



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT
BOARD OF ALDERMEN – REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY BUILDING
223 E BAY ST, SOUTHPORT NC 28461
JULY 10, 2025 | 6:00 pm**

Present Members:

Mayor Rich Alt, Rebecca Kelley, Karen Mosteller, Robert Carroll, Lowe Davis, Marc Spencer, Frank Lai

Staff Present:

City Manager Noah Saldo, Deputy Clerk Tori Deviney, Public Information Officer ChyAnn Ketchum, Police Chief Todd Coring, Fire Chief Charles Drew, Battalion Chief Ralph Treadway, Parks and Recreation Director Heather Hemphill

Others Present:

City Attorney Brady Herman

A. Call to Order

Mayor Alt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Invocation

Chief Coring Provided the Invocation

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Alt let everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance

D. Public Comment

Hugh Fosbury – 120 W Moore St

Mr. Hugh Fosbury, who resides at 120 West Moore Street, addressed the Board on behalf of the Southport Fourth of July Festival Committee and its board members. He explained that he was speaking in place of Lucinda Arnold, the committee president, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Fosbury began by thanking the City of Southport for its support of the festival. He emphasized that the event would not be possible without the City's involvement and

coordination. He specifically recognized Allayna Dale and the City staff who manage the operational aspects of the festival, noting that he has seen firsthand the extensive behind-the-scenes work required and describing their efforts as remarkable.

He also expressed appreciation to Police Chief Coring, Fire Chief Drew, and Public Works Director Tom Stanley, highlighting their departments' contributions to the success of the event. Mr. Fosbury remarked on the Public Works Department's efforts in restoring the city after the fireworks display, noting that although the area appeared heavily impacted late at night following the festivities, the cleanup was completed so efficiently that by the following morning it appeared as though the festival had never taken place.

Mr. Fosbury also thanked the numerous sponsors and volunteers who support the festival each year. He stated that more than 50 volunteers assist with the event and noted that the committee is always seeking additional volunteers for future festivals.

Providing a brief overview of the week's events, Mr. Fosbury stated that the festival was overall successful despite some weather challenges. Rain during the first evening required the committee to end the Embers band performance early, and there was additional rain during the naturalization ceremony the following day. However, he noted that large crowds attended the events and that the festival proceeded largely as planned despite the heat.

He commended the security presence throughout the festival, stating that law enforcement coverage on land and water was extensive and effective.

Mr. Fosbury highlighted several major events that occurred during the festival. The Opening Ceremony was held on Friday evening, June 27. The following morning featured the Freedom Run, which returned for its second year and attracted more than 400 participants across both a 5K race and a 1K event.

Later that day, the 40th Annual Firemen's Competition, organized by the Fire Department, was held and was well received. The festival also hosted a Tunnel to Towers exhibit, which Mr. Fosbury described as a meaningful display that, while costly to bring in, was well worth the investment.

Sunday's events included the Gospel Fest, organized by Madison, whom Mr. Fosbury complimented as an exceptional singer. That evening concluded with the World's Largest Ice Cream Sundae, which he said was a very popular event among attendees.

He also highlighted the Naturalization Ceremony, during which 55 candidates from 28 countries became United States citizens.

Mr. Fosbury noted that the Kids Zone at Taylor Field was expanded this year and included additional attractions such as a petting zoo, the Clips of Confidence horses, water slides, and other children's activities, all of which appeared to be well attended.

Festival merchandise also performed well. Mr. Fosbury noted that many festival shirts designed by local artist Ricky Evans had been sold and that additional shirts remain available. He added that several local businesses assisted with selling the shirts this year, which helped increase distribution.

He further reported that traffic management following the fireworks display appeared to improve this year. Special parking areas were designated, including parking for vendors and general parking near the elementary school, along with trolley service to transport attendees.

Mr. Fosbury stated that while the committee believes the festival was very successful overall, there are always areas for improvement. He noted that festival maps and information have been distributed through Southport Coast Magazine prior to the event to help visitors navigate the festival, though questions about restroom locations and availability continue to arise each year.

He also stated that the committee works to minimize disruptions to local businesses and attempts to reduce the use of loud generators whenever possible, though they are sometimes necessary.

Mr. Fosbury concluded by thanking the City again for its continued partnership and support. He noted that planning has already begun for next year's festival, which will coincide with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and stated that the committee is preparing for an even larger celebration.

Sue Hodgin – 608 Cottage Point Way

Ms. Hodgin addressed the Board and identified herself as the current Chair of the Southport Planning Board. She clarified at the outset that she was not speaking on behalf of the Planning Board, but rather as an individual member of that board and as a citizen of Southport.

Ms. Hodgin stated that she had learned in her life that sometimes accomplishments come from remaining silent, but she said that this evening would not be one of those occasions. She then addressed the Board's action earlier that week regarding her application for reappointment to the Planning Board. Ms. Hodgin explained that she had served on the Planning Board for several years, most recently as chair, and stated that her application for reappointment had been discussed and ultimately rejected without a reason being provided.

Ms. Hodgin stated that during the discussion one member of the interview panel acknowledged, after prompting from Alderman Carroll, that she had not said Ms. Hodgin was not qualified. She asserted that no rational reason had been offered for the decision. Ms. Hodgin further stated that, based on comments made during the meeting, she believed the outcome had been predetermined and characterized the decision as political retaliation that did not "pass the sniff test."

She also noted that, to her knowledge, no other current member of a City board, committee, or commission who had applied for reappointment during the same appointment cycle had been rejected. Ms. Hodgin added that she was not aware of any instance in Southport's history in

which a sitting Planning Board member or its chair had been removed from service in this manner.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that she believed the action had been intended as a punitive measure against her personally, but she also expressed the view that the broader appointment process had been unfair to the community as a whole. She further alleged that an alderman had used a personal Facebook page to invite individuals interested in serving on a City board or commission to contact him directly rather than directing them to the City's official application process. While stating that she hoped this information was not accurate, Ms. Hodgkin remarked that the situation created the appearance of potential favoritism or cronyism.

