

TOWN OF BURGAW BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

DATE: January 13, 2026
TIME: 4:30 PM
PLACE: Burgaw Town Center, 108 E. Wilmington Street
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Olivia Dawson, Mayor Pro-tem James Malloy, Commissioners Bill George, William Rivenbark, Michael Pearsall and Myra McDuffie

Call to Order

Mayor Olivia Dawson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

Invocation

The invocation was given, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Dawson noted that Item 6B (Burgaw Area Chamber of Commerce presentation) would be removed from the agenda as the Chamber was not presenting at this meeting and would return at a later date.

Motion: Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to approve the agenda as amended with the removal of Item 6B. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Approval of Consent Agenda

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

Special Requests/Presentations

Employee Recognitions

Fire Department

Fire Chief Johnathan Prevatte presented new fire department personnel who were recently hired through the SAFER grant which provided funding for six new full-time positions. Additionally, several part-time positions were backfilled, and some internal staff earned promotions. Chief Prevatte introduced:

- Justin Decker - Part-time firefighter
- Zakary Howard - Part-time firefighter
- Jason Hawkins - Full-time firefighter on A shift

- Jack Shortell - Full-time firefighter on C shift
- Caden Rhoades - Full-time firefighter on B shift who was promoted from part-time status
- Reagan Roberts - Fire Engineer
- Giovanni Sanzo - Fire Captain on A shift
- Kevin Hollar - Fire Captain on B shift
- Joseph Williams - Fire Captain on C shift, promoted from his previous role as a full-time firefighter on B shift

Commissioner Pearsall asked if these hires and promotions make the department fully staffed. Chief Prevatte reported yes, noting the additional need for part time staff as necessary. He advised that the department now has four full-time staff per shift working a 48/96 schedule, plus part-time staffing and volunteers. The increased staffing helps meet NFPA recommendations for personnel on scene.

The Chief also recognized Cameron Moniak and Joseph Williams for passing their state tests for EMT basic certification. Jack Shortell had completed his EMT class prior to starting with the department and has begun training for advanced EMT. This progress supports their mission to become a BLS provider, with at least three EMTs on every shift and plans to have all full-time staff EMT certified by fall.

Police Department

Police Chief James Rowell recognized two officers who recently graduated:

- Sergeant Ronnie Kennedy graduated from UNC Pembroke with a Bachelor of Arts, double majoring in criminal justice and sociology, graduating magna cum laude
- Corporal William Fair graduated from Western Carolina University with a Bachelor of Science in Emergency Disaster Management

Departmental Items

Building Inspections Department

Louis Hesse, Building Code Administrator, reported a relatively quiet month with several large projects in progress between rough-ins and finals. He highlighted:

- Kiln Direct is discussing a potential expansion
- Bagel King project continues to move very slowly, with only one inspection in the past year
- Patty's Place has received temporary COs pending payment of system development fees or approval of their grant application; they now have occupants in the apartments

Regarding minimum housing, Mr. Hesse reported having eight active cases, down from nine after one house near the elementary school was demolished. Two of the cases may need to be referred to the town attorney due to lack of progress. Commissioner Pearsall inquired about a house at the corner of Satchwell and Smith Street, which Mr. Hesse acknowledged was not yet formally addressed but would be added to his list.

Fire Department

Chief Prevatte provided statistics for the previous month: 63 incidents and approximately 620 training hours. For the entire year of 2025, they responded to 875 calls and logged over 7,100 training hours.

The AFG grant-funded Plymovent exhaust capture system installation had begun the day before and was expected to take about a week and a half to complete. This system will remove diesel exhaust from the station, creating a safer environment for personnel and visitors by reducing carcinogens.

He also reported that crews had completed hydrant flows in the Pender Central area of the fire district ahead of their end-of-year deadline.

Commissioner Rivenbark asked if the department is now fully staffed and how the number of volunteers are looking like. Chief Prevatte reported the department is fully staffed with 12 fulltime employees and around 7 part-time positions. There are approximately 14 volunteers on the roster with strong participation, including several working on getting cleared to drive apparatus and others attending live burn training outside the area on their own time.

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department

Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director, reported that the department had concluded their busy holiday season with good attendance at the Blueberry Drop. He noted that January would have no scheduled events, allowing the department to organize and plan for the coming year, especially with Recreation Coordinator Jayna's upcoming departure in March for the birth of her second child.

