



April 7, 2025
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**CITY OF SOUTHPORT
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
223 E. BAY STREET
9:00 A.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Richard Alt
Mayor Pro-Tem Rebecca Kelley
Aldermen Marc Spencer, Robert Carroll, Frank Lai, Lowe Davis, Karen Mosteller

STAFF: Noah Saldo, Interim City Manager
Tori Deviney, Deputy City Clerk
Charles Drew, Chair Historic Preservation Commission
Maureen Meehan, Planning Services Director
ChyAnn Ketchum, Public Information Officer
City Engineer, Bob Jarvis
City Engineer, Tom Zilinek

A. Call to Order

Mayor Alt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

B. Invocation

Reverend Lowe Davis, gave the invocation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Alt led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Alt read the Ethics Statement:

“If any members know of any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest concerning matters on the agenda, please so state at this time.”

No conflicts of interest stated.

D. Public Comment

Alderman Lai made a motion to open public comment, second by Alderman Kelley.
Unanimous vote; motion carried.

Mr. Richard Bandera, 409 W. Burrington Avenue, addressed the Board regarding the Southport Local Historic District. He indicated he had attended meetings, contacted the HPC chair and planning director, about concerns he had regarding the proposed historic district design standards. He spoke about his understanding of an amendment as an area that the historic district can be expanded into in the future which could impact any additions to his residence. He indicated his cottage sits on a 50 foot lot and under the proposed standards he would be unable to expand his home wider on the back of the house or it would have to be reconstructed in the original footprint in the event it was critically damaged. He asked for clarification of what the amendment means and what the potential could be to expand that district. He added that he had talked to neighbors who also were not aware of the amendment designation.

29 years plus resident, Ms. Pat Kirkman, 119 Park Avenue, spoke to the Board regarding what to do with the old County Courthouse. "It has been nine (9) years and now it's time for something to happen, it's time to make the decision and you are the only ones in this town of 4,200 people who are going to make that decision I'm sure that Todd Coring is sick and tired of talking about how to put the police in that building. I am standing up for Todd, I'm standing up for Police, I'm standing up for Southport doing something with that building."

Mentioning former mayors and aldermen, Ms. Kirkman questioned where the wise people of Southport were, those who have been around Southport all their lives, who don't have any comments about anything going on in the city. "We never see them sitting in a blue chair and we never hear from them. Where is their good advise." she stated.

Ms. Kirkman, indicated she was attending the meeting to hear the presentation from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). She said she had attended many of the HPC meetings because she is a historian and concerned about Southport's history. She recalled previous unsuccessful attempts to adopt a historic district and the public's resistance to it.

Ms. Kirkman pointed out the "*Please turn off all cell phones*" statement printed on the Agenda and she asked the Board to comply with the statement. She said; "What I'm seeing, as an observer, some of you as Aldermen are more interested in what is on your telephones than you are what's going on in the room. When this camera is on, we see all of you at one time. Keep that in mind because it makes a difference how you behave when you are sitting up there as our only seven (7) people who can make official decisions for this city." She added; "When you are upset about something that is going on, your body language makes a difference. When you are slamming your folders shut, when you are putting your glasses on or off, when you are throwing your pens down, all those things make a difference. We're watching you, we see what's going on."

Ms. Kirkman chastised the Board for talking over each other. "That is very annoying in any kind of panel meeting like this. One person doesn't get out a whole sentence before another one is saying something over that person. I would like to see my Board of Aldermen have a little more decorum in the meetings." She referenced Robert's Rules of Order and suggested the Mayor or City Manager stop the talking over each other before an argument erupts. "We do care about how you behave" she said.

Deputy City Clerk Deviney read the following emails into the record:

"It is really sad that some of the powers that be in Southport BOA and PB would even question where the Southport Police Department should be located and even sadder that they don't listen to their Chief of Police. They are totally disrespectful of Todd Coring as the Chief and his knowledge of what his department needs are and where the police department needs to be located. One planning board member was even quite arrogant towards the Chief at the March 27th meeting, grilling him as through he was being cross-examined in a courtroom. Even worse, there seems to be no respect for Southport's history and the old courthouse was a government building from its beginning and should be kept as one going forth. It is the prefect location for the police presence in the heart of downtown Southport which is where it was located before the building was abandoned. City Hall needs to stay where it is located as it is easily accessible by the public from Howe Street and side streets. If it was downtown it would create even more traffic and that area is already a traffic nightmare. Perhaps the two (2) boards should take lessons from Doshier Memorial Hospital and St. Phillips Episcopal Church. Both have been in the same place as when they were built and when they need to grow, they purchase adjacent land when it became available in order to do so."

