



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN – REGULAR MEETING  
COMMUNITY BUILDING  
223 E BAY STREET, SOUTHPORT NC 28461  
DECEMBER 11, 2025 | 6:00 PM**

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**Present Members:**

Mayor Rich Alt, Rebecca Kelley, Karen Mosteller, Robert Carroll, Lowe Davis, Frank Lai, Newly Elected Mayor Dr. Joseph P. Hatem, Paul Gross

**Staff Present:**

City Manager Noah Saldo, City Clerk Tori Deviney, Public Information Officer ChyAnn Ketchum, Planning Services Director Maureen Meehan, Building Inspector Kiley Barefoot, Police Chief Todd Coring, Fire Chief Charles Drew, Battalion Chief Ralph Treadway, Public Works Director Tom Stanley, Parks and Recreation Director Heather Hemphill

**Other Members:**

City Attorney Brady Herman

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**A. Call to Order**

Mayor Alt called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**B. Invocation**

Pastor Tim Davis provided the invocation

**C. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Alt led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance

**D. Public Comment**

**Sue Hodgin – 608 Cottage Point Way, Southport**

Ms. Hodgin, co-chair of the Winter Festival of Trees and representative of the Southport Garden Club, addressed the Board regarding what she hopes will become a new holiday tradition in Franklin Square Park. Ms. Hodgin explained that individuals, businesses, and

nonprofit organizations were invited to decorate Christmas trees for display throughout Winterfest, noting that the trees remain on display and continue to bring joy to visitors.

Ms. Hodgkin thanked the City for its recent work in Franklin Square Park, stating that the improvements stemmed from a maintenance and care plan and demonstrated the success of a public-private partnership in a park donated for the enjoyment of the people, as originally intended by Benjamin Smith. She publicly acknowledged the “tree designers,” owners, and registrants who donated their time and resources to create the displays and noted that a full list of participants would be shared through media outlets.

She also expressed appreciation to the Southport Baptist Children’s Choir, Magnolia Singers, Dirk Mercer, and Tim Brown for providing music throughout the evening; Intracoastal Realty for providing cookies; and Randy Jones for serving as master of ceremonies. Ms. Hodgkin thanked City departments for their assistance, including Parks and Recreation Director Heather Hemphill and Mike McGee for children’s crafts and overall planning support; Public Works Director Tom Stanley and his crew for logistical assistance; Fire Chief Drew and the Fire Department for providing equipment, manpower, and the department’s “Little Red House”; and Community Relations staff Allayna Dail, Jessie, and Gionna for publicity and signage.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that the event highlighted the strong sense of community spirit in Southport, with music filling the park, neighbors greeting one another, children playing, and widespread joy throughout the evening. She shared that the Garden Club was honored to gift the festival to the City and community and expressed appreciation for the encouragement and enthusiasm received for continuing the event in future years. She concluded by wishing everyone a heartfelt Merry Christmas.

**Emery B. Doughtie – 400 Sunset Ave, Roanoke Rapids**

Mr. Doughtie, Mayor of Roanoke Rapids, stated that he traveled approximately 175 miles to attend the meeting in support of Mayor-elect Dr. Joseph Hatem as he took the oath of office. Mr. Doughtie shared personal reflections on his long friendship with Dr. Hatem and his family, noting their lasting contributions to their hometown and community.

Mr. Doughtie spoke about his own experience serving multiple terms as mayor and reflected on leadership, public service, and the importance of community engagement. He remarked on the welcoming nature of Southport residents and noted that multiple people offered assistance in helping him find City Hall upon his arrival. He commented on the strong community turnout at the meeting and expressed admiration for the sense of unity and civic pride present in Southport. Mr. Doughtie concluded by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to attend the meeting and support Mayor-elect Hatem.

**Pat Kirkman – 119 Park Ave, Southport**

Ms. Kirkman, a longtime Southport resident, reflected on her many years speaking before the Board on matters related to historic preservation, including her service as a former president of the Southport Historical Society. Ms. Kirkman shared her personal connection to Southport and her long-standing advocacy for preservation issues.

Ms. Kirkman recalled past efforts to determine the future of the historic Brunswick County Courthouse and expressed hope that restoration efforts would soon be realized. She also referenced her advocacy for the City cemetery, noting ongoing concerns related to maintenance, records, and preservation, and expressed hope that future efforts would address those issues. Additionally, she referenced the work completed toward establishing a Historic Preservation District and stated that the matter now rests with the Board for final consideration.

Ms. Kirkman congratulated newly elected and returning Board members, welcomed Mayor-elect Dr. Hatem, and noted that she would continue following City matters from home. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the community turnout and wishing the Board well moving forward.

