Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
August 19, 2026

I. Call to Order & Roll Call- The Swansboro Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM on Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Present: Debra, Elena Messenger, Matthew Prane, and Betts Love.

Absent: Ryan Swanson and Jen Steele.

II. Adoption of Minutes

a. Special Meeting Minutes July 8, 2026- The board was given time to review the minutes. During review, members noted that the spelling of a member's last name on page four was incorrect and should read Swanson. Motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2026, as corrected, was made by Board Member Elena Messenger and seconded by Betts Love The motion carried by voice vote with no opposition.

III. Reports

a. Monthly Report- Parks and Recreation Director Anna explained that the monthly report was attached to the packet. The report was labeled June, but it covers July. A board member asked how often the playground is re-mulched. Director Anna said it is done about once a year, and sometimes more often if needed.

A board member asked whether the soccer association contracts had increased as previously discussed. Director Anna confirmed they had. The field rate went from $8 per hour to $10 per hour and is continuing gradual increases until it reaches the regular rental rate. An earlier increase was exceedingly small, described as pennies on the hour. Director Anna reported no pushback from the association this year.

b. Upcoming Programs/Events-

Few programs had been planned for September. Pumpkin Patch Party registration remains open on a wait list, so families can sign up without refunds if the event cannot proceed. Instructor-led programs (Tai Chi, adult voice classes), the book club (25 signed up), and theater trips continue; other programs are on hold. October advertising has not begun and is on hold until new staff are hired. Director Stanley said the priority is getting staff in place so reservations can resume.

The board asked about Bark Fest, later in September. Director Stanley will evaluate it and the Halloweenie Roast on September 1. The board asked about the Tunnel to Towers event. Director Stanley said it is a partner event and is not affected.

Later in the meeting, Elena M. shared a mockup of a derby car axle kit and asked opinions what families would pay for an entry that includes the kit, one or more races, and decoration judging, with a one-in-three chance to win a $50 gift card. Board members suggested about $25; other recreation professionals suggested $30 to $35. The full kit costs about $36.50.

The board discussed encouraging repeat participation, including donating kits back for a discount next year ($10 or 25 percent), charging $40 the first year and $30 for returning participants, and recycling parts. The board supported trying the event this year and evaluating the results afterward. Director Stanley said money is budgeted for the Halloweenie Roast and she would review last year's receipts to see what funds are available. The board does not want to remove existing resources or pass all costs to participants.

c. Updates

Staff- Director Stanley reported that a staff member had taken a leave of absence. Since the board last met, the department has also lost three part-time employees. One left for college, one left shortly after being hired for personal reasons, and one is moving on to a new opportunity and will leave at the end of the month. The department is extremely short staffed and will make the best of the situation. Deb has stepped up to help, and most festival responsibilities are returning to Director Stanley.

The board asked whether a hiring freeze was in place. Director replied that it was not. Two people had been hired, but fingerprinting is slow. The state is still processing fingerprints submitted in July, and she had checked on the status earlier in the week.

The board asked about hours. The new hires are part-time positions at 15 to 20 hours per week. A part-time employee may not exceed 1,000 hours per year, which averages about 19 hours per week.

Due to staffing shortages, the department is not accepting new reservations for September, with two exceptions. Reservations already on the books will be honored, and reservations that fall within normal operating hours may be accepted. This applies to the recreation center and to Town Hall since there are not enough staff to cover them. Director Stanley will reassess in the middle of September, once new staff are on board.

IV. New Business

a. 2026-27 Approved Budget- Director Stanley presented the approved budget, which includes the Parks and Recreation and the Festivals budget. Comparisons go back to

the 2023-24 budget. She offered to highlight major cuts, and the board reviewed the documents.

The board asked about the staffing request. Director Stanley explained that the request included one additional full-time recreation coordinator, part-time hourly wage increases and restoration of a part-time recreation assistant position to support the recreation staff with developing and running programs. Director Stanley noted that the part-time line is lower $5,000 lower than last year because it did not include summer camp staffing.

Director Stanley reviewed differences between the current-year budget, the amount requested, and the amount approved. The largest difference, about $137,000, comes from the non-capital outlay, capital outlay, and capital reserve lines. Non-capital outlay was reduced by almost $20,000. That line covers items such as park benches, trash cans, and fitness equipment. Capital outlay includes only the tot lot, which is part of the Capital Improvement Plan. The board noted that it will depend heavily on successful grants if projects are to move forward next year. Another area that was impacted was playground repairs, the amount approved was significantly lower than what was spent last year.