Ms. Hodgkin further stated that two of the three individuals appointed to the Planning Board during the recent appointment process had not submitted their applications until a second round of solicitations. Referencing comments made by Alderman Kelley that those individuals had "stepped up," Ms. Hodgkin questioned why their applications had not been submitted during the initial deadline period. She stated that submitting applications during the original timeframe would have demonstrated an understanding of deadlines, compliance with the posting, and a clear interest in serving the community.

Ms. Hodgkin then addressed what she believed may have contributed to opposition to her reappointment. She questioned whether the issue involved removal of liaison comments from the Planning Board agenda beginning in June. She explained that, to her knowledge, no other Southport board or commission routinely included a standing agenda item for liaison comments, and she said the Planning Board's previous inclusion of that item had been intended as a cooperative courtesy.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that after the May meeting, two Planning Board members suggested discontinuing that agenda item because no productive comments had been offered for several months. She said she conferred with Planning Director Meehan, who agreed with removing it, and Ms. Hodgkin then sent Alderman Lai a friendly text on June 16 advising him of the change before the June 19 meeting. Ms. Hodgkin read the text aloud and stated that the message did not appear problematic to her and that she had not heard any objection from Alderman Lai afterward.

Ms. Hodgkin next referenced another prior incident involving an alderman liaison who, according to Ms. Hodgkin, had not spoken during the public comment period at a Planning Board meeting and later wanted to interrupt the meeting. Ms. Hodgkin stated that the Board had simply followed its agenda and established protocol, and she said she had not heard any later complaint from that liaison either.

Ms. Hodgkin also revisited an earlier Planning Board appointment matter involving an applicant she said had been strongly favored by Alderman Kelley. According to Ms. Hodgkin, that individual was later found to have included false information on his application by claiming service on another municipality's planning board when no such service had occurred. She stated

that this information had been confirmed in writing by City Manager Noah Saldo at her request to the full interview panel.

Ms. Hodgkin said the interview panel, which included herself and the liaisons, ultimately reached consensus on three recommended applicants and did not include that individual. She then recounted that, on January 9, shortly before the Board of Aldermen meeting at which those recommendations were to be considered, Alderman Lai called Ms. Hodgkin and told her that the Mayor had said one of the recommended applicants would not be named and that the votes were already there to block that appointment.

Ms. Hodgkin further alleged that a prior Planning Board appointment decision was influenced by the discontinuation of a longstanding corporate donation to the City. She stated that the corporation had reevaluated its contributions during its budget process and elected to discontinue funding to the City, and that an applicant under consideration for appointment was an employee of that corporation.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that, based on information she described as creditable information coming from multiple sources both within and outside City Hall, the Mayor used the cessation of that corporate donation as a basis to retaliate against that applicant, asserting that the applicant had not acted in accordance with what she described as expectations from City leadership.

Ms. Hodgkin further stated that the matter had been referred to during the January 9 meeting as a “personnel issue,” by the Mayor, but she disagreed with that characterization, noting that Planning Board members are volunteers and not City employees. She stated that the issue was personal in nature rather than a personnel matter.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that the applicant’s appointment was ultimately voted down and that the seat remained vacant until the current appointment cycle. Turning to comments made during the Board’s recent appointment discussions, Ms. Hodgkin objected to remarks suggesting that citizens who had spoken in support of her were improperly lobbying the Board.

Ms. Hodgkin also referenced a statement by Alderman Davis indicating that she had not previously observed such activity involving calls related to Board matters. In response, Ms. Hodgkin asserted that calls between the Mayor and Board members occurs regularly and stated her belief that voting outcomes are often determined in advance.

She further stated that, during discussion of her reappointment, the Mayor indicated that he would not be voting on the matter, which she interpreted as evidence that the outcome had already been decided. Ms. Hodgkin characterized the decision as predetermined.

Ms. Hodgkin remarked by expressing appreciation to members of the Planning Board, a former board member, and a citizen who spoke during public comment in support of her leadership and administrative effectiveness.

She argued that public advocacy is common in Southport, noting that citizens have frequently appeared before both the Planning Board and the Board of Aldermen to urge action on issues such as Indigo expansion, conditional zoning matters, gates, signage, parking, rights-of-way, and support for the Police Department's use of the old courthouse. She stated that if the individuals who spoke in support of her were being characterized as engaging in lobbying, then similar participation by the public on past issues should be viewed in the same manner, and that such civic involvement has historically been accepted.

Ms. Hodgkin further stated that, during the prior meeting, Alderman Spencer had strongly criticized those commenters as well as fellow aldermen, and she expressed concern that such conduct had been allowed to continue. She questioned what it reflects about City leadership when members of the public are, in her view, reprimanded for expressing opinions on matters important to them.

She added that, in her opinion, if a Planning Board member were to lose decorum, act unprofessionally, or raised direct or accusatory remarks toward a member of the public, such as pointing or yelling, that individual would likely be removed from their position, and she stated that such action would be appropriate.

Ms. Hodgkin next addressed a statement made during public comment earlier in the week regarding the Planning Board's request to meet with the development attorney involved in the Waterway project. She stated that a prior speaker had attributed denial of that request to the Mayor, but she said that was not entirely accurate. Instead, Ms. Hodgkin stated that Planning Director Meehan and City Manager Saldo had advised that it was not the best use of City resources for the attorney to meet with the Planning Board. She referenced an April 23 email exchange between herself and staff, and she read portions of that correspondence into the record.