#### **Ginny Prunty – 5906 Dutchman Creek Rd, Southport**

Ms. Prunty thanked all members for their service over the past two years, including those whose terms were concluding and those continuing in office. Ms. Prunty expressed appreciation for the time, effort, and commitment required to serve and acknowledged the personal sacrifices involved.

Ms. Prunty individually recognized several Board members for their contributions, highlighting experience brought from prior public service, local knowledge of Southport's history, thoughtful leadership, attention to transparency, and diligence in addressing complex issues such as development planning, the Unified Development Ordinance, and long-term community goals. She commended Mayor Alt for his leadership, preparedness, and commitment to attending meetings prior to his term, and for encouraging critical thinking, open dialogue, and direct communication over reliance on social media.

Ms. Prunty also welcomed Mayor-elect Dr. Hatem and thanked him for his willingness to serve again, acknowledging the significant time and responsibility associated with the role. She encouraged continued problem-solving and collaboration moving forward and concluded by wishing the Board success.

#### **Shirley Sullivan – 5002 Seaward Ct, Southport**

Ms. Sullivan thanked all members for their service over the past two years. Ms. Sullivan stated that she found the term both interesting and educational and expressed appreciation for the dedication shown by the Board. She specifically thanked Mayor Alt for his leadership

during a period marked by challenges and opposition and commended his perseverance and service.

#### **E. Approval of Agenda**

Mayor Alt read the conflict of interest statement and asked whether any Board member was aware of a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest related to any matter on the agenda. No conflicts were stated.

Mayor Alt entertained a motion to approve the agenda. A motion was made by Alderman Lai and seconded by Alderman Kelley. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **F. Consent Agenda**

Mayor Alt entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda. A motion was made by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Lai. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Alt noted that the consent agenda included approval of minutes from prior meetings and renewal of the Maritime Museum lease. He explained that the Maritime Museum building is City-owned and has historically been leased to the Museum for \$1.00 per year, with the Museum responsible for maintenance of the building. The proposed lease would extend the agreement for an additional ten years under the same terms. Mayor Alt added that the arrangement is similar to the City's lease with the Franklin Square Park Art Gallery, which is also City-owned and maintained by the tenant organization.

#### **G. Recognition of Departing Mayor and Aldermen**

Mayor Alt called Alderman Frank Lai forward for recognition and read a proclamation honoring his service as Alderman for the City of Southport. The proclamation recognized Alderman Lai's dedication to the community, equity in leadership, commitment to the well-being of residents, contributions to public safety and community programs, promotion of transparency in governance, and service as ABC Board Liaison. Mayor Alt expressed the City's gratitude for Alderman Lai's leadership and public service and presented the recognition on behalf of the Board of Aldermen and the citizens of Southport.

Alderman Lai thanked City staff for their work and professionalism, noting that Southport residents expect a high level of service. He expressed appreciation for Public Works, emergency services, and City departments for their consistent efforts and support. Alderman Lai also thanked his fellow Board members for their collaboration, counsel, and ability to work toward consensus, even when disagreements occurred. He expressed gratitude to the citizens of Southport for their engagement and support and stated that he would remain involved in the community.

Alderman Davis recognized Alderman Lai's service by highlighting his wisdom, professionalism, extensive background and experience, and particularly his expertise in

human resources, which helped guide the Board's decision-making. Board members thanked Alderman Lai for his leadership and steady guidance during his tenure.

Alderman Kelley presented a plaque recognizing Mayor Rich Alt for his service as Mayor since 2023, following prior service as Alderman. The recognition acknowledged Mayor Alt's collaboration with the Board, City staff, and regional, state, and federal partners to advance City projects and advocate on behalf of Southport. Mayor Alt was thanked for his dedication and commitment to the community, and best wishes were extended for his next chapter.

Alderman Davis highlighted Mayor Alt's persistence and leadership in addressing community concerns, including efforts related to development impacts and environmental issues. She noted his willingness to engage directly with agencies, developers, and partners to resolve problems and protect the community.

Mayor Alt addressed the Board, staff, and audience, stating that his guiding principle during his tenure was to leave the City stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for the future. He emphasized that complex City projects require teamwork and credited City staff for their dedication and professionalism.

Mayor Alt thanked City Manager Noah Saldo and department leadership, including Public Works, Community Relations, Human Resources, Finance, Engineering, and the Public Information Officer, for translating Board vision into tangible progress. He highlighted several ongoing and completed initiatives, including restoration efforts for the 1844 courthouse, progress toward a permanent police department facility, shoreline restoration, stormwater improvements, street and sidewalk repair programs, updates to personnel policies, festival management reforms, and development of a comprehensive disaster response framework.

Mayor Alt expressed appreciation for the community's strong civic engagement and concluded by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.

