

Town of Swansboro
Appearance Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2026

In attendance: Cynthia LaCorte, Kim Kingrey, Larry Philpott, Claire Cole, Linda Thornley, Doug Rogers, and Nancy Palbicke.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Business

Introduction of Commission Members

Commission members introduced themselves and provided brief background information, including their length of residency, property ownership, and connections to the Swansboro area. The introductions reflected a mix of long-term residents and individuals with prior interest in community appearance and beautification matters.

Election of Chairperson & Vice Chairperson

Alissa Fender explained that pursuant to Town Code, the Commission was required to annually elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from its membership. The Chairperson's responsibilities were described as presiding over meetings, ensuring the agenda was followed, recognizing speakers, and maintaining orderly proceedings in accordance with North Carolina open meetings law. The Vice Chairperson would serve in the absence of the Chair.

Nominations were made in support of Cynthia LaCorte for Chairperson and Doug Rogers for Vice Chairperson. Their dedication and significant groundwork before the Commission's formation was highlighted. The nominees engaged extensively with town staff and officials, researched the operations of similar commissions in other municipalities, and showed a strong commitment to establishing the Commission.

On a motion by Mr. Rogers, seconded by Mrs. Palbicke, Cynthia LaCorte was unanimously appointed as Chairperson.

On a motion by Ms. LaCorte, seconded by Mr. Philpott, Doug Rogers was unanimously appointed as Vice Chairperson.

Determination of Staggered Terms

Clerk Fender reviewed that pursuant to Town Code, members of the commission serve staggered three-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive full terms. To properly establish the staggered membership structure, three members were required to be designated to serve an initial one-year term.

Larry Philpott, Linda Thornley and Claire Cole all volunteered to serve the 1 year term.

On a motion by Mr. Rogers, seconded by Mrs. Palbicke, a 1 year term with expiration of February 2027 was designated for members, Larry Philpott, Linda Thornley and Claire Cole, with unanimous approval.

Determination of a Regular Meeting Schedule

Clerk Fender reviewed that pursuant to NCGS 143-318.12, the Commission was required to establish a regular meeting schedule, which would then be filed with the Town Clerk and published accordingly. Discussion was held regarding the timing and frequency of future meetings.

During discussion among the commission, it was mentioned that an informal agreement had previously been made to hold meetings during normal business hours, so as not to place additional burden on town staff. Members generally expressed comfort with daytime meetings, though it was acknowledged that as the Commission's work evolves, reconsidering the meeting time may become necessary to accommodate working schedules.

In response to an inquiry from the board, Clerk Fender advised that Tuesdays were unavailable due to existing town meeting commitments, and that Friday meetings would need to be concluded before 1:00 PM.

On a motion by Mr. Philpott, seconded by Mr. Rogers, a regular meeting schedule of every 3rd Thursday at 9am was unanimously approved.

Clerk Fender clarified that the next meeting on May 21st would be a special meeting at which time the regular meeting schedule would be formally adopted.

Rules that Govern the Operation of the Committee

Clerk Fender provided a review of the key statutory requirements applicable to Commission members under North Carolina General Statutes. Three primary areas were covered:

- Open Meetings Law (Article 33, Chapter 143): Official business must be conducted at properly noticed meetings. Discussion at special meetings was limited to the specific identified agenda items in the meeting notice, and a majority of members were prohibited from discussing public business outside of an advertised meeting, whether in person, by phone, or electronically.
- Public Records Law: Emails, messages, and other communications made or received in connection with public business were considered public records and may be subject to disclosure upon request.
- Conflict of Interest (NCGS 160D-109): If a board member had a direct, substantial, or identifiable financial interest in a matter before the Commission, that member was required by statute to recuse themselves from voting.

The purpose of the review was to ensure all members shared a common understanding of their legal obligations so that the Commission could operate transparently and in a manner that protects public trust and individual members. Prior to the meeting, all members had completed their oath of office coinciding with upholding these laws.

Discussion on Creation of By-Laws

Clerk Fender reviewed that the Commission was tasked with adopting by-laws to govern its internal organization and meeting procedures, consistent with its advisory role under the establishing ordinance and applicable North Carolina law. Once finalized, the by-laws would be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for final approval. It was noted that the by-laws process may require multiple drafts reviewed across upcoming meetings.

Clerk Fender provided a list of topics typically addressed in by-laws, including membership and attendance, meeting procedures, voting and decision-making, ethics and conduct, the use of subcommittees, the process for requesting project or issue review, role clarification, and amendment procedures.

In response to inquiries from the board, Clerk Fender confirmed research gathered prior to the Commission's formation, including by-laws examples from other municipalities, and Ms. LaCorte's prior drafted by-laws could be used as a starting point. Clerk Fender offered to collect members' suggestions and recommendations via email and prepare an initial draft for review at the next meeting.

Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments/Public Comments

Ms. LaCorte and Mr. Rogers expressed their gratitude to the commission members for their trust and confidence in electing them for the chair roles. They emphasized their serious commitment to their roles and shared enthusiasm about the potential of the Appearance Commission for Swansboro, noting it was long overdue. Both expressed optimism about the board's ability to collaborate and move forward together.

Commission members collectively expressed their enthusiasm and support for the establishment of the Appearance Commission, recognizing the persistent efforts of Ms. LaCorte and Mr. Rogers. Additionally, Mrs. Kingrey shared that the Swansboro Historical Association may have a potential future project for consideration.

Town Manager Jon Barlow, Mayor William Justice and Commissioner Wayne Herbert all spoke and shared their appreciation to all members for dedicating their time and efforts to this new commission and looked forward to what they would accomplish.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Mr. Philpott, the meeting adjourned at 6:28 pm.