

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
April 15, 2026

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting of the Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was called to order on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at 5:30 PM in Swansboro, NC.

Present: Deb Pylypiw, Matthew Prane, Elena Messenger, Jennifer Steele, Bets Love, and Ryan Swanson

Absent: None

II. Adoption of Minutes

- a. Adoption of Meeting Minutes March 18, 2026- The minutes from March 18, 2026, meeting was presented for adoption. Motion to approve the minutes of March 18, 2026, was made by Board Member Prane and seconded by Chair Pylypiw. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Reports

- a. **Monthly Reports-** The March monthly report was presented. Board members were directed to the attached report and invited to submit any questions to staff.
- b. **Upcoming Programs/Events-** Sara Elliott provided updates on recent and upcoming programs. The Easter egg hunt was successful with good community participation. The first Tiny Olympics for ages 3-6 was held with 13 participants, and the Sprout Olympics for ages 1-2 was scheduled for Friday. Truck Touch was planned for the following Saturday with 32 organizations participating, though one helicopter cancelled due to fuel costs.

A new Mother's Day Tea Party program for toddlers was introduced and filled quickly with 8 registrations. The pirate cruise had only 10 seats remaining. Pirate Fest was scheduled for May 9th with a new music group, though the pirate ship would be unavailable due to maintenance work.

Arts by the Sea preparations were underway with food vendors confirmed for the wine and food tasting. National Night Out was rescheduled to August 7th and would include food trucks and new attractions.

c. Updates

Festival Vendor Updates: Chair Pylypiw reported that Arts by the Sea had approximately 10 spaces remaining, with several applications pending processing, and that the event was expected to reach full capacity. The Mullet Festival was similarly near capacity, with a small number of spaces being held for major sponsors entitled to complimentary booths. Food vendors for both festivals and the July 3rd event were reported as full.

2026-27 Budget-Director Stanley reported that initial budget review sessions had been held with both the Board of Commissioners and the Town Manager. Several cuts were made during the first round of review, including the removal of a new vehicle, outdoor movies, conference attendance, city data software, and certain office furnishings. Staff noted that a decision was made to prioritize a full-time staff position over restoring two

part-time recreation assistant positions. The part-time staff increase question was deferred for further review by the Town Manager. Staff acknowledged that additional budget rounds remained ahead and that some items could potentially be restored.

IV. New Business

- a. **Advisory Board Documents-Elena Messenger-**
Elena Messenger raised questions about the accuracy and relevance of the board's mission statement and bylaws, particularly regarding team building activities, orientation manuals, and other listed responsibilities that are not currently being implemented. She suggested the board review these documents to ensure they accurately reflect actual practices or update them accordingly.

Matthew Prane noted that bylaws should be reviewed annually as required and emphasized the board's role in making recommendations to commissioners based on community input and master plan data. The board agreed to review the documents for the next meeting.

- b. **New Programming-Elena Messenger-** Elena Messenger proposed two new program concepts: a Pumpkin Derby and a Cardboard Boat Regatta. She provided detailed information from other municipalities showing these programs could be implemented cost-effectively with participant fees covering expenses. She emphasized these would serve different population segments and utilize Swansboro's waterfront location.

Matthew Prane expressed support for targeting different community segments and asked about volunteer opportunities and staffing requirements. Sara Elliott raised concerns about liability issues, particularly for water-based activities, noting the town's insurance restrictions on athletic programming.

Board Member Messenger acknowledged those concerns but urged that the concepts be explored and vetted rather than dismissed outright, with waivers and legal review as part of that process.

- c. **Seaside Arts Council-SwanFest Waiver of Fees**

To review special even application submitted by Seaside Arts Council for the 2026 SwanFest. Director Stanley presented a special event application from Seaside Arts Council requesting waiver of \$2,400 in fees for use of the Pugliese Pavilion for SwanFest from June 7th through September 6th. The concert series runs every Sunday for four hours, excluding July 4th weekend.