A motion was made by Alderman Spencer and seconded by Alderman Kelley to recess for ten minutes. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously, and the Board recessed at 6:49 PM.

## **H. Swearing in of Mayor and Aldermen**

North Carolina State Representative Charlie Miller administered the oath of office to Dr. Joseph P. Hatem. The Honorable Judge Sarah McPherson stood alongside during the administration of the oath.

Following the Mayor's oath, The Honorable Judge Sarah McPherson administered the oath of office to Alderman Robert Carroll, Alderman Paul Gross, and Alderman Karen Mosteller.

Mayor Hatem shared that he was honored to return and serve as Mayor for the next two years. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with the Board, City Manager, and City staff, and emphasized his commitment to serving the citizens of Southport. Mayor Hatem noted that he remains accessible and looks forward to working collaboratively during the upcoming term.

### **I. Selection of Mayor Pro-Tem**

Mayor Hatem opened the floor for selection of the Mayor Pro Tem.

A motion was made by Alderman Kelley to appoint Alderman Karen Mosteller as Mayor Pro Tem. The motion was seconded by Alderman Davis.

During discussion, Board members commended Alderman Mosteller for her experience, prior service as Mayor Pro Tem, and her dedication and effectiveness on the Board.

With no further discussion, a vote was taken. The motion passed 5–1, and Alderman Karen Mosteller was appointed Mayor Pro Tem.

Yay – Alderman Gross

Yay – Alderman Kelley

Yay – Alderman Davis

Yay – Alderman Carroll

Yay – Alderman Mosteller

Nay – Alderman Spencer

### **J. 2026 Aldermen Regular Meeting Schedule**

Mayor Hatem introduced the proposed 2026 regular meeting schedule. City Manager Saldo explained that, following discussion with the Mayor, staff recommended reducing the regular meeting schedule to one meeting per month, to be held on the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Building. He noted that special meetings and workshops could be scheduled as needed.

A motion was made and seconded by Alderman Carroll to approve the 2026 regular meeting schedule as presented. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### **K. Committee Reports**

Alderman Spencer reported on Board of Adjustment matters, noting ongoing drainage issues behind the ABC Store and in other areas of the City where development has impacted drainage patterns. He stated that several similar issues have been identified and would need to be addressed.

Alderman Kelley reported that the Fourth of July Festival Committee is actively planning for the 2026 celebration, which will mark a significant anniversary. She noted that additional

events previously held in Southport may be brought back and that fundraising opportunities, including a possible ticketed boat cruise, are being considered.

Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller reported that the Beautification and Forestry Committees continue their work throughout the City. She noted upcoming tree plantings and stated that potential updates to the City's tree ordinance are being discussed.

#### **L. Manager's Report**

City Manager Saldo reported that he attended the Doshier Memorial Hospital Emergency Department ribbon cutting earlier that afternoon alongside Mayor Hatem. He noted that it was a positive event and highlighted the continued expansion of the hospital and its importance in serving the Southport community.

City Manager Saldo provided an update on the Wilmington Harbor re-dredging project involving the Cape Fear River, referencing the Board's special meeting held on December 2. He stated that City staff have remained actively engaged in the project and are continuing work toward submitting the City's official comments to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). He noted that staff will remain involved through the December 20 DEQ comment deadline and will continue coordination with state and federal legislators, as well as with other regional local governments. City Manager Saldo also acknowledged Bill Cary for his presentation and expertise shared with the Board regarding the project.

City Manager Saldo further reported that he attended the New Hanover County Ports, Waterways, and Beach Commission meeting in Wilmington alongside Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller, where the City's resolution was presented and awareness of the project was raised.

City Manager Saldo also highlighted several upcoming community holiday events, including the annual Light Up the Night Christmas Parade scheduled for the following evening and the Winterfest Flotilla planned for Saturday. He expressed appreciation for the strong community participation in recent holiday events and stated that staff looks forward to continuing that momentum.

City Manager Saldo concluded by stating that City staff are looking ahead to the new year and extended holiday and New Year well wishes to the Board and the community.

#### **M. Staff Reports**

Mayor Hatem noted that staff reports were included in the meeting packet and are available online for public review

#### **N. Mayor and Aldermen Comments**

Mayor Hatem began by thanking North Carolina State Representative Charlie Miller and The Honorable Judge Sarah McPherson for attending the meeting and participating in the

evening's ceremonies. He expressed appreciation to those in attendance, those watching from home, and welcomed family and friends present for the occasion.

Mayor Hatem acknowledged Mayor Emery Doughtie of Roanoke Rapids and his sister, Anne, sharing personal remarks about their long-standing friendship and expressing gratitude for their presence. He stated that their attendance was meaningful to both him and his wife, Tish, and welcomed future visits.