Katherin Hufham

40 Forest Oaks Drive

"To the Mayor and BOA

I a writing in support of our historic old courthouse, aka, Old City Hall being the new location for the Southport Police Department.

Having grown up and ruled in this town, I have seen the building as the county courthouse and the city hall. I've seen it's exterior go from brick to stucco and extensions added to make more room. And, lastly, I have seen it for too many years now a neglected old building sitting in the middle of downtown growing mold. So, now I'd like to see it used by the police department as their new headquarters.

It seems to take an unusually long time for the planning board to give a recommendation to the BOA and I understand that they rejected the idea of it being used by the police department. I, along with many others, are still trying to understand why the PB plays any part, much less such a big one in this decision. I feel the PB treated Chief Coring in a rude and disrespectful manner at the last meeting, that the PB chair person allowed to be filmed.

One PB member commented on social media that the building was already too small for the needs of the police department to which I respectfully disagree. I think the city will run out of space for new developments long before the police outgrow the courthouse.

So, as an old Southport native whose family has been here for many generations and who loves this town and our history, I'll just add it seems we sometimes have too many wanna be big fish in our little pond and some who thinks the natives and longtime locals opinions don't matter. Maybe they need to wonder how Southport survived for over 200 years without them."

Thank you, Cathy St.George Johnstone

Alderman Carroll moved to close Public Comment, second by Alderman Kelley.

Unanimous vote; motion carried.

E. Approval of Agenda

Alderman Lai made a motion to approve the Agenda, second by Alderman Mosteller.

Unanimous vote; motion carried.

F. Agenda

1. Capital Improvement Program (CIP) (Agenda pages 2 - 47)

City Engineer Bob Jarvis addressed the Board. He outlined a series of Capital Improvement projects planned for FY 2026 to FY 2031, detailing the estimated costs, funding sources, project descriptions and schedules of implementation. He indicated the total estimated cost for the entire program would be \$94,178,000 with the following allocations:

.	General Fund allocation:	
	\$29,952,500	
.	State and Federal Funds:	
	\$30,375,500	
.	Other Sources:	\$33,850,000

Engineer Jarvis stated the intent of the CIP is to make steady progress in preserving the capital assets of the city. He explained that a capital asset is typically defined as a city-owned physical resource that has a useful life of more than five (5) years and has significant value. Capital projects are differentiated from ordinary repairs or recurring maintenance. Some examples of capital projects include land acquisition, construction of, or major improvements to public buildings, recreation areas, roads and utilities, and the acquisition of large equipment such as fire trucks.

Engineer Jarvis emphasized that the CIP process begins in earnest at the beginning of the budget process. By anticipating capital projects and mapping out a means for financing them, policy makers are enabled to balance city priorities with financial capacity to pay for desired projects. He noted that the CIP is dynamic and could change based on several factors; financing, priorities and other factors can have an impact on the scheduling of projects. Projects may be moved up, moved back, or even eliminated from the plan. The annual review of the CIP ensures that the intent of the program is being met to provide community leaders and city officials with a clear view of what lies ahead.

Engineer Jarvis advised the Board that staff would approach the Board again for a formal adoption of the final CIP once the annual budget is finalized and approved.

Responding to a query by Mayor Alt, Engineer Jarvis stated the CIP does not prioritize the projects. The projects are initiated through various departments within the city and they are placed in the plan with the intent that the Board of Aldermen prioritize those projects. The CIP does not define where the money is going to come from. There are intended funding sources called out in the plan i.e., general fund, grants or other enterprise funds such as the fire fund or electrical fund. The plan, if adopted by the Board, is not a mandate to do the projects.

Engineer Jarvis confirmed for Alderman Kelley that the state and federal funding outlined in CIP for the current fiscal year, has been committed to the projects. In subsequent fiscal years the line item costs are a planning tool in the hopes of getting grants. In FY 27, 28, and 29, grant money or applications of grant money are anticipated but funding is not in hand. He explained the other sources would be something other than a state or federal fund, i.e., loans or participatory grants where the city is obligated for a portion of a grant.

Pointing out that seven (7) projects had an asterisk next to them denoting priority projects for 2026, Alderman Mosteller asked if the language could be softened so the public would better understand those denoted projects were staff priorities and the Board of Aldermen would ultimately determine the priority of projects. Engineer Jarvis indicated the final document would be edited to include in the current fiscal year those projects which do have funding and others would be re-categorized into out years.