Suggs provided a detailed update on the Westside Trail project:

- Progress from Dudley Street to Gateway Church is nearly complete
- Work from Highway 53 toward the ballpark is proceeding well
- An easement was signed the previous day for a property on Hayes Street
- A planned modification to add sidewalk instead of a bike lane on Hayes Street from Smith to Dudley Street had to be abandoned due to stormwater permitting constraints
- The project team is waiting for NCDOT approval for an encroachment at Bridger's extension
- Crosswalks are being mapped out for installation, and rapid flashing beacons are ready for installation pending DOT approval

Considerable discussion occurred regarding pedestrian safety on Hayes Street, particularly near the ballpark where children frequently cross. Commissioner Pearsall expressed concern about speeding vehicles and the need for better lighting and safety measures. Mr. Suggs acknowledged these issues and noted he would look to see what could be done, but noted budget constraints with the project. Commissioner Pearsall noted we could find the money for safety improvements and stated we need to make sure we are taking all necessary safety measures with our projects. The board agreed that further safety measures should be considered in the future.

Mr. Suggs also mentioned that William Stanfield, a member of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, had stepped down due to moving outside town limits. There was brief discussion about the roles of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and the possibility of combining the board with the Parks Foundation. The board decided to leave the advisory board as is for now and reconsider its structure in the future if needed.

Planning Department

Ron Meredith, Planning Director, reported on upcoming planning board activities including a straight rezoning case with no specific use identified. He noted that several forestry and tree removal activities were occurring around town - some qualifying as timbering and others as removal for future development.

Locations mentioned included:

- Area near Village on Eighteen (timbering)
- East Wilmington Street (tree removal for future development without town contact yet)
- Stag Park Road and Highway 53 (potential timbering with future development)

Police Department

Chief James Rowell reported that the department successfully supported holiday events including the tree lighting, parade, and blueberry drop. For 2025, the department handled over 2,700 reports, averaging more than seven per day.

Chief Rowell also mentioned that they had addressed concerns about trespassing along the canal on Wallace Street by working with Public Works to install gates at two locations in question.

In response to Commissioner Rivenbark's question about staffing, Chief Rowell stated they were short one patrol position out of 18 total full-time positions, with three part-time officers.

Commissioner Pearsall commented on construction activity taking place at the end of Satchwell Street and Hayes Street and requested increased patrols by law enforcement following a recent incident involving individuals being present on the property without authorization. Chief Rowell reminded the Board and the public to contact Pender County Dispatch if they see or hear anything suspicious, emphasizing that timely reporting allows the Police Department to respond while the incident is occurring.

Commissioner Rivenbark inquired about the status of homelessness within the Town. Chief Rowell stated that he is not aware of any significant concerns or related criminal activity at this time. Commissioner Rivenbark referenced a recent incident at Patty's Place in which an employee reported to him they felt uncomfortable due to a suspicious individual outside the business. Chief Rowell reiterated the importance of reporting any suspicious activity to Pender County Dispatch so that the Police Department can respond promptly and ensure the situation is addressed appropriately.

Public Services Department

Chris Medlin, Public Services Director, reported:

- Three water leaks were repaired in the past month
- Water and sewer taps were installed for the new urgent care building near the intersection of NC Highway 53 and US Highway 117
- Continued replacement of endpoints on water meters, with read errors down from 70 in December to 33 currently
- Gates and cables were installed at utilities access points to address trespassing concerns along the canal on Wallace Street

- Litter pickup was conducted along Highways 117 and 53 near Walmart before the holidays
- Pre-construction meeting was held for water main replacements, with work expected to begin the following week on West Fremont, South Bennett, and Dickerson Street
- Courthouse Avenue sidewalk replacement would also begin the following week
- The department's grapple truck would be out of service the following week for maintenance

Commissioner Pearsall brought attention to an open hole in the ground at South Vann and Hayes Street that had been there for years and posed a safety hazard. Mr. Medlin committed to addressing it the next day.

Commissioner Rivenbark asked about staffing in the Public Services Department. Mr. Medlin advised there are a total number of 14 employees within the department and is currently short one Equipment Operator position.

