

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
May 20, 2026

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting of the Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board was called to order on Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 5:30 PM in Swansboro, NC.

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

Absent: None

- a. Election of Officers- Director Stanley addressed the election of officers that had not been conducted at the beginning of the year. It was explained that a formal motion was needed to retain the current leadership structure with Deb P. as chair and Elena M. as vice chair. The current officers expressed their willingness to continue in their roles, and the other members indicated they were not opposed to maintaining the existing arrangement.

Motion: To keep Deb as chair and Elena as vice chair. Motion by: Betts L. Second by: Matthew P.

Result: Approved unanimously

II. Adoption of Minutes

- a. Adoption of April 15, 2026 Minutes- During review of the minutes, concerns were raised by one member about accuracy and completeness. One member noted that while they had committed to getting a ramp either sponsored and built or built independently for the Pumpkin Derby, this was not reflected in the minutes. More significantly, there was concern that the minutes showed concepts being "urged to be explored and vetted" but lacked an actual commitment to implement or thoroughly investigate programming options.

The discussion revealed frustration that many ideas had been talked about repeatedly without actual vetting or implementation. The member wanted to see a clear commitment to examine what could be done for 2027 programming within six months, rather than continued discussion without action.

It was clarified that the meeting recording process didn't require capturing every word but should capture the majority of what was discussed. The Director explained that different versions of transcripts were reviewed to piece together comprehensive minutes.

Motion: To adopt the minutes as presented. Motion by: Jennifer Steele Second by: Elena Messenger Result: Approved unanimously

III. Reports

- a. April Monthly Report- The April monthly report was presented without questions from the board members.
- b. Upcoming Programs & Events- An extensive overview of current and upcoming programs was provided. A new partnership event with Onslow County Animal Services had taken place that day, featuring volunteers walking dogs available for adoption. This monthly program was developed based on ideas from conferences and was well-received, with the dogs appearing happy during their walks.

The Sprout Scout and Tiny Trekkers programs had returned to regular programming, with plans to begin Sprouts and Tiny Olympics in July. The scheduling would depend on parent availability. A Mother's Day Tea Party for toddlers had been successful, and a new "Bugs and Butterflies" program focusing on sensory bins and outdoor play was nearly at capacity.

A walking program led by staff member Brienne had been running successfully for three months, building consistent attendance and relationships while introducing new participants to the recreation center. The fellowship night group had enjoyed their first outing to Mac Daddy's with ten participants, and there were plans for more such outings.

The Cinco de Mayo Pickleball program had to be cancelled due to rain. The Touch-A-Truck event was deemed highly successful with beautiful weather, though both helicopters had to cancel due to emergency medical calls. Despite having the most vehicles ever and losing the DJ to food poisoning, the event received positive feedback.

A program on Earth Day had attracted participants ranging from 3-4 year olds to adults in their eighties. The event was moved inside due to windy conditions but went well.

PirateFest, held two weeks prior, had started slowly due to weather concerns but ultimately drew over 5,000 attendees. A new band performed, and the Lady Swan cruise returned for the second year with positive reception.

The upcoming Arts by the Sea Festival was nearly sold out for vendors, with all entertainment booked. Special attractions would include the Sons of the American Revolution chapter from New Bern providing color guard and musket firing demonstrations. Wine tasting would feature new glasses sponsored by Michelangelo, with 30 tickets already sold. An indoor backup plan was in place to avoid the previous year's flooding issues.

A new program survey had been distributed, receiving responses that aligned with expectations, particularly strong interest in toddler programs. Some interest was noted for murder mystery dinner parties. The survey aimed to gather community input despite budget uncertainties.

Regarding the proposed cardboard boat regatta, it was reported that the insurance provided a number of safety concerns for the event. The concerns included the ICW location with its currents, boat traffic, limited water depth, youth participants on homemade boats, and lack of trained aquatic rescue personnel, creating a risk level deemed difficult to justify. Conversations with the dock master, fire chief, and police chief had all resulted in opposition to the proposal. Board members expressed frustration with the rejection, questioning whether alternative solutions had been explored. Discussion ensued about whether different locations, safety measures, or liability waivers could address the concerns. There was debate about whether the proposal had been thoroughly vetted or if additional options could be explored to find a path to approval. Some members felt that with proper planning and safety measures, including certified lifeguards and alternative locations, the event could be made viable.

The book club program was highlighted as a success story, with 27 registered members and a waiting list. The program had been patronizing downtown restaurants during the winter months when they had fewer customers, bringing 20-27 people to restaurants on Thursday nights. The club had alternated between By the Bridge and Preston's, but By the Bridge proved too small, so they moved exclusively to Preston's. For the following year, plans were to alternate between Preston's and El Chino. The final meeting of the current season would be held at the recreation center as a potluck since restaurants preferred not to accommodate large groups during their busy June season.

- c. Updates- Budget discussions were ongoing due to statewide tax valuation issues affecting all North Carolina municipalities. Multiple budget versions had been submitted as circumstances continued to change. The Board of Commissioners was also dealing with multiple scenarios, and everyone remained in limbo awaiting state-level decisions. Advocacy continued for part-time staff increases and a full-time position, though approval remained uncertain. Direction was expected from the town manager regarding necessary adjustments, and which capital projects might be funded. A balanced budget presentation was required by May 29th, so more definitive information would be available by the next meeting.

Progress continued on the Municipal Park project, with meetings held with various vendors to receive pricing on components of the project. Updated quotes were being gathered for windscreens and fencing to provide budget updates. An RFQ had been drafted and was under review and hoped to be posted beginning of June.

IV. New Business- No new business was discussed.

V. Old Business

a. Review of Board Bi-Laws

The board discussed reviewing and updating their governing documents, including bylaws and strategic plans. The Director provided a reference to other municipalities' practices, including the Town of Waxhaw, which creates an annual work plan in addition to their bylaws. This detailed work plan helps them focus on specific goals each year.

One member had prepared revised versions of three documents: the strategic plan, responsibilities document, and bylaws. These revisions included updated language, formatting changes such as converting paragraphs to bullet points for clarity, and highlighting modifications for easier review. The changes ranged from basic verbiage updates to more substantial structural modifications.

A broader philosophical discussion emerged about the board's purpose and effectiveness. Concerns were raised that after three years, the board lacked a clearly defined purpose, mission, and vision. Members felt they came to meetings primarily for updates rather than making substantive decisions or advancing initiatives. There was frustration that many proposed ideas were rejected due to budget, staffing, or time constraints.

The discussion touched on the comprehensive strategic plan that had cost thousands of dollars but seemed underutilized. Board members questioned whether they were effectively advocating for community priorities identified in the plan, including long-standing requests like a swimming pool that dated back to 2008. Some felt the board had become ineffective, serving mainly as festival coordinators rather than addressing broader recreational needs.

Staff responded to concerns about workload and capacity, noting that with only four staff members, coverage was challenging when people needed time off or had other commitments. The suggestion was made that board members could take on more substantial project coordination roles, such as managing the proposed cardboard boat regatta as a board initiative rather than a staff-run program.

The possibility was discussed of having the board take full responsibility for organizing and running the Halloween pumpkin derby event, which had been proposed but deemed too resource-intensive for current staff levels. Board members expressed willingness to coordinate such events if given the authority and support to do so.

VI. Comments- No public comments were made.

VII. Adjournment-

Elena Messenger made a motion to adjourn the meeting and seconded by Jennifer Steele. The motion was unanimously approved and adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Next Meeting June 17, 2026, 5:30 PM