real-time parking occupancy across multiple beach destinations before deciding where to travel.

Mr. Oakley reviewed revenue performance since the transition to Pivot, stating that income has been steady and represents a significant increase over the REEF era. He acknowledged some dip in Freeman Park revenue and attributed this to ongoing beach erosion and loss of sand since 2022 rather than management performance. Mr. Oakley expressed optimism that newly restored sand this year could improve those figures.

Council Member Rouse asked how performance compared to projections, and Mr. Oakley confirmed that revenue had met or exceeded budget projections in nearly every year, with the Freeman Park shortfalls being weather- and erosion-related.

Mr. Oakley highlighted several improvements made during Pivot's tenure: the addition of License Plate Reader (LPR) technology, Pivot's relocation of their offices into Town Hall to improve customer service and reduce the burden on Town staff fielding parking inquiries, and a general elevation of Pivot personnel to an "ambassador" role in the community. He noted that complaints have declined dramatically, and that during Potential Tropical Cyclone 8 (PTC8), Pivot staff actively assisted residents in evacuating and helped Town staff with storm-related tasks. Mr. Oakley also emphasized that Pivot operates in Wilmington, Wrightsville Beach, Surf City, North Myrtle Beach, and other markets, which allows them to redeploy staff resources as needed.

Mr. Oakley outlined the key terms negotiated for the renewal agreement:

- New LPR equipment: A new magnetic LPR, estimated at approximately \$20,000, with Pivot absorbing the full capital cost rather than the Town.
- Citation revenue structure: Pivot agreed to remove itself from any share of citation revenue. Previously, the incentive structure had drawn criticism that attendants were motivated to write tickets. This change eliminates that concern entirely. The Town will retain all citation revenue. Mr. Oakley acknowledged this would modestly reduce the annual threshold for Pivot's variable management fee but estimated a net positive of approximately \$20,000 to the Town.
- Freeman Park automation: A new automated entry/exit system for Freeman Park using LPR technology and gate arms, estimated to cost \$45,000-\$50,000 in capital investment, which Pivot has agreed to fund entirely. The system would allow vehicles with pre-purchased tickets or season passes to enter automatically, provide a lane for on-site ticket purchase, and track real-time occupancy data for use in operational decisions and display on the PivotGO! app. Mr. Oakley noted estimated labor savings of \$35,000-\$40,000 annually as a result of reduced

staffing needs at the Freeman Park entrance. He added that staff would likely still be present on busy weekend days to handle enforcement of vehicle-type rules and assist with any backups.

- Contract term: In exchange for absorbing approximately \$70,000 in capital investment, Pivot requested an additional three-year contract term rather than the standard two-year renewal.
- Exit provision: A 90-day termination clause remains in the agreement. However, if the Town exits early, it would be responsible for repaying the unamortized portion of Pivot's capital investment, prorated over the remaining term.
- Management fee structure: The Town continues to pay a flat monthly management fee of \$1,850. Pivot receives an 8.5% variable fee only on revenues above the annual threshold of \$3,237,500.

Mayor Barbee raised the question of whether the Town should pursue a competitive RFP to test the market. He noted that, as a public entity, all competitor contracts are publicly available, making it relatively straightforward to benchmark. Mr. Oakley responded that he believes Pivot is competitive, pointing to the fact that the Wilmington, Wrightsville Beach, Surf City, and others have all independently selected Pivot following their own procurement processes. He also acknowledged that going out to RFP carries real risks: potential for higher costs through unfamiliar vendor fee structures and middleware providers, new technology and signage costs, retraining of staff and the public, and disruption during a period when the Town is already managing significant infrastructure work. Mr. Oakley referenced the transition away from REEF as a cautionary example, noting unforeseen complications such as permit entry errors due to differing data formats that generated erroneous tickets and public frustration. He said these types of transition costs are difficult to anticipate and often go unrecognized in raw bid comparisons.

Council Member Losito suggested that rather than a full RFP, staff could compile a comparative chart of what peer municipalities pay for similar services – benchmarking Pivot's terms against publicly available contracts – without committing to a formal competitive process. Mr. Oakley acknowledged the idea but noted the time pressure involved; without a renewal decision, the RFP process would need to begin immediately. Council Member Losito noted that a resident had independently posted such a comparison on social media that morning, with results indicating that the Town's parking rates are favorable relative to neighboring municipalities.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she expressed initial reluctance about a three-year commitment but was reassured by the 90-day exit clause and the fact that any early exit liability would be limited to the amortized value of capital equipment that would remain with the Town.

