

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
October 22, 2025

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Board Chair Deb Pylypiw called the Town of Swansboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:30 PM on Wednesday, October 22, 2025. Roll call was conducted with the following members present: Deborah Pylypiw, Elena Messenger, Matthew Prane, and Ryan Swanson. Absent was Betts Love.

II. Adoption of Minutes

a. Adoption of August 13, 2025 Minutes

Elena Messenger noted that the August minutes had been sent out and she had read through them, finding no corrections needed. Matthew Prane made a motion to accept the minutes. Motion by Matthew Prane to accept the August 13, 2025 minutes. Seconded by Deb Pylypiw. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Reports

a. September Monthly Report

Parks & Recreation Director Anna Stanley presented the September monthly report, which had been attached and distributed to board members. She asked if there were any questions or comments about the report.

Elena Messenger inquired about Swansboro's involvement with America's 250th celebration, noting that the report mentioned serving on a committee. Stanley explained they were working with the historical association, and Deb P. provided additional details from her attendance at the last historical association meeting. The group was exploring options to potentially add programming to Arts by the Sea or the July 3rd event. The town has a historic flag from 1960 that was presented during Swansboro's bicentennial (1760-1960), featuring a swan on one side and naval stores imagery on the reverse. The flag is currently in an archival box, and there's interest in bringing it out for display, possibly at the homes tour or other events. Deb P. also mentioned connections with the Sons of the American Revolution in New Bern who might participate with regalia.

Director Stanley noted that Onslow County Museum had set up booths at previous events including July 3rd, presenting graphics and materials. The county received a \$10,000 grant for America's 250th activities, with representatives from Jacksonville, Richlands, and throughout the county participating in planning. Director Stanley stated that Swansboro would coordinate with the historical association to help as needed, given their already full plate of events.

Deb P. shared that North Carolina has created a passport program for the celebration, where visitors can get stamps at various locations throughout the state. The recreation center has been included in this passport program after Sara E. submitted a photo, making it one of the physical locations where people can receive stamps. The program focuses on physical places rather than festivals or events.

b. Upcoming Programs/Events

Assistant Director Sara Elliott presented the upcoming programs and events. This Friday, the Halloweenie Roast and Trunk or Treat event will be held, with expectations of over 500 children attending based on last year's turnout. Michelangelo's is sponsoring the event, and they've prepared 500 hot dogs for grilling after running out of 300 in just an hour last year.

Other upcoming events include a mixed doubles pickleball tournament for Thanksgiving (though registration numbers were currently low), a fall garland craft class, and craft night. The popular Sprout Scouts and Tiny Trekkers programs have returned and fill up quickly. Elliott noted she had increased capacity for Tiny Trekkers and might do the same for Sprout Scouts, though the meeting room becomes tight with 10 children plus parents and sometimes siblings.

Theater trips are scheduled, with one already booked and another to see Anastasia in December. The Christmas Flotilla is set for Black Friday, with two boaters already registered. Posters would be distributed the following week. A Veterans Day ceremony was organized for November 11th at 9:30 AM at Bicentennial Park, featuring local organizations as done in previous years. Multiple Christmas programs and Santa Fest are being planned for the holiday season. The book club meets tomorrow but is already fully booked.

Messenger asked about potentially modifying major free programs by adding paid attractions like pumpkin derbies to help cover costs. Elliott acknowledged the idea's merit but explained that October was their busiest month with staff working six weekends in a row, making additional programming challenging. The timing was particularly difficult with the Halloween event following so soon after the Mullet Festival complications. Pylypiw noted similar scheduling challenges occur in summer with Arts by the Sea followed four weeks later by July 3rd.

Messenger elaborated on the pumpkin derby concept, explaining how Public Works could help drill holes in pumpkins for participants to decorate and race, similar to cardboard boat regattas. She emphasized it would attract a different demographic beyond families with young children and create year-after-year participation. While acknowledging it would be a good addition, Stanley and Elliott cited staffing as the primary constraint, noting they only have three staff members who cannot work every event, and Public Works staff also cannot work all events.

Elliott mentioned she had been looking at pumpkin derby pictures after their previous discussions, agreeing it would bring in a different population segment.

Regarding a 4-H interest meeting mentioned in the report, Elliott explained that 4-H had reached out about using their facility and discussing a potential partnership. However, the meeting revealed it was more for families interested in joining 4-H rather than a true

partnership opportunity. The program had limitations on who could join and required sign-ups through 4-H rather than Parks & Recreation, unlike their free music therapy program open to all. Despite Stanley telling them there could be potential partnership opportunities requiring further discussion, 4-H never reached back out. The 4-H representatives had emphasized needing adult commitments to attend monthly meetings to create a Swansboro chapter.

c. Updates

Festivals

Director Stanley provided an update on the Mullet Festival cancellation and subsequent pivot. Due to weather concerns, the festival had to be cancelled, requiring the team to pivot quickly. Department heads met twice - first to decide on cancellation and explore options, then the next day to determine feasibility after reaching out to various services.

The event was successfully moved to the park with about 45 vendors participating. The fish fry sold approximately 400 plates, essentially breaking even according to the vendor. Shuttle services were provided, and t-shirt sales continued, with the vendor conducting inventory to potentially sell remaining annual t-shirts online as people were still requesting them. Approximately 1,500 shirts had been printed.

