

**TOWN OF BURGAW BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING**

**DATE:** July 8, 2025  
**TIME:** 4:30 PM  
**PLACE:** Burgaw Town Center  
108 E Wilmington St  
**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Olivia Dawson  
Mayor Pro-tem James Malloy  
Commissioner Jan Dawson  
Commissioner Bill George  
Commissioner Michael Pearsall  
Commissioner William Rivenbark

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Dawson.

**2. Invocation**

The invocation was led by Commissioner Malloy.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Pearsall made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dawson and carried by unanimous vote.

**5. Approval of Consent Agenda**

\*Items under Consent are generally of a routine nature. The Board may take action to approve/disapprove all items in a single vote. Any item may be withheld from a general action, to be discussed and voted upon separately at the discretion of the Board.

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

A. Approval of the June 10, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

B. Approval of the June 10, 2025 Closed Session Minutes

- C. Ordinance 2025-15 Amending the FY 25-26 budget to recognize USTA Tennis Venue Services Grant funding

## **6. Special Requests/Presentations**

Chief Hock introduced Dillon Byrd as the newest Patrol Officer in the Burgaw Police Department. He also introduced Glenn Sholar as the newest Water and Sewer Maintenance Worker. Mr. Suggs introduced Eli Smith as the Summer Intern for the Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department. Ms. Rivenbark noted new part-time Firefighter, Dakota Toms, will begin soon with the Burgaw Fire Department.

- A. Parks & Recreation Month Proclamation - Mayor Dawson

Mayor Dawson read aloud the Parks & Recreation Month Proclamation.

- B. NC Blueberry Festival Association

Crystal Batts with the NC Blueberry Festival Association commented on the recent annual NC Blueberry Festival that took place in June and thanked the town for their continued support.

## **7. Departmental Items**

- A. **Information Technology Department**

*Dustin McCullen, IT Director*

Dustin McCullen, IT Director, advised there were approximately 25 service tickets resolved, commented on the benefits of having new fiber connections with town facilities and parks, as well as ongoing system maintenance.

- B. **Facilities & Grounds Department**

*Damon Stanley, Facilities & Grounds Director*

Damon Stanley, Facilities & Grounds Director, said his department remains busy with ongoing projects. He said he completed a few requests recently made by Commissioners Rivenbark and Malloy regarding clean up on Satchwell Street, including the remediation of the flower beds at the post office intersection. Commissioner Rivenbark thanked Mr. Stanley for his help in fixing the flower beds that are usually maintained by the Rotary Club. Mr. Stanley advised he is currently in process of repairing an electrical supply at Dees Park due to vandalism.

### **C. Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department**

*Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director*

Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director, gave an update on the future Burgaw Bark Park and said the installation of fencing, signs, and benches will be complete soon. He advised the shade structure for the fitness equipment along the West Side Trail will be installed soon as well.

Mr. Suggs gave a brief update on the West Side Trail project and advised NC DEQ requested additional information for the permitting process, the town has responded, and was told it would be approximately 30 days to issue the permit. Commissioner Rivenbark said he is frustrated that NC DEQ keeps pushing us off and asked if engineers had visited town to proceed with the process. Mr. Suggs briefly explained their process. Commissioner Rivenbark confirmed with Mr. Suggs that the grant funding for the project has been extended to April 2026.

Mr. Suggs commented on the grant funding received for the tennis court upgrades, as approved in Ordinance 2025-15 on the consent agenda. He advised the total of \$25,300 will go towards resurfacing of the courts and lighting upgrades. Commissioner Rivenbark said the board had discussed the possibility of pickle ball courts and markings added to the existing tennis courts. Mr. Suggs advised the town would not be able to add lines for the pickle ball courts after the work is complete due to the grant funding stipulations. Mr. Suggs added he is working on getting quotes for pickle ball courts to be established and he is looking at the area in front of the tennis courts at the edge of the parking lot. Commissioner Rivenbark believes we will need more than one pickle ball court so we need to be mindful of additional courts in the future. Commissioner Pearsall asked about the possibility of expanding the courts to the left of the existing tennis courts, in the vacant lot currently owned by a private citizen. Mr. Suggs said he had not seen it posted for sale; Commissioner Malloy added the property owner was not interested in selling when this topic was brought up in the past.

