Appearance Commission Agenda

Town of Swansboro

Thursday, August 20, 2026

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

a. July 16, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

III. Business

a. **Discussion of Areas of Focus for Appearance Project Program Schedule**
Presenter: Cynthia LaCorte – Chair

Discuss potential areas of focus for the Appearance Project Program Schedule in order to begin developing project proposals.

Recommended Action: Identify areas of focus for the Appearance Commission and, if desired, appoint individuals to begin identifying proposal aspects.

b. **Property Appearance Recognition Program**
Presenter: Cynthia LaCorte – Chair

Review and discuss the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program.

Recommended Action: Review the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program and provide feedback regarding the development of a proposal for future consideration.

c. **Appearance Commission Strategic Plan**
Board Collaboration/Workshop

Following its review of existing Town plans at the July 16, 2026, meeting, the Appearance Commission agreed to continue discussions and begin establishing a strategic plan to provide a framework for supporting and advancing the implementation of adopted Town plans.

Recommended Action: Begin development of an Appearance Commission Strategic Plan by identifying priorities and implementation objectives that align with adopted Town plans.

IV. Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments

V. Public Comments

VI. Adjournment

Town of Swansboro
Appearance Commission
July 16, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

Item II - a.

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

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

Approval of Minutes
On a motion by Mr. Philpott, seconded by Mrs. Kingrey, the June 18, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

Business
Amendment of Regular Meeting Schedule
Town Clerk Alissa Fender presented the proposed amendment to the Appearance Commission's regular meeting schedule, which sought to move meetings to evening hours in accordance with directions from the Board of Commissioners. The purpose of the change was to improve Commissioner attendance and provide greater accessibility for working residents. The Commission was asked to select either Schedule A at 5:30 PM or Schedule B at 6:00 PM and that the meeting day would remain unchanged, continuing to be held on the third Thursday of each month.

The committee discussed and shared various perspectives on scheduling constraints and public accessibility:

Chair LaCorte provided context on how the 9:00 AM meeting time was originally established, noting that the Board of Commissioners (BOC) advised against overtaxing town staff. Ms. LaCorte highlighted that 7 people currently prefer the morning slot, noted that Onslow County Commissioners meet at 11:00 AM, and acknowledged that no schedule can accommodate everyone.

Mrs. Kingrey agreed with maintaining the current time, noting she was told meetings would be during the daytime when she was invited to join, and expressed uncertainty about committing to evening times during that specific week.

Mrs. Palbicke noted that the committee was already a third of the way through the year's meetings and advocated for keeping them in the morning, suggesting that individuals can adjust their schedules accordingly.

Mr. Philpott emphasized the importance of being a public body that represents and remains available to the public, noting the room is currently empty. He also expressed openness to a compromise, mentioning that the TDA meets at 2:30 PM.

Mrs. Cole echoed the shared sentiments regarding flexibility but noted personal unavailability after 6:30 PM due to business conflicts, adding that 5:30 PM would be acceptable.

In response to an inquiry from Mrs. Thornley, Town Clerk Fender confirmed that this request came from the Board of Commissioners and that meeting during the day did take away from daily duties and could result in staying later to compensate.

On a motion by Mrs. LaCorte, seconded by Mrs. Palbicke, unanimously approved to keep the meeting at 9 am, and to revisit the matter after the terms of the members currently serving one-year appointments have expired.

Appearance Project Program Proposed Schedule
Chair LaCorte presented a proposed schedule for the Appearance Project Program, previously discussed by the commission, that aimed to coordinate beautification and clean-up efforts in the town. The proposed schedule was crafted with careful consideration of seasonal weather patterns, selecting months when outdoor conditions would be comfortable, thus avoiding periods of extreme heat or cold. Chair LaCorte emphasized that the work would involve outdoor efforts from both Commission members and any volunteers enlisted for the tasks. One significant aspect of the schedule was Ward's Cemetery's activity was specifically in alignment with the Historic Homes Tour. Chair LaCorte noted that areas targeted in the schedule would be spruced up to be presentable in time for the Bonus Tour, ensuring the town puts its best foot forward.

