TOWN OF BURGAW BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING

DATE:	November 18, 2025
TIME:	4:30 PM
PLACE:	Burgaw Town Center, 108 E. Wilmington Street
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:	Mayor Olivia Dawson, Mayor Pro-tem James Malloy, Commissioners Jan Dawson, Bill George, William Rivenbark and Michael Pearsall

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Dawson asked for the board to consider adding item #11C, Resolution 2025-26 Opposing the Fuquay-Varina IBT and Request for Additional Comment in support of the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority. Commissioner Dawson made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

Approval of Consent Agenda

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

Special Requests/Presentations

Employee Recognitions

Kim Rivenbark, Human Resources Director, introduced Chris Medlin as the new Public Services Director. She also recognized Public Works Utility Technician, Jeffery Coenen, for receiving his Lift Certification and Flagger Certification.

Mayor's Proclamation - National Hospice and Palliative Care Month

Mayor Dawson read aloud a proclamation in support of the Town of Burgaw recognizing November as National Hospice and Palliative Care Month.

Angela Blake - Request closure of parking spaces for event

Angela Blake requested the blocking of public parking spaces on Fremont Street between Cowan Street and Walker Street for a wedding to be held on the same day as the town's Christmas on the Square event, December 6, 2025. After brief discussion, the spaces will be blocked off early morning hours on December 6, 2025. There were no concerns voiced by the board. Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to approve the request by Ms. Blake. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivenbark and carried by unanimous vote.

Burgaw Rotary Club - Request usage of Burgaw Community House

Mayor Dawson stated the board allowed complimentary use of the Community House last year for the Burgaw Rotary Club's Christmas gathering. This year's rental is requested for December 4, 2025 from 5-8 PM. Mayor Dawson stated the Club would pay the cleaning fee as they did in the prior year.

Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to approve usage of the Community House by the Rotary Club and waive the usage fee, with the understanding the cleaning fee would be paid. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

FY 2024-2025 Audit Presentation - Lee Grissom, S. Preston Douglas & Associates

Lee Grissom, with S. Preston Douglas and Associates, presented the FY 2024-2025 audit to the board by virtual attendance. This was their seventh year auditing the town. Mr. Grissom reported that they issued an unmodified report, which is the highest level of assurance an independent accounting firm can provide. The audit was submitted to the Local Government Commission on October 28, 2025, two months ahead of the December 31st deadline.

Mr. Grissom commended Finance Officer Tiffany Byrd on her first year in the position, noting that the accounting records were in good shape with fewer journal entries than the previous year. There were no budget overages, bank reconciliation issues, or internal control findings. The staff provided full access to records with no disagreements or illegal acts.

Mr. Grissom highlighted that all financial performance indicators submitted to the Local Government Commission were satisfactory, with only one minor issue: the budgeted tax revenue came in slightly below 97% of the budget (approximately 95-96%). This would require a response from the town, but was considered a minor issue.

Mr. Grissom presented several financial metrics, including:

- Fund balance for 2025 was just under $3.9 million
- The unassigned fund balance was 44% of general fund expenditures (about 5 months in reserve), which exceeds the minimum requirement of 34%
- Total cash for all funds was just under $7.3 million
- Long-term debt was just under $3.9 million, down from a peak of $4.6 million in 2022
- Water and sewer fund operations showed a positive balance of $331,000, an improvement of $573,000 from the previous year's negative $241,000, representing the best performance in a decade
- Property tax collection remained steady at just under 99%

Commissioner Rivenbark inquired about tax collection arrears, and Grissom explained that there was approximately $44,000 in uncollected taxes, with older debts typically cleared after 10 years.

Water Main Replacements Project (Areas 1, 2, & 3)

Mr. Gantt presented the water main replacements project for Areas 1, 2, and 3. The project would replace water mains on West Fremont Street, South Dickerson Street, and South Bennett Street at a cost of approximately $2.6 million, to be funded from the state appropriation of $10.6 million.