Stanley acknowledged that some community members did not receive the change well, particularly regarding the decision not to reschedule downtown but to hold it at the park instead. She had reached out personally to those individuals to apologize and try to make things right. Elliott emphasized that vendors were extremely appreciative and complimentary about the effort to provide an alternative event. They were happy to have their fees rolled over to next year and to have this opportunity.

Pylypiw added that vendors were continuously grateful for the fee rollover and the chance to participate. Only about 50 vendors could attend since most already had commitments the following weekend.

Stanley explained the logistical challenges that prevented a downtown rescheduling, including shuttle services having six weddings and two funerals booked. They had originally planned for three buses on Saturday and two on Sunday (large buses) but could only secure one 20-passenger van for the rescheduled date. This would have been insufficient for downtown traffic management. While Ward Farm was still used for parking, booking limitations and costs made planning for backup dates impractical. Services like shuttles and porta-potties would require payment for both potential dates.

The team has been asked to consider backup plans for next year, though Stanley noted the financial implications of reserving multiple dates for all services. October's busy schedule meant the last weekend was the only viable option for rescheduling, given Halloween activities and other commitments.

Stanley reported that TV advertising through Channel 9 had been particularly responsive, immediately stopping ads upon cancellation notification and quickly updating commercials and digital ads with new dates. They even added additional advertising at no

charge the following week. Radio stations were less responsive, though Pylypiw did participate in a phone interview with a talk show.

The rescheduled "Finger Mullet" festival received media coverage, including an article in Raleigh (either News & Observer or a business journal) about how Swansboro pivoted the event. People particularly enjoyed the creative name.

All bands' deposits were lost, but contracts were successfully rolled over to next year, securing entertainment for 2025.

IV. New Business

2024-25 Budget Review-Director Stanley presented budget highlights for the completed fiscal year 2024-25, explaining that July financials had not been available earlier. For Parks and Recreation revenue, the department came in under budget by approximately \$13,000. The two main shortfalls were in instructors and programs. Programs were only under by around \$7,000, but this was primarily due to not offering summer camp, which typically generates \$10,000-11,000. Had summer camp been offered, the department likely would have met budget targets.

Instructor revenue is challenging to project for both revenue and expense sides because programs are planned with minimum enrollment requirements. Several STEM camps had to be cancelled due to insufficient registration. Budget planning must include these programs to ensure funding availability for instructor payments, even though actual offerings depend on enrollment and instructor availability.

Positively, rentals, memberships, and room reservations all exceeded budget by \$300-450, indicating accurate prediction in these areas.

On the expense side, Parks and Recreation came in under budget by about \$15,000. Major savings came from camp activities (no summer day camp field trips) and instructor payouts being lower than anticipated. Most other line items came very close to budget projections, within a few hundred dollars.

For festivals, revenue exceeded projections by \$16,589, bringing in approximately \$96,000 against a budgeted \$80,000. Overall festival expenses were under budget by \$15,000, with savings primarily in overtime, part-time wages, and sponsor-donated items for the Mullet Festival and Flotilla. Items like golf carts and other sponsored services are budgeted as a precaution in case sponsors withdraw, but these typically result in end-of-year savings when donations come through.

Stanley expressed satisfaction with the overall financial performance despite not meeting revenue targets in Parks and Recreation, attributing the shortfall mainly to the cancelled summer camps and reduced instructor programs.

Special Event Application- Director Stanley noted there was no longer a special event application to review.

V. Old Business

Pickleball Courts-Director Stanley provided a brief update on the pickleball courts project. She has been meeting continuously with the Town Manager and has obtained all miscellaneous quotes for fencing, wind screens, and paddle racks to develop a more complete budget.

In their last meeting, the Manager directed her to prepare an RFP (Request for Proposals) for six dedicated courts. Stanley is currently working on this, having researched and obtained examples of RFPs specifically for pickleball courts from other communities. She will begin drafting the RFP.

The current funding allocation of \$150,000 will be insufficient, with estimates suggesting costs of at least \$200,000-230,000 based on compiled information, though actual costs could be higher once the project moves forward.

Stanley plans to propose applying for PARTF (Parks and Recreation Trust Fund) and/or LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund) grants, both offering 50-50 matches. Using a \$250,000 example, if the town has \$150,000 and receives grants, they would only need to contribute \$75,000. Additionally, these grants can be combined, with one grant potentially serving as match funding for the other, further reducing the town's financial obligation.

Swimming Pool Committee- Matthew Prane, Pool Committee Chair, reported that as of almost noon, the swimming pool survey had received 401 responses. He had set a personal goal of 500 responses. Prane expressed concern about misleading information on social media suggesting that only Swansboro taxpayers should respond to the survey, when in fact they want input from everyone who utilizes the town's parks. He noted that while they can filter the data by respondent location, the social media misinformation was disheartening.

Prane mentioned that the survey had been promoted at the Finger Mullet Festival, which helped increase responses from approximately 260 previously. He plans to continue promoting the survey, especially once the high school swim season starts next week, which should generate additional interest. There is no closing date for the survey.

The Pool Committee's next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (Thursday) at 6 PM, which will be a special interest meeting. Prane will pull and analyze the survey data in preparation for that meeting.

VI. Comments- No questions or comments were offered from board members or the public.

VII. Adjournment- Deb Pylypiw made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Matthew P. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM.

Next Meeting November 19, 2025, 5:30 PM