Mayor Alt noted that there is funding for the electric underground project for approximately three (3) years, after which prioritization will be critical to determine how much to expend each year. Alderman Kelley directed the Board to the estimated projects cost for FY26, \$7.7M, \$25M for FY27 and \$20M for FY28; “we are going to have to take a good look at what actually can be done because jumping from under 8 to 25 is significant.” she said.

Manager Saldo recommended the Board form a subcommittee to further investigate the CIP, and/or, have a work session specifically for going through the CIP as it pertains to the current budget process and setting project priorities. Mayor Alt asked the City Manager to provide an outline of what his thoughts are at the Thursday April 10 regular board meeting.

2. Bonnets Creek Phase 1 Stormwater Improvements Design (Agenda pages 48 - 61)

City Engineer Tom Zilinek provided an update on the BRIC Grant for Bonnets Creek Phase 1 Stormwater Improvement Project:

- At their March meeting the Board of Aldermen approved submittal of the application and authorized staff to pursue a consultant to design the project
- A proposal was received from the same consultant who did the stormwater mapping and modeling project
- Proposal is for a 70% design due to the fact FEMA will likely request changes
- WK Dickson has submitted a quote for \$478,000

Engineer Zilinek asked for authorization from the Board to award a contract to WK Dickson in the amount of \$478,000. Stating that a full application package had not yet been received from FEMA, Engineer Zilinek indicated that October 31st is the deadline for submittal of the application.

Board members discussed the past practices of approving open ended contracts without harder deadlines and penalty clauses for failure to perform. Providing several examples, City Manager Saldo pointed out that the significant penalty is withholding payment. He stated the best course of action would be to set a hard deadline so the city knows how to manage payments. He emphasized that the Board ultimately has to agree to the contract terms.

Alderman Mosteller made a motion to approve the contract with WK Dickson in the amount of \$478,000 for the Bonnets Creek Phase 1 Stormwater Improvements Design with an October 1st deadline and to authorize the City Manager to execute the documents and to further clarify the contract language. Alderman Lai seconded the motion. **Unanimous vote; motion carried.**

3. Southport Local Historic District Design Standards (Agenda pages 62 - 170)

Planning Services Director Meehan gave a brief overview of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) DRAFT Local Historic District Design Standards.

- HPC was established in 2022
- First meeting of the HPC was training with the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, November 2022
- Members are: Chair, Charles Drew; Vice-Chair Rick Pukenas; Alexis Gore Graves, Bonner Herring, Josh Cline McGee, Jim McKee, and Joanne Wesson
- Alternate Members are: Bonnie Bray and Tal West
- Some members were in attendance

Goals:

Preserve

- Character
- Heritage
- Landmarks

Promote

- Citizen Outreach
- Provide Education on Benefits of Preservation

Prevent

- Loss of Character
- Loss of Historically Significant Places
- Work on standards began February 2023
- Standards account for a variety of architecture, age, and historic significance
- It will be an overlay
- A certificate of appropriateness will be considered individually

Director Meehan pointed out two areas that had been removed from the Historic District; the Yacht Basin and property off of Kingsley Street. She explained they were removed because the properties do not have contributing features. She acknowledged concern about the Yacht Basin and reported that it is being designated as a Maritime Working Waterfront in the Comprehensive Plan which will preserve the ability for those businesses to be built back where they are. She added that historic markers can be placed in that area.

HPC Chair Charles Drew addressed the Board. He recalled the Board of Aldermen's decision to create a Historic Preservation Commission and his immediate resolve to apply for membership. He stated he loves history, loves Southport and in his opinion nothing greater than a native of Southport, or a newcomer do besides preserve, protect and promote the character of Southport.

Mr. Drew reported that the Commission has met monthly and sometimes twice a month spending countless hours of debating, collaborating, and creating the proposed design standards. He emphasized the collaboration of the Planning Board, Board of Aldermen, public, and city staff. He stated the document has been revised, reworked, redone several times with much input from the community. He noted that two well attended (2) public forums were held and every suggestion from citizens was addressed individually and worked into the draft document. Acknowledging the document is a regulatory document it is not so much about regulation as it is the protection of Southport's character and charm.