According to Ms. Hodgkin, she had emailed asking whether the development attorney, Mr. Terrell, could attend the Planning Board's May 2 workshop, either in person or virtually. She stated that Ms. Meehan responded that, after discussion with Mr. Saldo, staff had concluded that such a meeting was not currently the best use of resources because the development agreement was not technically part of the recommendation before the Board on the conditional zoning application.

Ms. Hodgkin said she replied that the development agreement, rezoning application, and CZ text amendment were intertwined and that limiting the Planning Board's questions in that way was another "gut punch" to the Board. She stated that she wanted the public to understand that the Planning Board had in fact requested access to legal counsel and that the email record contradicted statements made at the prior meeting that no such request had been denied. She asked for clarity as to whether the decision had come from the Mayor, City Manager Saldo, Director Meehan.

Ms. Hodgkin questioned whether the Planning Board's efforts to ask questions regarding the development agreement had been perceived as overstepping into matters reserved for the Board

of Aldermen. She stated that the Planning Board's intent had not been to interfere or disrupt, but rather to fulfill its responsibility by inquiring about items within the development agreement that could affect the associated conditional zoning application and text amendment. She noted that these items had been presented to the Planning Board as interconnected.

Ms. Hodgkin further stated that the Planning Board was carrying out its role in reviewing and asking questions, and she referenced prior acknowledgment by the City's development attorney, Mr. Terrell, of the Board's contributions, including raising the need for annexation scheduling language within the agreement.

She then asked whether direction had been given to City staff to deny the Planning Board access to Mr. Terrell or his office for consultation on these matters by the Mayor.

Ms. Hodgkin also responded to a statement made during discussion of her nomination that she had sent "terse" emails to Ms. Meehan. She said she was unaware of the specific emails being referenced and expressed sadness that any concerns had apparently been discussed with aldermen rather than brought directly to her. She stated that she has long supported Ms. Meehan and believes it is appropriate for Planning Board members to question staff about ordinance items, interpretations, processes, and comparisons to other municipalities. She said she did not believe such conduct made her "terse."

Ms. Hodgkin rejected comments that she "controlled the table" and did not let others speak at Planning Board meetings. Ms. Hodgkin stated that she chairs a board of intelligent and capable men and has learned a great deal from them. She suggested that criticism of her meeting management likely referred to an instance in which she did not allow Alderman Kelley to interrupt a meeting outside the proper public comment period. Ms. Hodgkin stated that she runs meetings according to the agenda and Robert's Rules of Order and argued that doing so should not be construed negatively.

Ms. Hodgkin addressed what she described as a characterization of her as "divisive." She stated that the term carries strong negative connotations, often suggesting intentional discord or disregard for unity, and she expressed that she was offended by being described in that manner. She referenced a prior statement by Alderman Davis who said, "I am offended" and stated that, while others had expressed concern about implications of collaboration among Board members, she likewise found the label applied to her to be inappropriate and she too was offended.

Ms. Hodgkin stated that her response was not intended to escalate conflict, but rather to provide context and defend the value of open dialogue. She emphasized that disagreement, when rooted in sincerity and respect, can contribute to positive outcomes rather than division. She questioned whether all disagreement should be considered divisive, suggesting there is a distinction between productive conflict and destructive discord.

She further stated that many historical advancements were initially viewed as divisive but ultimately resulted in progress, and she cautioned against equating unity with agreement. Ms.

Hodgin emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives, stating that open and reasoned debate strengthens decision-making by refining ideas and challenging assumptions.

Ms. Hodgin asserted that her intent in raising questions and concerns has been grounded in honesty, transparency, and a desire for shared understanding, not in creating division. She stated that true divisiveness involves intent to harm or create conflict for personal reasons, which she rejected as a motivation.

She further expressed concern that labeling individuals as divisive can be used to deflect from addressing substantive issues. Ms. Hodgin emphasized the importance of allowing space for differing viewpoints and cautioned that suppressing disagreement in favor of superficial unity can lead to larger conflicts over time.

During this portion of her remarks, the Mayor interrupted and asked whether Ms. Hodgins could indicate how much longer she intended to speak, stating that other attendees had come for another important topic and that she had been speaking for approximately forty minutes. Ms. Hodgin responded that her own topic was important as well and stated that she was nearly finished.

She then resumed by asserting that labeling someone as divisive can be used to avoid engaging with the substance of that person's concerns. She stated that she speaks up not because she enjoys conflict, but because she believes in honesty, transparency, free speech, and doing what is right. She added that if individuals interpreted her comments as personal attacks, that was their misunderstanding, and she said that if she intended to single out one specific person, she would do so directly.

Ms. Hodgin stated that Southport has become increasingly divided in recent years and that this division, in her opinion, has been intentionally done. She warned that election season would likely intensify that division. She said the City had become a subject of criticism in Raleigh, in regional meetings, and in other municipalities. Referring to the Board's recent action concerning her reappointment, she encouraged citizens to observe carefully how candidates align themselves in the coming election.

She closed by reaffirming her commitment to respectful, open, and transparent conversations for the good of Southport, urging others to reject forced consensus and instead engage in difficult but meaningful exchanges of ideas that could lead to better outcomes for the community. She also referenced a recent editorial in the *State Port Pilot*, stating that it accurately reflected the background to what she described as a political effort against her, and she thanked the paper for what she called truthful and unafraid journalism.

Debbie Barnes –

Ms. Debbie Barnes addressed the Board and began by expressing appreciation for the recent Fourth of July Festival. She thanked Mr. Fosbury and the festival team for their efforts in

organizing the event. She also recognized Public Works Director Tom Stanley, Fire Chief Drew, and Police Chief Coring, along with their respective teams, for both the preparatory work and the daily operations required to support the festival.

Ms. Barnes commented on the positive feedback she received from others regarding the event, noting that many people remarked on the beauty and cleanliness of the City. She emphasized that maintaining those conditions requires significant effort and stated that those contributions should not be overlooked. She expressed her appreciation to all individuals involved in making the event successful.