On a motion by Mrs. Kingrey, seconded by Mrs. Cole, the proposed schedule for the Appearance Project Program was unanimously approved.

Projects of Interest Discussion
The Commission held a roundtable discussion on several projects of interest.
- Swansboro Waterfront Records

Mr. Philpott shared a summary of the town's waterfront plan history, noting that it was approved around 2012-2013 and handed over to the Parks and Recreation Department for execution. Some completed components include enhancements at Bicentennial Park, the Church Street Gazebo, and erosion control at Ward Shore. Lighting was added under the bridge for pedestrian safety. The plan aimed for a linear streetscape connecting Riverview Park through Front and Church Streets to Ward Shore Park, intending to link parks, restaurants, shops, and parking areas via a distinct pedestrian path. A boardwalk idea was scrapped due to private property issues, with Hwy 24's sidewalk becoming the focus. Philpott emphasized a unified streetscape using consistent elements like lighting and benches to align future improvements. Susan Hatchell's previous presentation was highlighted as beneficial for cohesiveness. Relating to an economic plan for a "sense of place," he mentioned previous wayfinding sign additions that stalled after 11-12. About $200,000 from the state for a veteran's memorial project could help garner more funds.

Potential funding could be sourced from the Parks and Recreation Trust, Onslow, and Swansboro Tourism Authorities, needing Board of Commissioners' approval. Philpott advised not tackling the entire waterfront plan at once but advocated for components that can improve the town's appearance and sense of place, like standardizing trash bins and lighting.

A question was raised regarding whether landscaping had been part of the original palette concept. Board Member Philpott acknowledged that the waterfront plan had been a conceptual document and had not progressed to the level of detail required to produce a true design palette. He explained that in order to develop that level of detail, the town would need to engage a landscape architect or similar consultant, and that even a conceptual streetscape document produced by such a professional could serve as a long-term guide without requiring immediate expenditure. He reiterated that the value of such a guide was in ensuring that routine improvements, when they occurred, reflected a consistent and intentional vision rather than being made in an uncoordinated fashion.

Mrs. Palbicke raised the idea of reaching out to Carteret Community College's horticulture program as a potential resource, suggesting that students from that program might be able to assist with landscaping components at a more affordable cost.

Mrs. Palbicke shared details related to a conversation she had about installing solar string lights on Front Street with a Duke Energy representative. Using the town's federal tax ID, a work order could be filed, and engineering approval obtained in about three business days. She noted 150-foot solar lights cost under $35 each. The representative said this would be similar to holiday lighting and need such approval. Mrs. Palbicke highlighted that these lights would enhance evening festivals like Swansboro by Candlelight.

A question was raised about whether such lighting would be any more visually intrusive than the existing overhead utility lines in the area, with the implication that the impact would be minimal. The discussion reflected general interest in the concept, though it was acknowledged that further details would need to be worked through.

The Commission agreed that a workshop would be needed to develop an overall blueprint from the available planning materials. It was requested that Town Clerk Fender distribute an email with several proposed dates and times for scheduling the workshop.

Mrs. Kingrey brought up the unattractive neon-colored waste cans in the historic district, supplied by GFL, the town's waste collection contractor. These brightly colored cans were visible street-side due to residents' limited storage options. Mrs. Kingrey emphasized that resolving this requires amending the GFL contract, a change she discussed with the Town Planner. Town Manager Jon Barlow shared that such an amendment would need the

Board of Commissioners' approval, and that there could be potential fees for switching cans.

Additionally, Mrs. Kingrey shared observations she took from a visit to a historic district in Cape Code, describing how landscape architects had volunteered their services to design the gardens, which were meticulously maintained by volunteers. She suggested leveraging similar strategies might enhance local beautification efforts, proposing these ideas be explored further during the upcoming workshop.