Mayor Hatem thanked the community for the honor and privilege of serving again as Mayor and stated his commitment to promoting peace, progress, projects, and civility within the City. He reflected on the positive holiday season in Southport, specifically thanking the Southport Garden Club for the Festival of Trees in Franklin Square Park and recognizing Sue Hodgins and Tish Hatem as co-chairs.

Mayor Hatem highlighted several upcoming community events, including the Christmas parade, Santa at the Fire Station, the Winterfest Flotilla, the Holiday Home Tour, and encouraged residents to shop locally and support downtown businesses.

Mayor Hatem expressed appreciation to City staff, department heads, and employees for their dedication and service, and stated that he looks forward to working closely with them moving forward. Mayor Hatem also noted his familiarity with much of the Board and expressed enthusiasm for continuing collaboration, including welcoming new members.

Mayor Hatem concluded by thanking friends and family in attendance, including Kevin and Mary Locklin, who traveled from South Carolina, and expressed gratitude to everyone who attended in recognition of the swearing-in ceremony. He then opened the floor for Alderman comments.

Alderman Paul Gross thanked his wife for her support throughout the recent campaign period and expressed appreciation to his family, friends, and the voters of Southport. He stated that he was humbled by the trust placed in him and looks forward to serving all residents and businesses within the City. Alderman Gross referenced his prior service as Interim Finance Director in 2023 and his background in policy and finance, noting that he brings 39 years of state and local government experience. He expressed his commitment to continuing the City's progress through civil, transparent, and collaborative service.

Alderman Spencer congratulated all newly elected and re-elected officials and stated that serving on the Board continues to be a great honor. He emphasized that while the evening was a celebration, significant infrastructure challenges remain, including flooding issues, shoreline stabilization, and rebuilding City facilities. Alderman Spencer thanked Mayor Alt for his leadership over the past two years and expressed appreciation for Alderman Lai's friendship and service. He noted the importance of focusing on the City's future growth and infrastructure needs while remaining committed to serving the community in the coming term.

Alderman Kelley welcomed Mayor Hatem back to the Board and congratulated Alderman Gross. She expressed appreciation for serving alongside Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller and Alderman Carroll and reflected positively on the strength of the Board over the past two years. Alderman Kelley thanked former Mayor Alt for his guidance and leadership and stated her enthusiasm for continuing collaborative work under Mayor Hatem. She highlighted the success of Winterfest activities, thanking the Southport Garden Club, Beautification Committee, and City staff for their efforts in creating a festive holiday atmosphere. Alderman Kelley provided an update regarding the ice-skating rink, noting that Saturday would be the final day of operation due to weather conditions and logistical requirements. She concluded by expressing excitement for the upcoming Christmas parade and holiday events.

Alderman Davis commented on the uniqueness of having ice skating in Southport and thanked the Community Relations Department for their role in bringing the attraction to the City. She posed a lighthearted remark regarding the timing of the Doshier Memorial Hospital Emergency Department ribbon cutting in relation to ice-skating, which Mayor Hatem clarified was ceremonial and that the facility had not yet opened.

Alderman Carroll welcomed Mayor Hatem back to the Mayor's seat and congratulated Alderman Gross. He expressed appreciation for Alderman Kelley's service as Mayor Pro Tem and thanked her for her leadership during meetings. Alderman Carroll also reflected on the service of former Mayor Alt and Alderman Lai, noting Alderman Lai's wisdom, professionalism, and thoughtful contributions to the Board.

Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller provided an update regarding outreach efforts following the December 2 special meeting concerning the Wilmington Harbor dredging project. She stated that she had shared the City's adopted resolution with elected officials and communities along the Lower Cape Fear River to raise awareness of the December 20 DEQ comment deadline and encourage coordinated responses. Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller reported that multiple municipalities have expressed similar concerns and support, and that efforts are underway to draft a joint letter for broader community consideration. She thanked City staff for their continued work on preparing Southport's official comments.


Mayor Pro-Tem Mosteller expressed gratitude to Representative Miller and Senator Rabon for their accessibility and service and thanked City employees across departments for their dedication. She also recognized the City's volunteers and committees for their contributions to Southport's quality of life. Mayor-Pro-Tem Mosteller concluded by expressing pride in the Southport community and wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Mayor Hatem recognized Tom Woerner with the State Port of Pilot and David Gale, Mayor Hatem's Wife's son who traveled from Rocky Mount to attend the meeting. Mayor Hatem thanked all attendees for their presence and concluded with a holiday message emphasizing peace and goodwill.

A motion was made by Alderman Carroll and seconded by Alderman Kelley to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**O. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

  
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*Joseph P. Hatem, M.D., M.P.H., Mayor*

*ATTEST:*

  
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*Tori Deviney, City Clerk*