Ms. Barnes then presented a suggestion related to public safety. She noted that, in her opinion, the Board has demonstrated a strong focus on safety in recent years, referencing measures such as four-way stops, one-way street designations, additional signage, and traffic-calming features installed on various streets.

She stated that while she supports pedestrian crosswalks, she has observed visibility challenges at certain locations. Specifically, she noted that when pulling out from West Street onto Howe Street, it can be difficult at times to see pedestrians approaching crosswalks or to safely make turning movements. Ms. Barnes clarified that she was not suggesting the removal of parking spaces but proposed that the Board consider modifying the use of those spaces near crosswalks, potentially designating them for smaller vehicles such as golf carts, bicycles, or similar uses, to improve visibility and enhance safety.

Sandy Spencer – 410 West Brunswick Street

Ms. Spencer addressed the Board and noted that she resides in a home her parents purchased in 1949. She stated that she would be speaking later regarding the Historic District but first wished to address concerns related to lighting and traffic safety.

Ms. Spencer stated that a streetlight previously located on the water side of Brunswick Street in front of her residence had recently been removed and had not been replaced. She noted that while there are other streetlights located further up the street near the intersection of Brunswick and Short Street and at the opposite end near Yacht Basin Drive, the area directly in front of her home is now very dark at night. She stated that it had been her understanding that streetlights are typically spaced at regular intervals within the City, and she requested that the Board consider addressing the lack of lighting in that area.

Ms. Spencer also expressed agreement with earlier comments made by Ms. Barnes regarding visibility and safety concerns at the intersection of West Street and Howe Street. She stated that due to pedestrians, planters, and parked vehicles near nearby businesses, visibility is significantly limited when attempting to enter or cross the intersection. Ms. Spencer stated that she has experienced multiple near-collisions at that location and expressed concern for public safety.

Ms. Spencer suggested that the Board consider implementing additional safety measures at the intersection, including the possibility of a traffic signal.

A motion to close public comment was made by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Spencer. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Spencer. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Approval of the Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of the March 13, 19, and April 7, 2025 Aldermen Meetings
2. EMS Franchise Agreement

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Alderman Spencer and seconded by Alderman Mosteller. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Agenda

1. Public Hearing – Local Historic District Overlay

A motion to go into the public hearing was made by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Spencer. The motion passed unanimously. The public hearing was then opened.

Planning Director Meehan addressed the Board and stated that the item before them was a public hearing for Case ZMA 25-02, a zoning map amendment to establish the Southport Local Historic District Overlay. She explained that, prior to any zoning map amendment, a duly advertised public hearing is required. She noted that Historic Preservation Commission Chair Charles Drew would provide a presentation on the history of the Commission, as well as an overview of the proposed district and design standards. She further stated that Historic Preservation Planner Penny Tysinger was also present to provide information regarding the designation process, and that staff would be available to answer questions following the presentation.

Chief Charles Drew, Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, addressed the Board and provided an overview of the Commission's work. He stated that the Commission was established following adoption of an ordinance by an ad hoc committee of the Board of Aldermen in September 2022, with members appointed on October 13, 2022. He noted that, over the past three years, the Commission has met regularly, often more than once per month, to develop rules of procedure, goals, and design standards.

Chair Drew stated that the concept of a local historic district had been discussed at numerous Board of Aldermen and Planning Board meetings. He noted that the Commission held two well-attended public forums, which were advertised through utility bill inserts, social media, the City's website, and local newspapers. He stated that public feedback received during those forums was documented and incorporated into the design standards presented to the Board.

Chair Drew explained that several properties within the City of Southport are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but noted that such designation does not provide regulatory protection. He stated that Southport's historic district boundary was established within the National Register program in 1980; however, that designation does not grant the City any regulatory standing.

As an example, Chair Drew referenced the Walker-Pike House, built circa 1800, which he described as one of the oldest known residential structures in Southport. He stated that, despite being located within the National Register district, the structure currently has no protection from demolition, provided that any redevelopment complies with the existing Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and zoning regulations.

Chair Drew explained that the proposed local historic district overlay would not prohibit demolition but would introduce a delay period of up to 365 days. He stated that this delay would allow the Historic Preservation Commission time to work with property owners to emphasize the historical significance of the structure and explore alternatives. He further noted that, if demolition ultimately proceeded, any new construction would be required to comply with the adopted historic design standards in rebuilding a new structure.

Chair Drew stated that the Historic Preservation Commission members appointed by the Board are individuals committed to the City of Southport and its preservation. He explained that the Commission has actively sought and incorporated public input throughout the process, noting that citizens participated through emails, attendance at meetings, and public input sessions that were publicly advertised and streamed. He stated that all feedback received, both supportive and critical, was documented, reviewed, and incorporated into the development of the design standards.

Chair Drew emphasized that the Commission views Southport as belonging to its residents and that public input and community support have been essential to the process. He acknowledged that similar efforts to establish a local historic district had been attempted in the past but were unsuccessful, and stated that the current Commission has dedicated significant time to educating the public and encouraging understanding of why it does not need to fail this time.

He stated that the Commission's guiding principles can be summarized as "preserve, promote, and prevent," explaining that the intent is to preserve Southport's heritage by protection, promote conservation, education, and cultural enrichment, and prevent demolition, destruction and the removal of historical character and significance.

Chair Drew further emphasized that the Commission does not intend to impose unnecessary restrictions on property owners. He stated that there are no requirements related to paint colors and that flexibility has been incorporated regarding building materials. He noted that the guidelines were developed with consideration and compromise, with the goal of creating standards that work collaboratively with the citizens of Southport.

Chair Drew stated that the Commission incorporated consideration and compromise into the development of the proposed guidelines. He explained that the historic district boundary line is largely consistent with the 1980 National Register district, with only minor adjustments made based on recommendations from the State Historic Preservation Office.