Commissioner Pearsall noted that this was a good investment, with about $8 million remaining for future projects after this expenditure.

Motion: Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to approve the water main replacements project using $2.6 million from the state appropriation funds. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

Departmental Items

Building Inspections Department

Louis Hesse, Building Code Administrator, reported that:

- The law enforcement center project is progressing well with power on both sides, though not yet inside the building.
- The Health and Human Services project is ahead of schedule with the last above-ceiling inspection approved.
- Carolina Quality Care has been permitted next to the Scotchman.
- Sea Breeze Dental has received permits.
- Easter Seals has received a temporary certificate of occupancy.
- Patty's Place has temporary power approval for the restaurant portion, with firewalls 100% complete.
- Minimum housing code enforcement is showing good progress.
- Building Inspector Ivey English continues to perform exceptionally well with inspections.

Mayor Pro-tem Malloy inquired about a house on Wright Street, and Mr. Hesse confirmed that good progress is being made on the renovations.

Commissioner Pearsall commented on transparency and praised staff on a revised departmental report from the Inspections Department.

Finance Department

Tiffany Byrd, Finance Officer, reported that the audit has been submitted and the department can now focus on the upcoming budget. She mentioned that the construction within the finance offices are now complete and the team is enjoying the new space.

The board congratulated Ms. Byrd and her staff for their work on the audit and the financial improvements.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Johnathan Prevatte reported on the department's activities:

- 71 call responses and 698 training hours last month.
- Completed 48 fire prevention events during October, reaching over 5,800 people, with social media reaching nearly 96,000.
- Conducted demonstrations of new vehicle extrication and stabilization equipment.
- Progress on hydrant maintenance and flow testing.
- Hiring process for Captain positions is underway, with applications closing soon.

- Completed ISO consultation with positive feedback and potential to improve from a class 5 to a class 4 or potentially a class 3 rating.

Prevatte outlined the ISO consultant's recommendations:

- Developing a training facility to meet ISO requirements for 36 hours of annual training at a certified facility.
- Continued improvements to the water distribution system.
- Considering a substation to better cover the large district.
- Creating a structured apparatus replacement plan.

Commissioner Pearsall commented on the future growth along US Highway 117 By-pass and asked Chief Prevatte if a substation would be beneficial due to the expected growth. Chief Prevatte explained that the growth itself would not impact the ISO rating, but the appropriate location for a substation would. Commissioner Rivenbark said he would like a list of the consultant's recommendations and suggested asking the consultant for guidance on funding opportunities for funding the recommendations in the future. After brief scenarios given by Chief Prevatte, the board requested copies of the ISO report recently done for the department. Chief Prevatte will prepare and distribute copies to the board by the next meeting.

Chief Prevatte also gave an overview of the new fire truck specification process and said they have completed working with the vendor for a Rosenbauer fire truck at a cost of $1,214,342, which is on the lower end of the expected range ($1.2-1.4 million). The estimated delivery time would be approximately 19 months after ordering.

Commissioner Rivenbark asked about the lifespan of current fire trucks within the department. Chief Prevatte provided an overview explaining that both the squad and ladder trucks are approaching the recommended timeframe for being cycled out of first-line service. He noted that although both trucks have undergone repairs in recent years, they are nearing the point where replacement should be considered in the future.

Mayor Dawson asked whether a color had been selected for the new apparatus. Chief Prevatte responded that a decision has not yet been made and they are currently waiting on graphics.

Commissioner Rivenbark stated that he is not in disagreement with the replacement, but emphasized the importance of maintaining the town's ISO rating. He noted that keeping the rating below a 5 is essential, and achieving a 4 is even better.

The board expressed support for the need to replace aging equipment. After discussion, the board requested details and pictures of the new fire truck to be presented at the next board meeting.

Human Resources Department

Kimberly Rivenbark, HR Director/Deputy Town Clerk, shared that:

- An offer has been extended and accepted for the Planning Technician position.
- The personnel policy rewrite is progressing well.
- Town department heads and staff will participate in an eighth-grade career fair at Heidi Trask Highschool on November 21st.
- Current advertised positions include Equipment Operator, Fire Captain, and Patrol Officer.