Commissioner McDuffie asked about Mr. Medlin's job responsibilities and how his time is divided between office and field work. Mr. Medlin advised that he spends approximately 50% of his time in the office and 50% in the field. He provided a brief overview of the projects he is currently managing, including the water main project and Courthouse Avenue improvements. He also noted that he regularly works hands-on in the field where assistance is needed and has addressed issues brought forward during the previous Board meeting.

Public Forum

Prior to Public Forum, Mayor Dawson called for a break between 5:31 PM and 5:39 PM.

Robert Kenan, 211 E. Fremont Street, on behalf of King Solomon Lodge #138, requested use of the town's digital sign to advertise an upcoming American Red Cross blood drive on February 3rd at the lodge. The Board approved this request. Mr. Kenan also asked the board if the town street sweeper was working because he is seeing a lot of leaves in culverts. Mayor Dawson advised a new street sweeper is on order.

Martha Daniel, 308 S. Cowan Street, expressed concern about a political campaign float in the Christmas parade despite rules prohibiting political entries. Mayor Dawson and Commissioner McDuffie acknowledged this was an oversight, as the application did not indicate it was for a political campaign. They assured her steps would be taken to prevent this from happening again, noting that the Chamber of Commerce manages the parade, not the town.

Julie Rowland, 315 S. McRae Street, raised two issues:

- A concern about the Westside Trail construction removing her flower bed at Hayes and McRae Streets without notification, as well as an old fire hydrant that has not been replaced as stated in the past. The bed contained specialty plants that cannot be easily replaced. Staff committed to investigating the right-of-way boundaries, checking the fire hydrant that was marked for replacement, and improving communications for future work.
- Problems with unleashed dogs from a residence on Hayes Street that have attacked feral cats and created safety hazards. The dogs' owners have been fined multiple times by animal control but continue to let the dogs run loose during evenings and

weekends when animal control isn't working. Town Manager James Gantt stated he would work with the Police Chief to address the issue.

Public Hearing

Early Citizen Input on FY 2026-2027 Budget

Mayor Dawson declared the public hearing open at 6:03 PM.

Town Manager James Gantt noted this was an opportunity for citizens to provide input at the beginning of the budget season, with additional opportunities to come throughout the process. A citizen survey was also planned to be distributed soon.

There being no speakers, Mayor Dawson closed the public hearing at 6:04 PM.

Items from Manager

Discussion - Speed Limit Reductions for NCDOT Roads

Mr. Gantt presented a recommendation to request NCDOT reduce speed limits on Henry Brown Road (Bridgers Street extension) and Penderlea Highway (near Wallace Street) from 35 mph to 25 mph. Upon completion of the Westside Trail, both roads will be used by pedestrians. After discussion about the specific portions of roads to include, the Board agreed to recommend reducing the speed limit from 35 MPH to 25 MPH on Henry Brown Road (Bridgers Street extension) between Giles Marshburn Road and Bridgers Street, and on Penderlea Highway from Wallace Street to Smith Street.

Motion: Commissioner George made a motion to recommend NCDOT reduce the speed limit from 35 MPH to 25 MPH on Henry Brown Road (Bridgers Street extension) between Giles Marshburn Road and Bridgers Street, and on Penderlea Highway from Wallace Street to Smith Street. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Malloy and carried by unanimous vote.

3-Way & 4-Way Stop Sign Review

Mr. Gantt presented a map showing all 3-way and 4-way stops in town, noting that several appeared unnecessary with the town's 25 mph speed limits. After discussion, the Board determined that 3-way stops should be eliminated due to the reduced speed limits in residential areas. Commissioner Pearsall requested the 4-way stops remain as is for West Satchwell, Bodenheimer, and West Fremont Streets. Four-way stops on thoroughfares like McNeil Street and Bickett Street would be converted to 2-way stops, with the thoroughfares having right of way.

Motion: Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to amend the traffic ordinance to eliminate unnecessary 3-way stops and convert certain 4-way stops to 2-way stops as discussed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote.

Mayor Dawson also brought up a traffic concern regarding the intersection of Dickerson Street and Fremont Street. After brief discussion, Mr. Gantt will meet with staff to see what improvements can be done, or determine if a 4-way stop is the best solution.

Updates on current projects

Town Manager Gantt reported that financing for the Westside Trail had closed. He also noted that departments were working on their budget workbooks, with initial meetings scheduled for that week.