He noted that modifications to the boundary included adjustments along Kingsley Drive, inclusion of the south side of Brown Street after Brown Street was divided, and revisions within the Yacht Basin area. He explained that portions of the Yacht Basin were removed due to the presence of a significant number of non-contributing structures, stating that the area has already experienced substantial change over time. Chair Drew noted that some historically significant uses, such as working fish houses, are no longer present, though certain properties, including Potter's Seafood, remain within the proposed district. He stated that these boundary adjustments were made to better reflect existing conditions while still preserving remaining historic resources.

Chair Drew further explained that the original 1980 boundary extended across the waterfront to include areas such as Battery Island; however, the revised boundary was limited to the City's jurisdiction, ending at the high-water mark, in accordance with guidance from the State Historic Preservation Office.

He stated that the Commission has worked diligently for nearly three years to reach this stage and described the design guidelines as a "living breathing document" that may be revised over time as needed. He explained that the Commission reviewed and compared historic preservation standards from numerous municipalities across North Carolina, evaluating both more restrictive and more flexible approaches, and ultimately developed guidelines tailored specifically to Southport.

Chair Drew emphasized the unique character of Southport, noting its historical significance, coastal setting, and cultural identity. He referenced features such as the City's waterfront, historic landscapes, and long-standing community landmarks, stating that these elements contribute to Southport's distinct identity.

Chair Drew stated while some have suggested it may be too late to preserve the City's historic character, he believes there is still an opportunity to protect what remains.

Chair Drew stated that Southport's historic coastal character and charm are key reasons people choose to live in the community and emphasized the importance of preserving those qualities. He noted that the Historic Preservation Commission consists of seven members and two alternates and invited the commissioners present to stand in recognition of their service. He also acknowledged a former commissioner who had previously served and recognized additional individuals for their input and support of preserving Southport's historic character.

Chair Drew expressed appreciation for the time and effort contributed by the Commission members, noting that they have volunteered many hours to develop the proposed overlay and

guidelines. He reiterated that the Commission's intent is not to impose unnecessary regulation, but rather to preserve, promote, and prevent the loss of Southport's historic character.

He acknowledged that the proposed design standards and district boundaries are not perfect and may require future amendments and revisions. However, he emphasized that the Commission believes the overlay is an important step toward protecting the City's remaining historic resources.

Chair Drew clarified that properties within the proposed district would continue to be subject to the existing Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and other applicable regulations, with the overlay serving as an additional layer of protection specific to historic preservation.

He stated that the Historic Preservation Commission has completed the tasks assigned by the Board of Aldermen, including development of design standards and procedures, and noted that both the public and the Planning Board have participated in and reviewed the process. Chair Drew urged the Board to approve the proposed overlay district and stated that the future of Southport's historic character depends on the decision before them.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Planner Penny Tysinger addressed the Board and thanked them for the opportunity to speak. She stated that Chair Drew had provided a comprehensive overview and indicated that she would briefly summarize the process and remain available for questions.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger explained that the effort to establish the Historic Preservation Commission began in 2022 and has involved a multi-year process extending through 2025. She stated that during this time, various groups worked to develop the design standards, local designation report, and the proposed overlay zoning map. She noted that a consultant was engaged to assist with the process, but emphasized that the Commission provided substantial input to ensure the standards were tailored specifically to Southport.

She further explained that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed the materials and provided feedback, including recommendations to adjust the district boundary to remain within the City limits. Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger described the documents as "living documents," noting that they may be revised over time and that the materials presented represent what the Commission believes is the best approach for Southport at this time. She stated that feedback would be taken and changed as needed.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger stated that the Historic Preservation Commission made final recommendations at its June 4 meeting regarding three primary components: the design standards, the local designation report, and the overlay zoning map. She noted that the Planning Board subsequently reviewed and unanimously recommended approval of these items at its June 19 meeting, bringing the matter before the Board of Aldermen for consideration.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger clarified that the focus of the current public hearing is the zoning overlay map. Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger emphasized that the overlay would not replace existing zoning regulations, stating that all current zoning and building code requirements would continue to apply. She explained that the overlay would function as an additional layer intended to preserve the historic character of the area, primarily addressing the exterior appearance of properties as visible to the public, and would not regulate interior features unless requested by the property owner.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger also noted that preservation of the historic area has been identified as a priority in the City's comprehensive planning efforts, including both the current plan and the upcoming plan under development. She acknowledged the work of previous and current Boards in advancing the process and stated that, given the length and effort involved, staff hopes the Board will move forward with adoption.

She concluded by stating that staff is available to answer any questions following the public hearing and thanked the Board for its consideration.

The mayor opened the floor for public comment.

Debbie Barnes – 425 West West Street

Ms. Barnes addressed the Board and stated that her property would be located within the proposed overlay district. She noted that her home is not historic but expressed appreciation for living in Southport and being part of the community. Ms. Barnes commended the Historic Preservation Commission, stating that the document prepared was thorough and well done, and encouraged others to review it.

Ms. Barnes stated that she supports the concept of historic preservation but had several questions and concerns regarding implementation and potential impacts on property owners within the overlay district. She first asked whether existing properties would be "grandfathered" if they are not currently in compliance with the proposed standards, and whether property owners would be required to make changes to existing features.

She provided several examples of concerns related to the design standards that should be corrected. Ms. Barnes noted that her home is described in the documentation as having painted wooden shake siding, whereas it actually has vinyl siding designed to resemble that appearance. She stated that references in the document indicating vinyl siding is not appropriate raised concerns for her, particularly regarding future maintenance or replacement and the potential financial burden of required changes.

