

Town of Swansboro
Appearance Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2026

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

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Rogers, seconded by Mrs. Kingrey, the April 23, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

Business

Adoption of Regular Meeting Schedule

Town Clerk Alissa Fender reviewed that pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.12, a public body may establish a schedule of regular meetings indicating the time and place of those meetings. At its April 23, 2026, special meeting, the Commission discussed and agreed to a regular meeting schedule of 9:00 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month and a meeting schedule had been established for adoption. Once adopted, the schedule would be filed with the Town Clerk's office and published on the Town's website in accordance with statutory requirements.

On a motion by Mr. Rogers, seconded by Mrs. Palbicke, the regular meeting schedule of the 3rd Thursday of the month at 9am for the Appearance Commissioner from June 2026 to May 2027 was approved unanimously.

Review of Draft By-Laws

Town Clerk Fender reviewed the first draft of the Commission's by-laws for consideration. She stated that at its April 23, 2026, special meeting, the Commission had been tasked with developing by-laws to guide its organization and procedures, with the understanding that multiple drafts may be reviewed before a final version was submitted to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Based on prior research, examples from other municipalities, and input provided by members via email, an initial draft was prepared for the Commission's review. Records considered in preparing the draft included a draft created by Chair LaCorte, as well as by-laws from the Towns of Selma, River Bend, Kernersville, and Wendell. Town Clerk Fender noted that the final by-laws would be provided to the Board of Commissioners for final approval after the commission's approval of the final draft.

The Commission made no edits to the draft. On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Mrs. Palbicke, the draft by-laws were approved to be finalized and presented at the next

meeting for final review by the commission and recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for final approval.

Appearance Project Program

Chair LaCorte introduced the concept of an Appearance Project Program to create a schedule of property enhancement and clean-up projects throughout the year. The discussion centered on how projects would be staffed, with the idea that the Commission would invite other committees, commissions, townspeople, and organizations to volunteer alongside members to accomplish work more efficiently.

Mrs. Thornley suggested identifying project locations before setting dates and noted that materials and efforts would likely need to be funded through donations or similar means. Ward Cemetery was raised as a timely candidate given recent public attention following a storm. Mrs. Thornley cautioned against investing significant effort into a site without having a plan for who would maintain it afterward, noting the risk of completed projects falling into disrepair.

Discussion also touched on the importance of planning not just for the initial project, but for long-term maintenance. The group acknowledged the value of prioritizing both high-visibility and high-impact locations and agreed that a tiered approach—identifying short-term, long-term, and future goals—would be a productive framework for the program.

Potential Project Opportunity

Vice-Chair Rogers presented a potential project opportunity involving the property between Saltwater Grill, the Saltwater Grill parking lot, the gazebo, and the waterfront downtown where four live oak trees were located. Vice-Chair Rogers noted the area had existing hazards including protruding sprinkler heads and light fixtures lying on the ground that he had already begun to address. He reported that the owner, Ms. Anderson, was open to ideas for enhancement but had not committed to any specific course of action.

Town Clerk Fender noted that the property was within a flood zone, meaning any improvements would need to comply with the town's flood ordinance. She further noted the property was also located within a historic district, meaning historic preservation requirements and color restrictions would apply, and that any work affecting the waterway would also need to satisfy CAMA regulations.

The Commission discussed appropriate surface materials and considered whether options such as brick pavers, mulch, or artificial turf would satisfy stormwater and perviousness requirements, with the understanding that any material used would likely need to allow water to pass through it. This waterfront location was identified as

receiving significant foot traffic and tourism, making its appearance a matter of public interest despite being privately owned. Suggestion to consult with a landscape or horticultural professional for informal guidance was made and the commission agreed that one member would continue discussions with the property owner and report back at a future meeting.

On a motion by Mrs. Palbicke, seconded by Mrs. Cole, with unanimous approval, Vice-Chair Rogers was appointed to further explore this project by collaborating with property owner Ms. Anderson and to provide an update at the next regular meeting.

Appearance Commission Project Signs

Chair LaCorte presented a draft signage concept for placement at completed project sites to publicize the Commission's work and support recruitment efforts. The idea was to create a sign that could be temporarily placed at a project site following completion and removed after an agreed-upon period.

Town Clerk Fender clarified the town's sign regulations, noting that wire-frame yard signs were not permitted in Swansboro except for political signs as provided by state law. She indicated that a more substantial sign mounted on a post would be permitted and could be installed at a project site during or after a project's completion. For projects within the historic district, color restrictions and other historic specifications would need to be observed.

The group agreed to revisit the idea at the next meeting with more refined proposals.

Future Meeting Agenda Item Discussion

An opportunity for commission members to discuss future agenda topics and provide direction to staff regarding items to be included on upcoming agendas was provided. The following items were addressed:

- Next meeting format would be roundtable style setup for collaboration
- Further discussion and/or details were to be provided on the following items:
 - o Diagonal parking on Front Street
 - o Enhancement of Holiday Lights
 - o Solar Lights across Front Street from Highway 24 to Church Street

Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments

Chair LaCorte acknowledged the board's significant potential and the many opportunities within the town and commended the impressive assembly of insightful and skilled individuals on the commission.

Mrs. Kingrey shared that her initial views about this commission had changed significantly and proposed a collaborative effort between the Historical Association and the Towns Historic Preservation Commission.

Mrs. Thornley emphasized the importance of budget awareness, long-term sustainability, alignment with Historic Preservation Commission goals, and a focus on practical improvements that could provide both short-term progress and lasting impact as the commission moves forward.

In response to an inquiry from the board about members meeting downtown to walk around and talk about ideas, Town Clerk Fender explained that any gathering of three or more commission members to discuss town business, whether in person, by phone, or electronically, was considered a meeting and requires public notice under the open meetings law. Two members could meet casually without issue, but if more gather, it violates the law. If the committee as a whole wishes to meet downtown for any reason related to the commission and its business, a 48-hour notice stating the meeting's purpose was required.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Mrs. Thornley, the meeting adjourned at 9:49am.