

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, May 26, 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 Vince Losito

ABSENT

Council Member Wayne Rouse

ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Deputy Town Manager Ed Parvin

Finance Director Debbie Hall

Town Clerk Kim Ward

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Volleyball Court Discussion

Mr. Oakley said he would like to get formal direction from Council before moving forward on a proposed new volleyball court. He noted that everyone seemed to be in agreement that it was a good idea to add another court where the Community Building used to be.

Mayor Barbee acknowledged that while the volleyball court wasn't in alignment with their facilities plan, there are no short-term funded projects in that space. He explained that volleyball courts are very easy to move later as things develop, and he also noted there is significant community support both financially and emotionally. Mayor Barbee said he didn't have a problem with the proposal.

Council gave consensus to support the volleyball court project.

2. FY26/27 Town Manager's Budget Message and Discussion

Mr. Oakley presented the FY26/27 budget message, explaining that the focus is on public health and safety, employee recruitment and retention, and fiscal responsibility, including improved cybersecurity and organizational efficiencies. He noted there are no new positions in the General or Utilities Fund,

but there was a transfer of the unfilled Public Information Officer position to create a Cyber Communication Technology Manager role.

The budget was balanced at a 2.95-cent tax increase, bringing the total to 17.12 cents, with a 9% utility rate increase required by bond covenants. Major projects funded included a new force main from the Lake to Henniker's Ditch, the well 15H and vessel filtration system, and engineering for the water storage tank and headworks. Mr. Oakley also noted recreation and economic development priorities, including a debt service fund to help with the Boardwalk property purchase and future land and equipment, and public health and safety priorities, including bulkhead improvements and installation, a sanitary fish freezer, Police and Fire response vehicles, and air packs and safety equipment for first responders.

Mr. Oakley said the Town would be giving employees a cost-of-living adjustment based on a living wage, an approach he feels is more equitable than a standard percentage increase. He explained this would favor lower-paid employees, with everyone receiving approximately the same dollar-amount increase. Mr. Oakley said the budget also included increased family healthcare coverage to help with recruitment and retention.

Mr. Oakley noted the 52% fund balance. Mayor Barbee pointed out that the fund balance target had been 50%. Mr. Oakley said the Town is not trying to stockpile tax money beyond what is needed.

3. Staff Presentations

Police Department

Police Chief Vic Ward presented highlights, emphasizing a fiscally responsible approach with no new position requests. He noted they aggressively pursued grant funding and received significant support from the Police Foundation for equipment that would otherwise require budget requests.

Chief Ward said the department completed its second renewal of the N.C. League of Municipalities (NCLM) Risk Review, which helps lower the Town's liability insurance costs, and they are also undergoing voluntary accreditation through the N.C. Department of Justice program.

Chief Ward noted that several department members had received national recognition through major police associations, and the department achieved Elite status with policy provider Lexipol, representing the gold standard for policies. He also highlighted the robust Police Cadet Program with four cadets currently, three of whom had direct ties to the Town, indicating they were looking to make careers in the community rather than leaving after a few years.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte expressed concern about low salaries for entry-level Firefighters and Police Officers, noting it was difficult to see what these first responders earn given the risks they face daily.

Mayor Barbee noted that the Police Foundation is not an endowment and relies on grassroots fundraising from citizens of the Town, which shows the support that the Police Department has.

Public Works

Public Works Director Brian Stanberry highlighted several major accomplishments, including successful Mobi-Mat installations for beach crossovers that provided significant cost savings compared to wooden walkways. He said the Hamlet Avenue and Ocean Boulevard crossovers were recently replaced, and the Freeman Park access ramp was improved using mats left by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, saving an estimated \$300,000-\$400,000.

Mr. Stanberry said recent paving projects were completed on Alabama Avenue and Pinfish Lane, and the 2nd Street Extension project was wrapped up with stop sign installation. He also noted that they had replaced seven bulkheads with three more scheduled and said the 1810 Canal Drive parking lot was completed, adding that stormwater mapping was underway with analysis through two zones out of six.

Mr. Stanberry also highlighted upcoming projects, including Canal Drive bike lane striping and intersection improvements, and said for the Canal Drive one-way traffic situation, they are considering planters instead of delineators for better aesthetics, though maintenance of plants remained a concern requiring irrigation solutions.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Jelinski announced rapid progress on the volleyball court project, with over \$30,000 already secured in fundraising from Friends of CB Parks & Greenways, Pleasure Island Volleyball, and Jersey Mike's. He said a contractor meeting had been held, and construction was expected to begin within one to two weeks.

Mr. Jelinski said major accomplishments included adding shade to the accessible Skate Park, renovating the Lake Park picnic shelter with a new ceiling and an ADA-accessible sidewalk, and resurfacing courts at Mike Chappell Park, with two additional pickleball courts added. He mentioned that future improvements at Lake Park included widening the bridge, demolishing the old bathroom, and cleaning up electrical infrastructure, with work planned for January/February to minimize disruption during heavy usage periods.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte provided positive feedback from a resident near Lake Park about the new bathroom placement and picnic shelter improvements.

Utilities

Mr. Parvin, who gave the report in the absence of Public Utilities Director Mark Meyer, discussed the ongoing Freeman Park survey, which is open through July 19 and available via QR code at the Freeman Park entrance. He said a public meeting was planned for August with three sessions throughout the day and reminded Council about the harbor meeting scheduled for this evening to discuss the evolving role and enforcement activities of the Town's Harbor Masters.

Mr. Parvin said major utilities projects included transitioning away from porta-potties to permanent facilities for cost savings and better service. New semi-permanent bathroom units would be installed, along with a Freeman Park container bathroom.

Mayor Barbee said porta-potties are designed for events and are not meant to be permanent facilities. He said building something more permanent is more cost-effective and better for the environment, adding that Freeman Park is the only public drive-on beach in the State that has porta-potties.

Staff reported that in 2020, the Town was spending approximately \$300,000 annually on porta-potty maintenance including staff time, equipment, licensing, and supplies.

Mr. Parvin said the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meter reading system was being upgraded from transmission units to cellular-based service for improved efficiency and reduced personnel requirements for meter reading. He also noted the start of an information campaign about keeping fats, oils, and grease out of home drains and keeping wipes out of toilets. Mayor Barbee requested adding storm drain education to address people putting inappropriate materials into storm drains.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Barbee complimented staff on outperforming inflation over the past six years and noted the Town had become more efficient at securing grant funding and processes.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she appreciated the focus on employee retention from the January budget retreat, acknowledging it costs more to retrain employees than retain them. However, she expressed concerns about staff policy compliance and professionalism, noting instances of employees making their own hours and inappropriate conduct toward business owners that reflected poorly on the Town.

Mayor Barbee asked about traffic signal timing at the Dow Road intersection, specifically regarding the right-turn signal not operating when the left-turn arrow was active for opposing traffic. Mr. Parvin said he will inquire with the N.C. Department of Transportation.

Mayor Barbee said the next steps for the budget process would be a public hearing and budget approval at the June Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 10:00 AM.