Ms. Barnes also referenced features of her home such as a screened porch with adjustable window panels, stating that the language in the document could be interpreted as discouraging or prohibiting such features. She further noted that her home includes metal hurricane shutters,

which differ from references in the document to wood shutters, and questioned whether those would be considered noncompliant.

Additionally, Ms. Barnes raised questions about decorative elements, such as custom cut designs incorporated into shutters, and whether such features would be permitted under the proposed standards. She also referenced a situation involving a temporary heating and cooling unit, noting that there should be flexibility in the guidelines to allow for temporary or emergency installations without requiring a lengthy approval process.

Ms. Barnes emphasized the importance of maintaining balance so that the overlay does not create financial hardship for property owners. She expressed support for the overall effort but stated that she would like to see additional clarity and flexibility in the standards.

She also stressed the importance of ensuring that residents within the overlay district continue to have a voice in how the standards are applied and modified over time, particularly as future boards or commissions may change.

Ms. Barnes acknowledged that she had not been aware of the full extent of the process earlier and stated that, had she known, she would have participated sooner. She concluded by reiterating her general support for historic preservation while emphasizing the need for practical considerations and clear processes moving forward.

Mayor Alt asked Chair Drew whether he would like to respond to the questions and concerns raised during public comment so that the information could be addressed on the record for those present and for those viewing the meeting later.

Chair Drew stated that it was a good opportunity for education and proceeded to respond to the concerns raised. He clarified that existing conditions would not be required to be brought into compliance retroactively. He stated that property owners would be permitted to maintain and replace existing materials, such as vinyl siding or windows, with similar materials, noting that the intent is to move forward rather than require changes to existing structures.

Chair Drew also acknowledged a discrepancy noted by Ms. Barnes regarding the description of her property and stated that a correction would be made.

Alderman Kelley asked whether an overarching statement could be included in the document to clearly indicate that existing features could be replaced with like materials.

Planning Director Meehan confirmed that such language is already included in the document and reiterated that property owners would not be required to retroactively alter existing conditions. She stated that this issue had been raised multiple times during the development process and was specifically addressed by the Commission.

Chair Drew further clarified that the Commission's review would focus primarily on the "streetscape," meaning the exterior features of a property visible from the public right-of-way, rather than side or rear yard elements.

He also addressed concerns regarding decorative features and temporary installations, indicating that such elements would not be subject to undue restriction and that temporary items, such as window units, would be addressed within the guidelines.

Following the discussion, Ms. Barnes indicated that her questions had been answered.

Mayor Alt thanked Chair Drew for his responses. A question was raised regarding whether certain properties could be exempt from the standards and included in the document.

HPC Planner Penny Tysinger responded by clarifying that the Historic Preservation Commission operates as a quasi-judicial board, meaning its decisions are made through a formal hearing process rather than through general or informal determinations. She explained that the Commission cannot make blanket statements about whether specific standards will or will not apply to individual properties outside of that process.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger stated that property-specific decisions must be made through a formal hearing, during which the applicant presents evidence and testimony, and the Commission evaluates the request based on the adopted standards. She emphasized that this process ensures fairness and consistency. She further noted that discussions outside of a formal hearing, including making commitments about outcomes, are not permitted, as ex parte communication is prohibited.

Mayor Alt then inquired whether the document would be searchable to assist users in locating specific information.

Chair Drew responded that the document would be available in a searchable format, allowing users to easily locate specific topics.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger added that all relevant documents, including the designation report, design standards, and overlay map, are currently available on the City's website. She noted that staff is available to discuss the materials with residents and that hard copies can also be provided upon request.

Mayor Alt then asked whether the term "appropriateness" is defined within the standards.

Chair Drew responded that it is addressed through the requirement for a Certificate of Appropriateness, which must be obtained for applicable work within the overlay district. He explained that each application would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis during a formal hearing, with the adopted guidelines serving as a framework for the Commission's decision-making.

Chair Drew further noted that while Commission membership may change over time, the appointment of members remains under the authority of the Board of Aldermen, providing a level of oversight through the City's governing body.

Alderman Mosteller stated that there is an appeals process associated with decisions of the Historic Preservation Commission, noting that the Board of Adjustment serves as the appellate body, similar to its role for Planning Board decisions.

Alderman Davis asked for clarification regarding what triggers review by the Historic Preservation Commission, specifically whether an application would first be denied by staff before being brought forward.

Planning Director Meehan explained that proposed work within the overlay district is categorized as either requiring a minor or major Certificate of Appropriateness, depending on the scope of the project, as outlined in the adopted standards. She stated that routine maintenance activities, such as painting, minor repairs, or small landscaping changes, would not require review. She further explained that minor items, such as fence removal, would be handled administratively by staff, while more substantial changes, such as removal of mature trees or alterations to walkways, would require a major certificate and be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.

During this discussion, a member of the audience asked whether a tree permit would require review by the Commission. Ms. Meehan confirmed that tree removals would require review, as they currently already do, and noted that the permit itself is free, though it does add an additional step to the process.

Alderman Davis then asked about replacement of siding materials, including aluminum and asbestos.

Ms. Meehan responded that the standards specifically address materials such as vinyl and aluminum siding, stating that while such materials are generally not permitted for new installations, existing materials may be maintained and replaced with like materials. She clarified that aluminum siding is specifically addressed in the standards.

Chair Drew added that asbestos materials cannot be reinstalled once removed, noting that such matters are governed by applicable regulations.

Alderman Kelley asked for clarification regarding common scenarios, including repainting shutters and replacing existing wood shutters with metal alternatives. Chair Drew stated that repainting existing shutters would not require review; however, replacing wood shutters with a different material, such as metal, would likely require application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger further clarified that the Historic Preservation overlay does not replace existing regulatory requirements. She stated that property owners must still

comply with all applicable zoning, building codes, and permitting requirements. She noted that certain materials, such as asbestos, are regulated under building codes, and that the Historic Preservation Commission would work in coordination with the Building Inspections Department on such matters.