Deb Pylypiw noted that SwanFest benefits the town significantly with hundreds of weekly attendees of all ages and supports downtown businesses and sponsor visibility. Matthew Prane asked about alternative bookings for the pavilion during this period and was informed that reservations are rare, typically limited to occasional Saturday weddings. Board members expressed support for the waiver, noting that SwanFest draws large

weekly crowds of all ages and provides significant benefit to downtown businesses and the broader community.

Recommended Action: Motion to recommend the waiver of the \$2,400 in fees for the Seaside Arts Council's use of the Pugliese Pavilion for the 2026 SwanFest concert series was made by Board Member Elena Messenger seconded by Board Member Prane. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Old Business

- a. Lighting- Board Member Messenger revisited the topic of park lighting, with particular focus on the pickleball courts. She noted that previous efforts to coordinate with Duke Energy had not produced results and asked whether commercial-grade solar lighting had been explored as an alternative. Staff acknowledged that solar options had been researched to some degree and that the subject would be revisited in connection with the upcoming major park improvement project. However, staff emphasized a preference not to delay indefinitely and expressed interest in pursuing lighting solutions independent of the larger capital project. Board Member Prane noted that solar lighting systems are programmable and can be set to operate on timers.

It was acknowledged that any extended hours of use at the courts would require an ordinance amendment, as town parks currently close at dusk. The board agreed that lighting remained a priority and that staff should continue pursuing a viable solution, whether through Duke Energy or commercial solar options.

- b. Sponsorship/Naming Opportunities- Board Member Messenger raised the topic of sponsorship and naming opportunities, which had been discussed previously but had not been formally developed. She suggested that windscreens, shade structures, and benches at the pickleball courts and other park facilities could be offered to local businesses as sponsorship opportunities, allowing those improvements to be made at little or no cost to the town.

Director Stanley confirmed that logo placement on windscreens had been explored for other projects and that the concept was feasible. Director Stanley also stated that there had long been interest in establishing a formal memorial program, research has been compiled but had not been implemented.

Board Member Messenger suggested delegating some of the research and compilation work to staff to move the program closer to implementation. Board Member Prane echoed the sentiment that if staff resources were stretched, the board should work to identify which activities were most impactful and focus efforts accordingly.

- c. Pickleball Courts-Funding Strategy- Staff presented the comprehensive funding strategy discussed with the board of commissioners the previous evening. The proposal combines six pickleball courts, tennis court resurfacing, skate park area conversion, and playground replacement into one major project seeking both Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant funding.

The grants are dollar-for-dollar matches with LWCF allowing up to \$750,000 and PARTF up to \$500,000, where each grant can serve as the local match for the other. Projects must be completed within three years and combining them allows all requirements to be met once rather than duplicating efforts.

The timeline involves LWCF applications opening in May with November deadlines, and PARTF opening in November with May deadlines. Grant results would be known by the end of 2027. A consultant will be hired to ensure proper grant coordination.

Next steps include establishing a project budget, determining skate park renovation scope, and issuing an RFQ for grant consulting services. The town will potentially pay nothing if the project stays under \$1 million, or up to \$250,000 if the project reaches \$1.25 million.

The board of commissioners approved proceeding with budget establishment and the RFQ process, with June identified as the target for beginning the grant writing process.

Board Member Prane acknowledged that while the timeline was long, he saw no viable alternative path to funding a project of this scale, and that the grant strategy should be clearly documented as the town's course of action. Board Member Messenger urged that small, visible improvements be made in the interim to maintain community confidence. Staff noted that any expenditures made prior to formal grant award would not be reimbursable, which limited the scope of interim improvements that could be funded from the earmarked balance. The board agreed that non-monetary wins, such as sponsorship-funded shade structures or benches, could help maintain community engagement in the meantime.

VI. Comments

No public comments were received.

VII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Board Member Prane and seconded by Board Member Messenger at 6:30 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting May 20, 2026, 5:30 PM