- Fundraising Options and Details

Town Manager Barlow reported that staff reviewed the matter, including guidance from the UNC School of Government, and determined that the Commission is authorized to conduct fundraising and accept sponsorships on behalf of the Town for specific projects or designated purposes. He explained that any funds raised must be dedicated to the stated project and noted that this practice is consistent with the Town's existing use of sponsorships from businesses and individuals for events and festivals.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Philpott, seconded by Mrs. Kingrey, the meeting adjourned at 10:01 am.

Appearance Commission Meeting Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Discussion of Areas of Focus for Appearance Project Program Schedule**

Board Meeting Date: **August 20, 2026**

Prepared By: **Cynthia LaCorte – Chair**

Overview: Discuss potential areas of focus for the Appearance Project Program Schedule in order to begin developing project proposals.

Proposal Development Process: Following discussion of potential areas of focus, the Appearance Commission may direct members to begin preparing aspects of the proposals. Each proposal should identify the intended work, location, general scope, priority level, estimated needs, potential partners, and any anticipated ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

Staff Review: Proposal concepts would be reviewed by staff to ensure that the proposed scope is appropriate for the Appearance Commission to undertake and to identify any operational, budgetary, maintenance, or policy considerations.

Once a final draft is approved by the Appearance Commission, the proposal would then be presented to the Board of Commissioners for review and approval before implementation. Approved areas of focus may then be incorporated into the Appearance Project Program Schedule following Board of Commissioners' approval, with specific dates and timelines to be further defined.

Background Attachment(s): *None*

Recommended Action: Identify areas of focus for the Appearance Commission and, if desired, appoint individuals to begin identifying proposal aspects.

Action: ______________________________

Appearance Commission Meeting
Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Property Appearance Recognition Program**

Board Meeting Date: **August 20, 2026**

Prepared By: **Cynthia LaCorte – Chair**

Overview: Review and discuss the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program.

The Commission is tasked with reviewing the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program example and provide feedback on the program criteria, nomination and selection process, recognition frequency, eligible properties, and administrative needs. Staff will use the Commission's input to develop a draft program proposal, verify conformance with applicable UDO standards, and identify any operational, budgetary, maintenance, or policy considerations. The draft proposal will be presented to the Appearance Commission at a future meeting for further consideration.

Background Attachment(s): Property Appearance Program Example

Recommended Action: Review the proposed Property Appearance Recognition Program and provide feedback regarding the development of a proposal for future consideration.

Action: ______________________________

PROPERTY APPEARANCE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

COMMERICAL "APPEARANCE AWARD"

Seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall

RESIDENTIAL "APPEARANCE AWARD"

Monthly

PROCESS: Three committee members submit their nomination with address and photo, and it will be added to the agenda and voted on. The nomination receiving the most votes will be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for consideration and final approval.

SIGNAGE: Swansboro logo & "APPEARANCE AWARD OF THE MONTH"

SIGN PLACEMENT: Signs to be placed by the town maintenance

RECOGNITION/AWARD: In addition to being recognized by the yard sign, we can recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the owner of the business, property, or tenant occupying/leasing the property could be recognized at their Board of Commissioners meeting and awarded a certificate including recognition by the Mayor, Board of Commissioners, and Appearance Commission as a keepsake. Additionally, we could solicit area businesses for the donation of an item or gift card to present to the recipient with the certificate.

Appearance Commission Meeting
Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Appearance Commission Strategic Plan**

Board Meeting Date: **August 20, 2026**

Prepared By: **Alissa Fender, MMC – Town Clerk**

Overview: Following its review of existing Town plans at the July 16, 2026, meeting, the Appearance Commission agreed to continue discussions and begin establishing a strategic plan to provide a framework for supporting and advancing the implementation of adopted Town plans.

Topics for discussion may include lighting and signage standardization, identification of community funding opportunities, and development of strategic priorities that align with the Town's long-term goals and vision identified in adopted plans.

Commission members are reminded to bring with them the plans supplied to them previously for reference.

Background Attachment(s): None

Recommended Action: Begin development of an Appearance Commission Strategic Plan by identifying priorities and implementation objectives that align with adopted Town plans.

Action: ______________________________