Information Technology Department

Dustin McCullen, IT Director, reported that:

- Support ticket requests remained consistent at approximately 35, all of which were completed.
- The department completed finishing touches for the Parks and Recreation offices, including TV installation and network cabling. Additional video conferencing equipment and a digital signage display are planned. Door access control was added to the building.

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department

Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director, provided several updates:

- The dog park project is finished with water installed and drainage complete.
- The tennis grant project is complete and reimbursement has been submitted to USTA.
- The parking area at Hankins Park has had asphalt replaced with stone, with plans for future paving.
- The Train Depot flooring project is underway, requiring closure until December. Extensive repairs were needed under the kitchen area of the Depot due to moisture issues.
- Christmas events are being planned.
- Emiline Kozak is resigning from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to join the Parks Foundation.
- Department staff will be attending the Parks & Recreation Conference in Charleston, SC between December 1-3.
- Mr. Suggs noted Mayor Dawson has joined the City Parks Alliance as a member of the Mayors for Parks Coalition.
- The Westside Trail project is progressing well with concrete work moving smoothly. The PARTF three-year update was submitted last week with positive feedback. Mayor Dawson and other commissioners expressed appreciation for the sidewalk improvements. Mayor Pro-tem Malloy requested former Planning Board member, William Smith, to be invited to the ribbon cutting ceremony once the Westside Trail project is complete.

Planning Department

Ron Meredith, Planning Director, reported that:

- The UDO rewrite is progressing.
- RCCP grant phase 4 contracts have been received.
- NCDOT multimodal grant documents have been completed.
- The department is behind on code enforcement due to a staff vacancy but expects to catch up once the new Planning Technician starts.

Ordinance 2025-22 Amending the Town of Burgaw Code of Ordinances Chapter 34, Trees and Shrubs, Article II, Tree Board

Mr. Meredith presented an ordinance to change the Tree Board from being the Planning Board to key town staff. This would allow for quicker decisions on tree matters without being limited to scheduled Planning Board meetings. The staff would meet at least quarterly to fulfill Tree USA requirements and update the town's tree plan.

> Commissioner Dawson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-22 as presented. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Malloy and carried by unanimous vote.

Police Department

Police Chief James Rowell reported that:

- K-9 Kane retired at the end of October, with K-9 Omen now on board and sworn in on October 30th.
- Two new vehicles have been dropped off for upfitting with a new blue color scheme to better align with the town's blueberry theme.
- Halloween went smoothly with no major issues.
- The department is preparing for Christmas festivities.
- Progress is being made on the camera project previously requested by Mayor Pro-tem Malloy.

Commissioner Pearsall asked about the status of water barriers or blockades for safety during events. Chief Rowell explained that they used fire trucks, cones, and sheriff's office vehicles for Halloween, and are looking at options for purchasing water barricades and researching removable bollards for streets that are closed frequently for various events.

Public Services Department

Chris Medlin, Public Services Director, reported that he met with Jason Turner, District Ag Cost-Share Technician from Pender County regarding erosion issues at the corner of Progress Drive and South Dickerson Street near Rotary Park. Mr. Turner provided leads on potential grants, which Mr. Medlin has begun exploring.

Alan Moore, Public Works Division Manager, reported:

- Staff has recently worked to repair two water leaks.
- TTHM sample taken.
- Continuing to change out endpoints.
- Christmas decorations being installed.
- South Wright Street sidewalk project progressing.
- South Smith Street sewer line replacement starting soon, with street closure between Clark and Hayes Streets except for local traffic.
- Pender County Jail pump station wet well and check valve vault installed.

Damon Stanley, Facilities & Grounds Division Manager, reported:

- Parks and Recreation facility move completed with upgrades to door apparatuses for ADA compliance.
- Ongoing grounds assessment and maintenance.
- Christmas decorating is underway.