Mr. Suggs advised his department is currently hosting summer camp, and updated the board that Ms. Augst is now the Recreation Supervisor and interviews are in progress for her previous position as Recreation Coordinator.

Mr. Suggs recognized Chief Hock for his assistance to the Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department over the years and announced a bench will be placed along the trail at Rotary Park in his honor. The board commended Chief Hock and agreed to placing the bench at Rotary Park.

### **D. Planning Department**

*Ron Meredith, Planning Director*

Ron Meredith, Planning Director, said there are several projects going to TRC soon, and he is anticipating two quasi-judicial hearings at the August Board of Commissioners meeting. Mr. Meredith advised the wayfinding signage study and UDO

re-writes are on-going projects. Commissioner Pearsall commented on the graph that was included in the planning report and said it was easy to follow.

**E. Building Inspections Department**

*Louis Hesse, Building Code Administrator*

Louis Hesse, Building Code Administrator, gave a brief update on numerous projects around town and said minimal housing issues are making progress. Commissioner Pearsall said the monthly report from the Inspections Department shows how busy things are in town.

**F. Finance Department**

*Tiffany Byrd, Finance Officer*

Tiffany Byrd, Finance Officer, said she is finishing up the prior year budget and working on preparing for the audit. Commissioner Dawson thanked Ms. Byrd for working on the audit. Mayor Dawson announced Ms. Byrd has been promoted to Finance Officer for the town. The board congratulated Mrs. Byrd.

**G. Human Resources Department**

*Kimberly Rivenbark, Human Resources Director/Deputy Town Clerk*

Kimberly Rivenbark, Human Resources Director, updated the board on current employee opportunities, recently filled positions and promotions of current employees. Police Chief interviews are in progress since Chief Hock is retiring. She also said Assistant Chief Fuller has submitted his resignation due to moving out of state. Once the Police Chief position is filled, she will work on the hiring of an Assistance Police Chief. Ms. Rivenbark congratulated Tiffany Byrd on her promotion as Finance Officer and Jayna Augst on her promotion as Recreation Supervisor. Ms. Rivenbark advised interviews will be held soon for the vacant Recreation Coordinator position. She also added she is in the onboarding process of one Volunteer Firefighter and one Junior Firefighter. Michael Carlisle with the Burgaw Fire Department is heading up the Junior Firefighter Program.

Commissioner Malloy reminded everyone of the scholarship opportunities with Cape Fear Community College for anyone interested in the fire or police field.

Commissioner Rivenbark asked if anyone from the board is part of the interview process for the Police Chief position. Mayor Dawson and Ms. Rivenbark advised there is no one from the board participating in the interview process. Commissioner Rivenbark said he thinks one or two board members should be included in the process. Ms. Rivenbark and Attorney Blanchard said the Town Manager hires the Department Heads and the board being involved in the interview process is not typical done. Attorney Blanchard said the board can request to review the resumes if they wish. Commissioner Rivenbark said he accepted that response but thinks the board needs to be notified before the final decision. He asked Attorney Blanchard if it was illegal for

someone on the board to sit in on the interviews. Attorney Blanchard said he doesn't see a reason why it would be illegal. Commissioner Pearsall suggested the board review the final one or two candidates before making the final decision. Commissioner Rivenbark commented on his past with reviewing resumes and he says references and anything behind the scenes needs to be checked. Commissioner Malloy said he thinks this topic should be discussed further and that the board needs to be careful of the precedent we are setting for the future. Commissioner Rivenbark asked Ms. Rivenbark if the new Chief of Police was being hired as only Chief of Police or both Chief of Police and Assistant Town Manager. Ms. Rivenbark stated the position is only being filled as Chief of Police. After brief discussion, Ms. Rivenbark stated the board is more than welcome to come by her office to review resumes.