Commissioner Rivenbark asked about the status of the stormwater mapping project. Town Manager Gantt explained they were in the final stages, with engineers completing system modeling. The public-facing map should be available within the next month. Commissioner Rivenbark noted this information needs to get out to the public soon.

Items from Attorney

The attorney had no items for open session but would provide an update on three litigation matters in closed session.

Items from Mayor and Board of Commissioners

Consideration of appointing one (1) member to the Tourism Development Authority

Mayor Dawson recommended Brenda Allen, owner of BeBe's Bed and Breakfast, for appointment to the Tourism Development Authority. She noted that as a collector of occupancy tax, Ms. Allen would bring valuable perspective to the TDA.

Motion: Commissioner George made a motion to appoint Ms. Allen to the TDA. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivenbark and carried by unanimous vote.

Other items to be announced

Mayor Dawson requested the Board to consider amending the Beautification Committee membership by adding one additional resident position and making the Town Clerk an ex-officio member, voting only in the case of a tie. There were no concerns voiced by the Board.

Motion: Commissioner McDuffie made a motion to add one resident position and designate the Town Clerk as an ex-officio member, voting only in the case of a tie, to the Beautification Committee. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Mayor Dawson noted that Pender County tax office representatives would attend the February meeting to present information about the reevaluation appraisal process.

Commissioner Pearsall commented on the updates previously spoke about regarding the "Rules of Procedure for the Town of Burgaw Board of Commissioners" document and requested these changes be done as soon as possible. Staff advised they are reviewing the guidelines to ensure no other updates are needed prior to bringing the final amendments to the board for approval. Ms. Wells advised these amendments would be brought back for approval at the February meeting.

Commissioner George commented on the need for a stop light at the intersection of US Highway 117 and Wilmington Street. Mayor Dawson advised requests and the board approved resolution from the last meeting have been submitted to the state to express the town's urgency for this consideration.

Commissioner McDuffie requested the board consider financially securing the Executive Director position for the Burgaw Area Chamber of Commerce. She expressed concern that without action, the current part-time director would leave in February. After extensive discussion about how to structure and fund such a position, the Board agreed to secure the position conceptually while working out the details later. Mr. Gantt explained difficulties with funding a non-profit position and the purpose of the Chamber verses the town. Mayor Pro-tem Malloy confirmed funding was not being allocated for this request at the time of this discussion.

Motion: Commissioner George made a motion to support the Burgaw Area Chamber of Commerce and to start the process of securing a full-time Executive Chamber Director position. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McDuffie and carried by unanimous vote.

Closed Session

The Board voted to enter closed session pursuant to NC GS 143-318.11(a)(3) Attorney/Client Privilege and NC GS 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

Motion: Mayor Pro-tem Malloy made a motion to enter closed session at 7:10 PM. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

The Board voted to exit closed session and return to open session.

Motion: Commissioner McDuffie made a motion to exit closed session and return to open session at 8:37 PM. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Open Session

Upon returning to open session, Mayor Dawson noted several actions by the Board:

Mayor Dawson stated the Board has come to resolution regarding the D.R. Horton lawsuit filed against the town. D.R. Horton has advised they would dismiss the lawsuit if the Board agreed to approve the plat. She also noted D.R. Horton has plans to revisit the town regarding annexation of the property.

Motion: Commissioner McDuffie made a motion to approve the D.R. Horton plat. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Mayor Dawson said the town received an application from Patty's Place requesting grant funding for their system development fees.

Motion: Commissioner Pearsall made a motion to deny the request. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McDuffie and carried by unanimous vote.

Following a discussion in closed session, Mayor Dawson asked the Board if they wished to proceed with requesting an efficiency study through the NC League of Municipalities.

Motion: Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to proceed with having an efficiency study conducted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McDuffie and carried by unanimous vote.

Mayor Dawson advised the annual Mayor's Gala hosted by the Parks Foundation of Burgaw is scheduled for March 14, 2026. She asked the Board if they wished to sponsor the event as they did in the prior year. Mayor Dawson reminded the Board that the sponsorship would cover the Board members' tickets to attend, but spouses would need to purchase tickets separately.

Motion: Commissioner Rivenbark made a motion to approve a \$1,000 sponsorship towards the Mayor's Gala. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner McDuffie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 PM. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.