- HVAC preventative maintenance program completed for the quarter.
- Replacement of insulation in the skyline of the Train Depot attic.
- Assisting Parks and Recreation with backfilling sidewalks.

Public Forum

There were no speakers during Public Forum.

Items from Manager

License Agreement with Cape Fear Council Boy Scouts of America (Pack 247 / Troop 242)

Mr. Gantt presented the license agreement with the Cape Fear Council Boy Scouts of America. Mayor Dawson noted the scouts were notified to have the electricity account put into their names.

Commissioner Rivenbark mentioned that he had met with the scouts the previous week and noted they were making good progress, having fixed a leak, installed the sewer line, gutted the building, and begun improvements. He stated that the board would be invited to view the completed work.

> Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to approve the license agreement with the Cape Fear Council Boy Scouts of America as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dawson and carried by unanimous vote.

Resolution 2025-24 Supporting Project R-5701 for Traffic Signal Installation

Mr. Gantt presented Resolution 2025-24 supporting the installation of a traffic signal at Wright and Wilmington Streets as part of the R-5701 project scheduled for 2027. The resolution urges NCDOT to expedite the installation before 2027. Commissioner Rivenbark noted he requested NCDOT to speed the project along during a recent RPO meeting.

> Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-24 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

Resolution 2025-25 Supporting Traffic Signal Installation US Hwy 117 Bypass & Wilmington St

Mr. Gantt presented Resolution 2025-25 supporting the installation of a traffic signal at US Highway 117 Bypass and Wilmington Street.

> Commissioner Pearsall made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-25 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

Updates on current projects

Mr. Gantt provided updates on several projects:

- The street sweeper has been ordered.
- The water and sewer master plan is progressing with good data collected.

- The stormwater master plan is nearing completion.
- Guard railing on Walker Street near Creekside has been installed by NCDOT.
- Downtown underground power project with Duke Energy is underway.
- Budget preparation has begun with department heads working on capital improvement items.
- A budget survey will be published soon to gather public input.

Mr. Gantt also addressed the fire truck purchase, noting that prices are likely to increase, and there are potential discounts available for partial upfront payment. He emphasized that the sooner the town commits to the purchase, the better the price they will secure. Mayor Dawson requested the board to think about this to discuss about the December meeting for consideration.

Mayor Pro-tem Malloy voiced concern with expediting the paving of Ashe Street and McNeil Street. Mr. Gantt noted McNeil Street has utilities located under it, but both streets are on the top of the priority list. Commissioner Rivenbark also commented on the paving needs for Robinwood Street and Vann Court as he spoke about at the last meeting.

Mayor Pro-tem Malloy asked for an update on the request for NCDOT to consider adding lighting at the off-ramps at NC Highway 53 and I-40. He said this is very important for the town. Mr. Gantt stated he has not heard an update but will follow up with them.

Items from Attorney

Town Attorney Norwood Blanchard had no items to present in open session.

Items from Mayor and Board of Commissioners

Resolution 2025-23 In support to retain and use the full six percent occupancy tax revenue collected within the Town of Burgaw

Mayor Dawson presented Resolution 2025-23, requesting that the state allow Burgaw to retain all six percent of its occupancy tax revenue instead of the current arrangement where three percent goes to the county. This would help fund tourism efforts, visitor attractions, and wayfinding signs. Burgaw is the only town in the county that provides funding to the county from its occupancy tax. Mayor Dawson stated she has presented the request to state representatives, but request a resolution from the board to be sent as well. Commissioner Rivenbark said he is in full agreement with the town keeping the full six percent.

> Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-23 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

Other items to be announced

Resolution 2025-26 Opposing the Fuquay-Varina IBT and Request for Additional Comment in support of the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority was added to the agenda for consideration at the beginning of the meeting. The board addressed a resolution opposing the Fuquay Varina Inter-Basin Transfer (IBT) and supporting the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority. The resolution aims to protect the Cape Fear River Basin from water transfers to the Neuse River basin.

Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-26 as presented. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Malloy and carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Rivenbark commented on the website, drivenc.gov, provided by the state that the public can view to see a list of road closures around the state. He also spoke about the recent RPO meeting he attended and gave a brief overview of a resolution that the Cape Fear RPO is adopting regarding legislative priorities. Ms. Wells will prepare the resolution for consideration by the town board at the December meeting.

Commissioner Pearsall provided remarks emphasizing the importance of trust, transparency, and follow-up in the operations of the Town. He stated that, throughout his previous leadership roles in various companies, these three principles have always been foundational to effective teamwork and accountability. He noted that actions should be approached with clarity and permission rather than risking questionable steps that later require forgiveness. While he clarified that he was not accusing anyone of wrongdoing, he stressed that his attention remains focused on ensuring that Town operations maintain transparency. He acknowledged that he does not rely on gossip, whether from social media or casual conversations with residents, but instead relies on direct information and clear communication. Commissioner Pearsall explained that many of his questions during meetings are follow-ups from prior discussions, and staff should not be surprised when he requests updates. He stated that this is due to instances where commitments were made but not carried out. Asking for follow-ups helps ensure accountability and keeps everyone aligned with expectations. Regarding transparency, he reminded staff that Board members, and often members of the public, may already know some details about Town matters and simply seek verification. He reiterated that accuracy in information and reports is critical, as the Board and Mayor depend heavily on staff-provided data to make informed decisions and cast votes on behalf of the residents who elected them. He asked staff to double-check information provided to the Board, noting that he depends heavily on the information provided from staff. He also reflected on his two-year anniversary serving on the Board, sharing that his first year involved significant learning and adjustment. He now feels more grounded and confident in his role and looks forward to continued growth over the next two years. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work more closely with staff and fellow Board members as those relationships continue to develop. Commissioner Pearsall concluded by encouraging everyone to remain diligent and to uphold mutual accountability, stating that staff should keep the Board honest just as the Board will work to keep staff honest.

Closed Session

Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NC GS 143-318.11(a)(3) Attorney/Client Privilege and NC GS 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel at 6:41 PM. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to go back into open session at 7:53 PM. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

Upon returning to open session, the following motion was made, as well as additional discussion related to repairs at the Old Jail.

- Commissioner Dawson made a motion to approve the amended September 9, 2025 closed session minutes presented and discussed in closed session. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Malloy and carried by unanimous vote.

- Commissioner Pearsall spoke about the money being spent for the repairs at the Old Jail. Mr. Gantt and Mayor Dawson reiterated the need for the repairs and authority to spend the money before waiting to inform or ask the board. Discussion was held regarding the significant repairs needed, noting long-term water damage, deteriorating plaster, and issues discovered during renovations for moving Parks, Recreation & Tourism offices in the building, including moisture intrusion traced to upstairs windows, which have since been replaced and resolved the problem. Project costs increased from early estimates of $12,000–$25,000 to approximately $50,000 due to unforeseen structural issues. Commissioner Pearsall expressed a desire to establish a spending threshold, suggesting a $20,000–$25,000 cap that would allow the Mayor and the Town Manager to approve routine expenditures without Board action, while requiring Board approval for larger expenses to maintain transparency and safeguard taxpayer funds. Mr. Gantt noted that current authority already permits the Mayor and the Manager to approve emergency or routine expenditures within the adopted budget but clarified that adopting a purchasing policy with a set cap is possible if the board wishes. Mayor Pro-tem Malloy confirmed as long as money is being spent from the budget approved by the board, there should not be any issue. Mr. Gantt and Mayor Dawson confirmed the money they decided to spend was within the approved budget. Mr. Gantt said by statute, any money needed outside of the budget must be approved by the governing board. Commissioner Pearsall commented on transparency again and said he is not confused about where the money is coming from and what needs to be done. He said if repairs need to be done and the money needs to be spent, to let the board know. He said maybe we don't need a cap, but to be transparent and let the board know when things cost more than expected.

Adjournment

Commissioner Dawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 PM. Motion carried by unanimous vote.