#### **H. Police Department**

*Jim Hock, Police Chief*

Jim Hock, Police Chief, said officers provided mutual aid for recent events at neighboring agencies, as well as gave an update on several officers who are currently in training or have completed training. Chief Hock took a moment to thank the following agencies for their assistance during the NC Blueberry Festival held in June: Pender County Sheriff's Office, Surf City Police Department, Topsail Beach Police Department, NC Highway Patrol, New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, Wilmington Police Department, UNCW Police Department, Jacksonville Police Department, Onslow County Sheriff's Office, and Holly Ridge Police Department. He also thanked the town's Facilities & Grounds Department, Public Works Department, Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department, and Fire Department for their assistance during the annual 5K run held the morning of the festival. Chief Hock commented on the Juneteenth Celebration recently held and thanked the 1865 Society of Pender County for inviting him to the special event held the Friday evening before the celebration. In addition, Chief Hock said the SROs for the department are assisting with the Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department's summer camps.

#### **8. Public Forum**

Prior to Public Forum, Mayor Dawson called for a break between 5:24 PM and 5:35 PM.

Regina Fennell, 815 Ridgewood Avenue, thanked the board and town staff for their service. She also thanked Mr. Gantt for his assistance with her previous request in being able to utilize her United Health card to pay for the utility bill with the town. She is now able to use this method of payment. Ms. Fennell also commented on the light she requested at the end of Ridgewood Avenue and US Highway 117. Mr. Gantt said this is in the works and should be installed soon by Duke Energy.

Shannon Berlied, 208 West Satchwell Street, voiced her concern about a neighbor next to her residence on Satchwell Street. She said there are feral cats that are coming

from the property and urinating on her patio, as well as lots of items and debris around the property. Planning Director Ron Meredith advised there have been multiple violation letters mailed to the property owner, but will speak with the Town Attorney about the situation. Mayor Dawson also commented that she spoke with the property owner and informed them they needed to clean up their property. Commissioner Pearsall said the property of concern is located behind his property and asked if animal control could be contacted regarding the cats. Mr. Meredith will reach out to animal control to see what can be done. After discussion, Commissioner Rivenbark stated this has been talked about over and over and we need to move forward. Mayor Dawson said that Mr. Meredith and the Town Attorney would look into the concern as soon as possible and move forward with a solution.

## **9. Items from Assistant Manager**

### **A. Updates on current projects**

Chief Hock said the vehicle surplus process is underway. The culvert project is nearing completion, with remaining work focused on cosmetic items in order to finalize the project. A concern was raised regarding a section of South Walker Street across from the wooden walkway bridge near Creekside where there is an issue with erosion and a pipe located at the edge of the asphalt; Jeff Garrett with NC DOT has been contacted, and the installation of a guardrail is being considered for safety. Chief Hock said he spoke with NC DOT again about adding an extra two feet of shoulder on North Wright Street; this is in the works and will be scheduled with contractors through NC DOT. Commissioner Rivenbark said, with school reopening on August 25th, NC DOT needs to be mindful of the increased school bus traffic in the area in conjunction with ongoing construction of the Pender County Law Enforcement Center. Chief Hock stated he would remind them.

Chief Hock commented on the interview process for the Police Chief position and stated he submitted a 3-month retirement notice in hopes of working with the incoming Police Chief for a few weeks before leaving.

## **10. Items from Manager**

### **A. Updates on current projects**

Mr. Gantt said Sarah Fulton with Pender County advised the county will be starting to install water and sewer lines in the area of Old Savannah Road and North Wright Street.

Mr. Gantt commented on the downtown project with Duke Energy installing

underground utilities. He said they need an easement from the town for Dees Park so that work can be done on the property with installing transformers, etc. Mr. Gantt stated Attorney Blanchard has reviewed the easement and there are no issues. Commissioner George made a motion to allow Mr. Gantt as Town Manager to sign the easement on behalf of the town. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malloy and carried by unanimous vote. Mr. Gantt said once this is completed and all the easements are finalized, he will have a better timeline of the project.

Mr. Gantt spoke about the Storm Water Master Plan and said there will be a public drop-in meeting held on July 10, 2025 to gather input from citizens, staff and board members.

Mr. Gantt said the Water and Sewer Master Plan is underway and the engineers, McKim and Creed, continue with surveying around town and obtaining inventory information.