The festivals budget remains the same due to most festival expenses are fixed and increase each year. Part-time salary was an exception. Director Stanley stated that revenue is generated through sponsorships and vendor fees, but do not necessarily break even. The four festivals are budgeted as its own department. Revenue generated by the town's festivals does not return to the parks and recreation budget and expenses remain separate.

The board asked whether festival fees for tents and booths are reviewed. Director Stanley stated staff compared other festivals' pricing every couple of years to stay in line without pricing vendors out. Fees were raised about two years ago. Research revealed the town's fees are comparable to, and in some cases slightly higher than, those of other festivals. An average food vendor pays about $800 to $1,200.

The board asked for comparisons with other festivals. Director Stanley said Jacksonville's festivals are much smaller, and the Seafood Festival is much larger, with about 100,000 attendees and has over $100,000 in sponsorships. It also has an executive director and paid staff dedicated solely to the festival.

V. Old Business

a. Municipal Park Enhancement Project

Director Stanley reported that the agreement has been received and will go before the Board of Commissioners at the next meeting. A site visit with the project team was conducted the prior week. They reviewed the project, walked the area

including the tennis courts, the planned pickleball courts, and the tot lot, and suggested additional project elements.

Director Stanley is looking at adding cameras to the project for the tennis and pickleball courts and expanding to replace the cameras at the recreation center and extending down to the concession stand. The Recreation Center may not be able to be included, but the cameras would at least cover the tennis courts, pickleball courts, and parking lots. The director is still exploring options for park lighting and met with solar lighting company a couple of months ago. Sports lighting options could be explored for courts and Duke lighting for parks.

The board asked whether there were significant safety or security concerns. Director Stanley said the existing cameras are of little use. Footage is pixelated, plates cannot be read, and police cannot follow up on incidents. The cameras she is proposing are used by surrounding municipalities, and the vendor is willing to send test units. They are more expensive but offer advanced features. Staff can search recorded footage by description, such as clothing, car descriptions, and read license plates. The cameras can also count park patrons and vehicles, which would give the department park attendance data it does not currently have. The system would include a 10-year warranty and a 10-year license covering software upgrades. A board member said infrastructure, servers, and subscription costs need to be considered. Director Anna confirmed these are covered under the license and warranty.

Director Stanley discussed additional grant details. Items will be brought to the board only if a vote is needed. The grant requires public community meetings and is currently confirming those organizations. The board asked whether bids for the project would be prepared soon. Director Stanley informed the board no bids or requests for proposals will occur until both grants are received, which will not be until November of 2027.

The board asked about the status of the written response regarding the skatepark equipment. Director Stanley said it is still pending. She wrote the letter a year ago, and the regional consultant is following up.

b. Advisory Board Documents

Board Responsibilities
A board member explained that the expanded responsibilities document was meant to define what each responsibility means in practice, such as advocating for community needs. It was not meant to make every item required. Some content is already covered in the bylaws, such as meeting structure, roles, and approval of minutes. The board discussed whether to set a required number of events for members to attend. It reaffirmed the earlier conclusion that

involvement looks different for each member, depending on their stage of life and existing volunteer commitments. The board agreed that the one firm expectation is to attend board meetings and to notify staff when unable to attend. Other involvement can include bringing community perspectives to meetings.

After the bylaw changes, many of the document's bullets may be unnecessary. The board agreed to defer a detailed discussion. Members will compare the documents and mark what should be removed or adjusted. Director Stanley will assemble all the documents for one combined review once all the discussions are complete to include the mission and vison.

Strategic Plans
The board agreed that the mission, vision, and purpose language is standard and that the documents should complement each other. The board favored aligning the top sections with the strategic plan. No action was taken.

b. Future Agenda Topics

Next Meeting: Recreation Resource Services Presentation
Recreation Resource Services is visiting departments across the state and will attend the board's September meeting. The board will meet the regional consultant, Brittany Ship. Director Anna said the visit comes at a good time given the board is revising the responsibilities and strategic plans. The visit will be an informational presentation, and nothing will be on the agenda unless a vote is needed. The next meeting is September 16, 2026.

Additional Comments/Updates from Director

- Director Stanley announced that the Recreation Center is now in compliance with LWCF project for Municipal Park.
- A board member shared that she had spoken with Director Staney the day before she feels the need to step down from board. She hopes to continue volunteering for events and programs, which she enjoys and feels she does well. Director Stanley confirmed the member would remain on the volunteer list. Board members said the member can make an impact in the community in many ways and thanked her for her service.

VI. Comments

VII. Adjournment- Motion to adjourn was made by Elena M. and seconded by Matthew P. The motion carried by voice vote with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 PM.

Next Meeting September 16, 2026, 5:30 PM