Mr. Drew provided a history of Southport's historic area. He explained that since 1980 Southport

has had a historic district designation are with no protection and anyone could do anything that meets the Unified Development Ordinance and the building codes. He stated the proposed standards protects the boundary, provides guidelines to establish and protect the character of downtown Southport, the vistas, the historic buildings.

Noting that he is a native of Southport, Mr. Drew stated; “I have watched over the years the demolition and destruction of many historic structures in our city. When this HPC started, I had citizens, natives, newcomers come to me and say, “it’s too late to do this.” But I vehemently oppose that rhetoric. We must preserve what we have left. We must save what we have, we must protect our historic character. We must prevent the destruction of our charm and we must promote education of why these standards are so valuable. The remaining character of Southport now rests on your shoulders with this document you have. What future does Southport have depends on your decision.”

Alderman Kelley asked about the Fencing and Walls section and if the standards would be in conflict of the recently adopted Right-of-Ways Policy. Director Meehan indicated the right-of-way policy would be enforced first and foremost. She added that provisions had been added to the historic district design standards for existing fences so that they can remain and be maintained.

Questioning Mr. Drew as to his feelings on the matter, Alderman Spencer asked if Southport would lose its character if the city began charging parking fees, etc. Mr. Drew stated his opinion that charges would not affect Southport’s historic character. He said; “We are basically talking about the look, historic buildings, the feel when you drive down the street, making sure that everything is in line with the character of the architecture of what we have had in the past.”

Expressing support for the HPC and the design standards, Mayor Alt shared the gist of an article he recently read about another historic waterfront town that was able to fend off urban development. He asked if provisions had been incorporated into the design standards for additions to existing structures. Mr. Drew confirmed the standards do not prevent additions being added onto existing structures.

Mayor Alt asked the city manager to work with Mr. Bandera regarding his concerns.

Alderman Mosteller praised the work put in by the HPC; “Awesome job, I’m so grateful, you all have done yeoman’s work. For two years you all have shown up and produced a document I am eternally grateful for. Thank you.”

Alderman Davis pointed out that she and Aldermen Carroll and Mosteller comprised the ad hoc committee that “put this thing together, interviewed for members, and you have exceeded all of my highest expectations.”

4. Specialty Southport License Plate (Agenda page 171)

Public Information Officer ChyAnn Ketchum addressed the Board. She requested permission to move forward with the contest for the community art submissions for Southport License Plates. She reminded them of the following:

- The minimum pre-registrations required is 500 by February 15, 2026 which will allow a month to prepare all documentation needed by the General Assembly to

- ensure placement on their next year's legislative session
- A community art contest for the design of the license plates will start April 14, 2025 through June 1, 2025
- Contest will be run through Aventney, the Community Relations Department system
- A \$10 entry fee will go towards a cash prize for the winner
- City staff will select three (3) to five (5) finalists depending on the number of submittals
- Finalists will be submitted to the Board of Aldermen no later than June 12, 2025
- The Board of Aldermen will select the winner

Responding to a query by Alderman Davis, Ms. Ketchum indicated the contest would be announced after this date's approval by the Board of Aldermen, the contest is open to everyone with no age parameters.

Alderman Mosteller suggested keeping the names of the artists confidential until a winner is chosen.

Alderman Spencer made a motion to accept the guidelines and to move forward with the license plate submission contest. Alderman Kelley seconded the motion.

Unanimous vote; motion carried.

G. Manager's Report

City Manager Saldo reported on the Shoreline Stabilization Project:

- Project has been on-going for several years
- Funding for the project must be encumbered by June 2026
- Project will be two (2) phases
- Phase I will consist of new revetment and revetment repairs to the shoreline areas adjacent to Waterfront Park and E. Bay Street
- A CAMA general permit and permit exception will be required
- Final design and permitting are underway
- Project scheduled to bid by the end of Summer
- The first phase of the project will include bid alternatives to the bidding process to allow the work to be completed in the phases to ensure the City is moving forward expeditiously and the available funding is spent through Phase II
- Phase I construction will begin by the end of calendar year 2025
- Phase II includes new revetment seaward of the private parcels located near the Riverside Motel and Olivers Restaurant; beach dune restoration and three (3) rip rap breakers seaward of private property near the Riverside Motel and Olivers Restaurant
- Agreements relating to easements with private land owners has been reached and language is being finalized with signing of the agreements anticipated within the next few weeks.
- Meetings with CAMA on site will begin
- Permit application submittal expected by early May
- Final permitting from all agencies anticipated early 2026
- Final project design, construction plans and bidding documents to be prepared simultaneously with permitting process
- Project bidding forecast for March 2026
- Anticipated project award and funding encumbrance by June 1, 2026

City Manager Saldo stated: “All this and Phase II will be contingent on agency review and their approval of the permitting process. It is my intention we stay on top of the project to ensure we are meeting the stated required deadlines, to ensure we are spending the funds as appropriated, and the projects gets to completion.”