Mr. Gantt advised Representative Carson Smith has filed a house bill on behalf of the town to obtain the property at the prison where the town water tower is located, which is approximately 11 acres in size. He said the bill has been approved with the house and will be going to senate soon.

Commissioner Dawson commented on an area of South Walker Street that is eroding, near Bennett Street. Mr. Gantt and Public Works will take a look at the area to see what can be done.

Commissioner Pearsall said there is a hole on Fremont Street in the area of Johnson Street Apartments that needs to be fixed. Mr. Gantt and Public Works will look into this.

## **11. Items from Attorney**

Attorney Blanchard said he will work on the nuisance issue as spoken about during Public Forum, if that was the pleasure of the board. After brief comments, the board agreed to allow Attorney Blanchard to move forward with the next step.

## **12. Items from Mayor and Board of Commissioners**

Commissioner Rivenbark commented on the fallen tree located in the right-of-way along Highway 53 and expressed concern regarding safety. He requested that staff proceed with cleanup of the tree/debris along the edge of the roadway; if the town is unable to perform the work, staff should contact NC DOT. He acknowledged that responsibility ultimately falls on the property owner but emphasized the need to address the roadway shoulder for safety purposes.

Commissioner Rivenbark reminded the board and staff that the Methodist Church parking lot located next to the Fire Department is under an agreement allowing the town to use the parking spaces during the week; however, parking spaces must be cleared and made available to the church for Sunday services. Mr. Gantt advised he also spoke with Charles Rooks about this issue and staff has been made aware.

Commissioner Rivenbark shared information received from Verizon Representative David Brown, noting there had been a contract years ago to install an antenna in Burgaw that the board at the time did not want to move forward with. He stated two residents are interested in being contacted by Verizon to host a tower. Mr. Brown informed him Verizon is currently contracting with the county to locate a tower on the Sheriff's Office tower beginning June 2026, and could not comment on why an antenna could not be placed on the Town's water tanks. Commissioner Rivenbark mentioned Mr. Brown also referenced an antenna in the historic downtown area. Mr. Gantt added that the town has provided Verizon with multiple properties to consider, but reported Verizon advised they could not use the prison tank because it was not structurally substantial.

Commissioner Malloy reported erosion concerns in the Rotary Park canal area and at Johnson Park along Hayes Street, noting he thought culverts was previously approved for those areas. Mr. Gantt confirmed these projects fall under the Stormwater Master Plan, which also includes drainage improvements near Ms. Casey's residence. Commissioner Rivenbark proposed running piping from Hankins Park area to Cowan Street and filling in the area to enhance esthetics in preparation for a future splash pad. Mr. Suggs added the town is seeking grants for related parking lot and drainage improvements. Mr. Gantt advised the engineer working on the Stormwater Master Plan is redesigning the BRIC program, which is expected to provide substantial funding.

Commissioner Malloy also requested the hole on Ashe Street in front of the tennis courts be patched; Mr. Gantt will see this gets handled.

Commissioner Rivenbark inquired about the ADA corner replacements. Mr. Gantt clarified this was a NC DOT project with no town expenditure.

Commissioner Malloy raised an issue regarding a possible violation on McRae Street; Mr. Meredith stated a violation has been issued.

Commissioner George commented McNeil Street is in bad shape and needs to be repaved. Mr. Gantt said we are waiting to see which water lines need to be replaced along this street before paving, but reassured the board this street is a top priority.

Commissioner Dawson asked Mr. Gantt why it was taking so long for Duke Energy to address the lighting request along Ridgewood Avenue as requested by Ms. Fennell. Mr. Gantt said Duke Energy plans to update the type of lighting in the area and was inquiring to see if any encroachments were needed before they proceeded with the

project. Mr. Gantt will reach back out to Duke Energy for an update.

### **13. Closed Session**

#### **A. Pursuant to NC GS 143-318.11(a)(3) Attorney/Client Privilege**

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to go into closed session at 6:25 PM. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to go back into open session at 6:51 PM. The motion seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

### **14. Adjournment**

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 PM. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.