Council Member Losito praised the removal of citation incentives as a major step forward. Other Council Members agreed.

Council Member Healy said if the current parking program is not broken, he sees no reason to fix it.

Council Member Rouse pointed out that Pivot has met metrics projections and delivered on what they promised. He said he is inclined to take the concessions they are offering. He noted that in approximately two to three years, the Town anticipates acquiring nine additional parking parcels, which would significantly change the competitive landscape for any future bid and likely yield more

favorable terms than a bid issued today. On that basis, he said he sees the three-year term as reasonable.

Council Member Healy raised the possibility of bringing parking management in-house. Mr. Oakley identified several reasons this would be problematic: Pivot brings specialized expertise, the Town would likely hire the same field personnel, and there could be potential for political pressure on staff regarding ticket decisions.

Mayor Barbee said he does not have confidence in Town staff's ability to select a software system and manage and run it within 90 days.

Mr. Oakley said personnel costs for municipal employees are higher than private-sector equivalents.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she thinks bringing parking management in-house would be feasible over a longer time frame and stated the Town now has three years to figure it out.

ACTION: Motion to approve the contract with Pivot Parking under the terms as presented

Motion made by Mayor Barbee

Voting Yea: Mayor Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte, Council Member Healy, Council Member Rouse, Council Member Losito

Motion passed unanimously

3. Events for the Remainder of 2026

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Jelinski provided an overview of upcoming Town-sponsored programs and events through the end of 2026,

Boardwalk Music and Fireworks

Mr. Jelinski reported that the Boardwalk Music series had completed 14 of its 16 scheduled weeks with only one rainout, and the rained-out show will be made up on Labor Day weekend with a double fireworks show. He acknowledged the collaborative, all-hands effort involved in running the Boardwalk series, crediting Police, Fire, and Public Works as well as volunteer coordinators and their teams for keeping the Boardwalk covered and secure during fireworks events.

Mr. Jelinski noted that additional community events not directly managed by the Parks and Recreation Department would be presented at a future Council meeting.

Youth Athletics

Mr. Jelinski highlighted the Town's youth athletics programs, overseen by Athletic Supervisor Bryce Smithson. Programs include:

- Youth flag football
- Youth wrestling club
- Fall gymnastics
- Youth lacrosse
- Youth co-ed basketball

Adult Athletics

Programs include:

- Adult co-ed softball league
- Adult basketball league
- Adult co-ed kickball league

Special Events

Programs include:

- Police Department Bike Rodeo
- Annual Halloween Carnival

Holiday Programs

Programs:

- Letters to Santa
- Holiday Decorating Contest
- Lighting at the Lake, with Parks and Recreation taking a more active role this year by partnering with the Island of Lights community to expand programming and amenities
- Christmas Parade, with emphasis on the extensive behind-the-scenes safety work by public safety crews, including closing Lake Park Boulevard and managing traffic and checkpoints
- Holiday Market, featuring children's activities, Santa Claus, and face painting
- Holiday Movie Night, featuring "A Christmas Story" selected for this year
- Christmas by the Sea, featuring Santa Claus, train rides, holiday music, and food vendors
- Rockin' New Year's Eve, a new event at the Boardwalk from 6:00 to 8:00 PM designed for families who do not wish to stay out until midnight, which will act as a first-year test event with the intent to grow it in future years

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte noted that Carolina Beach had been recognized in the top 25 for the Hallmark Channel's Merriest Christmas Towns Contest and encouraged the public to vote daily through September 4.

Mayor Barbee thanked the Parks and Recreation Department on behalf of Council, emphasizing that this work is central to the quality of life in Carolina Beach and is a primary reason it is a desirable place to live, retire, and visit. Mr. Jelinski thanked Council and acknowledged his full staff by name.

4. Saint Joseph Street Multi-Use-Path Update

Mayor Barbee noted this item was added to the agenda at the request of a resident seeking a general status update. Mr. Oakley confirmed that the project is ready to go out to bid and staff is currently meeting with the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT). He said a more detailed public update will be provided in the near future.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte recognized staff, especially Mr. Parvin and Ms. Ward, for their work on the Freeman Park open house sessions held the prior day. She said for those who couldn't attend, there are plans for a mini session at an upcoming date of the Lake Park market.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said the open house drew 77 attendees across three sessions, the highest attendance ever recorded for a Town open house event.

Mayor Barbee suggested that future Freeman Park planning documents address the long-standing question of jetties and groins so the public's voice on that issue is formally recorded before the Town potentially assumes jurisdiction over that land.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 10:15 AM.