City Manager Saldo indicated the budget workshops would continue Tuesday, April 8, 9:00 a.m. at the Indian Trail Meeting Hall (ITMH) to review the Community Relations Department proposed budget.

H. Mayor’s Comments

Mayor Alt provided for the record that the beginning of the meeting was not videoed due to a technical glitch. He thanked staff for quickly getting the video back on line.

Mayor Alt talked about the celebration of life for lifetime resident Charlie Perry. Mayor Alt pointed out the timing of the Blessing of the Fleet on the same day and same time as Mr. Perry’s celebration of life; “The blessing followed up on Mr. Perry’s storyline throughout the City.” Mayor Alt encouraged all to attend the annual event.

Mayor Alt thanked the board members for their continued work on the city’s many projects and meeting the challenges related to funding the projects.

I. Board Comments

Alderman Lai thanked city staff for their interesting presentations and information provided. He mentioned that he would be attending an ABC Board meeting this date and anticipated an increase of business for the ABC store with the current upheaval on the national level.

Alderman Spencer stated appreciation for the Historic Preservation Commission. He expressed his concerns; “Every time we *get preserve the historic character of Southport*, it’s almost like putting handcuffs on and that’s why I asked, will we be able to preserve our character if we don’t give away Southport for free. Will we change our character if we make people pay to come and look at the water versus giving it away? Is that part of our heritage? For everything I have seen for the last 20 years, it has been no this, no that, no port, no this, no meals tax. No has gotten us put into a corner where we are in trouble financially and the long-term perspective doesn’t look good. With these HP districts it sounds like we are protecting it for the people who come in the future but what happens it ends up hurting the people who have been here forever. These rules are not affecting the new people, there are affecting the landowners. Our tree permits, who gets those fines? People that have been here forever. All these rules keep adding up, and for me, sometimes it doesn’t preserve the historic character, it sabotages our future. So I’m afraid sometimes, I know the messenger, and I trust the messenger, but I know how this ends up turning around and biting us back, most of the time.”

Alderman Spencer thanked city staff for their work on the Bonnets Creek Phase I Project. “It is not a bridge, but we are moving forward and making sure those neighborhoods will have some drainage solutions.”

Alderman Kelley thanked the Public Works Department for addressing drainage issues on Spike Rush Trail in Indigo. She further stated appreciation for much needed patching on the road into Indigo and how nice it is to be able to ride through there now.

Alderman Kelley shared that as long as she could remember, the barge used for shooting fireworks was Charlie Perry's barge. "Charlie Perry left a legacy in Southport, he will be missed."

Alderman Carroll pointed out that Atlantic Avenue from Bay Street to Moore Street is in disrepair and to consider repair of the street in the budgeting process.

Alderman Carroll asked if someone could be brought to the Board of Aldermen March meeting to discuss paid parking.

Referencing the CIP, Alderman Mosteller asked the city manager about the funding on the shoreline stabilization project. City Manager Saldo responded that the entire \$5M will be utilized.

Alderman Mosteller asked the city manager; "As we move forward in the budget process, I want to reiterate the need for activity based budgeting by departments so we understand what is being paid for in each department."

Alderman Mosteller asked planning staff to be aware of the following legislative bills and to keep the Board apprised of :

- Senate Bill 495; regulations to allow accessory dwellings in all residential areas regardless of zoning
- Senate Bill 497; expand middle housing to allow town homes in up to six-plexes in all residential zones
- Senate Bill 499; allowing housing in commercial zones
- Senate Bill 699

City Manager Saldo indicated Director Meehan is putting together a thorough review of the referenced bills and will have the report out shortly.

Mayor Alt asked the city manager to provide an update regarding the \$700M left over in federal funding to the state for Potential Tropical Storm #8 and if the city is going to apply for additional funding, how to go about that, and if it interconnects with current city projects.

J. Adjourn

Alderman Carroll made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:26 a.m. Alderman Kelley seconded the motion. **Unanimous vote; motion carried.**

R. B. Alt

Richard Alt, Mayor

ATTEST:

Tori Deviney

Tori Deviney, Deputy Clerk

(SEAL)