Jim Todd – 209 Short Street

Mr. Todd addressed the Board and stated that he and his wife had moved to Southport approximately four years ago. He noted that they were drawn to the community in part because of its historic character and expressed overall support for the proposed historic preservation efforts.

Mr. Todd stated that he had recently reviewed the proposed standards, acknowledging that his review was limited compared to the multi-year process undertaken by the Commission. He commented that, based on his review, the major provisions appeared well-developed and aligned with the goal of preserving Southport's character.

He further noted that he and his wife own another property on West Street and recently renovated the front porch, intentionally designing it to reflect the traditional character of "old Southport was." He stated that this effort reflects his support for the goals of historic preservation and maintaining the community's aesthetic.

Mr. Todd stated, however, that he had some questions and concerns regarding the number and scope of items classified as "minor" Certificates of Appropriateness, noting that there were numerous items listed and that this raised concerns about the potential for overregulation. He stated that while insufficient regulation could be problematic, excessive regulation could also create challenges.

He specifically referenced provisions related to areas not visible from the street, such as side and rear yards, and questioned how those standards would be applied. Mr. Todd asked whether property owners would be required to obtain approval to remove items such as damaged or diseased trees in those areas, particularly following storm events.

He further inquired about the process for resolving disagreements between property owners and the Commission or staff, such as situations in which a homeowner believes a tree or feature should be removed, but the reviewing authority does not agree.

Mr. Todd concluded by reiterating his general support for the effort while expressing a desire for clarity regarding the scope of minor approvals and the process for handling potential disputes between property owners and the reviewing authority.

Historic Preservation Planner Penny Tysinger responded that each situation must be evaluated individually, noting that different circumstances may require different approaches. She clarified that in emergency situations, such as storm-related damage, normal permitting requirements may be waived, as emergencies are handled through a separate process.

Ms. Tysinger explained that tree removal requirements already exist and would continue to apply within the overlay district. She stated that if a property owner disagrees with a staff determination, there is an established appeals process through the Board of Adjustment.

She further noted that, in cases of disagreement, the City may consult with professional arborists and the Forestry Committee to provide additional expertise. She referenced that experienced individuals are often brought in to evaluate tree preservation or removal requests and stated that, in most cases, a resolution is reached through this collaborative approach.

Rich Bandera – 409 N Burrington Ave

Mr. Bandera expressed disagreement with the exclusion of the Yacht Basin area from the overlay district. He stated that, based on his experience in other coastal communities, areas with evolving or adaptively reused structures can still contribute to historic character. He noted that while some original uses, such as fish houses and ice houses, no longer exist, the overall form and historical significance of the area remain important. He referenced past development changes within the Yacht Basin and expressed the opinion that the area should be included in the overlay to help preserve what remains.

Mr. Bandera also raised concerns about certain provisions within the design standards, stating that some requirements appear excessive. He specifically referenced provisions related to minor Certificates of Appropriateness, noting that certain activities, such as planting in non-visible rear yard areas, would require approval, which he felt may be overly restrictive.

He further commented on the timeframe outlined for issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness, noting that the document allows up to 180 days for a decision, which he stated could be burdensome for property owners.

Additionally, Mr. Bandera referenced mapping and language within the designation report, specifically regarding an area identified as a potential historic overlay amendment extending toward Leonard Street. He stated that he had previously sought clarification on the meaning and implications of this designation and requested that the language be more clearly defined, particularly regarding whether it would allow for future expansion of the overlay district.

Mr. Bandera concluded by stating that he believes the Commission has done a strong job overall and characterized his comments as relatively minor concerns for clarification and refinement.

Chair Drew responded to Mr. Bandera's concern regarding the referenced boundary line, stating that the historic overlay district cannot be expanded without approval from both the State Historic Preservation Office and the Board of Aldermen.

Director Meehan clarified that the line referenced was part of a prior study area associated with a National Register boundary evaluation conducted around 2010. She explained that the study area was never formally adopted and does not represent an active or proposed expansion of the overlay district. It was only a true study.

Mayor Alt expressed concern that inclusion of such a line within documents could lead to future misinterpretation. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that any materials presented for adoption are clear and not subject to unintended interpretation.

Ms. Meehan confirmed that the proposed overlay district currently under consideration does not include that study boundary.

Alderman Kelley asked whether the map could be updated to remove any potentially confusing references. Ms. Meehan confirmed that updated maps would be used in the final documents and that the outdated study boundary could be removed from materials presented for adoption.

Alderman Lai suggested that the City clearly indicate that the study boundary is not relevant to the proposed overlay in order to avoid confusion. Ms. Meehan reiterated that the study boundary is not part of the overlay district.

Historic Preservation Planner Tysinger noted that the study boundary has historical context and may be retained for reference purposes in other materials, but acknowledged the concern about including it in documents subject to Board approval.

Mayor Alt reiterated that any maps included in the adopted materials should be clear and not open to interpretation regarding future expansion.

Mayor Alt then raised a question regarding whether the standards restrict planting in private yards.

Ms. Tysinger stated that she was not aware of any provision prohibiting such activity. However, Alderman Davis referenced specific language in the document indicating that planting or removal of trees in rear or non-visible side yards would require a minor Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mayor Alt expressed concern about the level of regulation implied by such provisions and emphasized the importance of ensuring the standards are reasonable and appropriate before adoption.

Chief Drew acknowledged that the document is not perfect and reiterated that it is intended to be a “living document.” He stated that provisions identified as problematic could be revised or removed.

Mayor Alt emphasized that the purpose of the public hearing is to identify and address such issues prior to adoption.

Chief Drew then addressed Mr. Bandera’s concern regarding the 180-day timeframe for Certificates of Appropriateness, clarifying that the timeframe applies to the entire review process, from application submission to final decision, and does not represent the expected turnaround time for staff review alone.

City Attorney Herman confirmed that the 180-day timeframe is established by state statute and represents the maximum allowable period for a decision to be rendered.

Jim Brown – 114 S Howe St

Mr. Brown stated that his property, known as the Thompson-Williamson House (circa 1873), is located within the historic district and listed on the National Register. He noted that he has owned the property since 1983 and has lived in Southport for approximately 50 years.

Mr. Brown further stated that he previously served on the Board of Aldermen for 24 years and recalled that a similar historic preservation effort had been considered approximately 20 years ago but was not adopted at that time.

He expressed his opinion that the timing is now appropriate and stated that he believes it is important to preserve the character of Southport's historic district.

Jean Johnson – 232 E Moore St

Ms. Jeannie Johnson addressed the Board and stated that she and her husband moved to Southport with the intention of honoring and preserving the historic charm that attracted them to the community.

Ms. Johnson expressed support for the overall principles of the proposed historic preservation effort and noted that she appreciated the opportunity to review the materials and learn more about the City's history. She acknowledged that she had not been aware of the full extent of the process earlier and, similar to other speakers, expressed a desire for improved clarity and communication moving forward.

She emphasized the importance of clearly defining which properties are included within the overlay district and how the standards will be applied and governed over time. Ms. Johnson also echoed prior comments regarding the Yacht Basin, stating that although it has changed over time, it still retains elements of historic character and may warrant consideration for inclusion.

Ms. Johnson commented on the number of items classified as minor Certificates of Appropriateness, noting that while the process and structure appear well-developed, the volume of items could benefit from further review. She stressed the importance of establishing a clear and accessible process for notifying residents of changes, updates, or interpretations of the standards, and ensuring that property owners have an opportunity to provide input.

She further discussed the need for ongoing communication and public engagement, noting that not all residents may be aware of meetings or notices despite outreach efforts.

Ms. Johnson also highlighted the importance of partnership between the City and property owners, particularly with respect to infrastructure and aesthetics. She referenced items in the standards related to utilities, such as placing lines underground and screening utility boxes, and

suggested that achieving these goals would require coordinated efforts between the City and residents.

She provided examples of existing conditions, including utility fixtures and street conditions, and stated that improvements in these areas would support the broader goals of historic preservation. Ms. Johnson emphasized that while residents may be willing to take on certain responsibilities, the City should also play a role in maintaining and enhancing the overall appearance and functionality of the historic district.

Ms. Johnson concluded by reiterating her support for the initiative and encouraged the Board to consider both resident impact and City partnership as the process moves forward.

Tal West – 6159 River Sound Cir

Mr. Tal West addressed the Board and stated that he is a member of the Historic Preservation Commission and has lived in Southport since 2019. He shared that he previously lived in Charlotte and observed that, in his opinion, that city did not adequately preserve its historic character.

Mr. West stated that Southport's historic charm and character are key reasons people are drawn to the community, noting that it is frequently recognized for its quaint appearance, historic buildings, and presence in films. He emphasized the importance of preserving these qualities for future generations.

He stated that, in his view, the City has been fortunate that large-scale development has not significantly altered the historic district in the past, noting that without protections, areas could have been redeveloped in ways inconsistent with the community's character.

Mr. West referenced past development proposals in the Yacht Basin area and expressed concern that, without preservation measures, such proposals could have resulted in development inconsistent with Southport's historic identity. He stated that historic preservation efforts are intended to prevent similar outcomes in the future.

He also noted that historic preservation programs are common in other communities, referencing examples in both North Carolina and neighboring states. He stated that many comparable historic coastal towns have established preservation districts and that Southport should do the same.

Mr. West acknowledged that some concerns have been raised regarding the proposed standards but emphasized that the document can be amended over time. He stated that adoption of the overlay would allow the City to begin the process of protecting its historic resources while continuing to refine the standards as needed.

He concluded by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Commission and for the opportunity to speak.

Josh Cline McGee -

Mr. McGee, an architect and member of the Historic Preservation Commission, addressed the Board and stated that he and his wife moved to Southport approximately six and a half years ago due to their appreciation for the City's historic homes and downtown character.

He referenced his experience in Charlotte, noting that historic buildings were demolished over time, including structures he believed would be preserved, and stated that those experiences influenced his support for historic preservation efforts.

Mr. McGee emphasized that the Commission worked over a three-year period to develop guidelines intended to balance preservation with practicality, stating that the goal was not to create overly restrictive standards. He noted that the focus of the guidelines is largely on maintaining the visual character of properties as seen from the street, while allowing for flexibility in materials that achieve a similar appearance.

Mr. McGee shared his professional background in architecture and development, noting his experience working with builders and developers. He stated that, in his experience, development is often driven by maximizing return on investment, which can lead to the loss of historic structures if protections are not in place.

He also stated that growth and development in Southport are inevitable, referencing infrastructure expansion and increased traffic as indicators of future growth. He emphasized the importance of guiding that growth to ensure quality development.

Mr. McGee noted that historic districts can contribute to maintaining and enhancing property values and attracting quality investment. He stated that establishing an overlay district would help preserve a defined area of historic character while allowing other areas to develop.

He concluded by expressing concern that, without adoption of the overlay, Southport could lose its historic character over time, and encouraged the Board to move forward with the proposal.

Sandy Spencer – 410 W Brunswick St

Ms. Sandy Spencer addressed the Board and stated that her home, which has been in her family since 1949 and dates back to approximately 1879, is currently listed on the historic registry. She expressed her desire to maintain its historic designation.

Ms. Spencer stated that she supports the concept of historic preservation and believes it is appropriate for the City to have the ability to implement such measures. However, she expressed concern that portions of the proposed document are overly specific and potentially too restrictive.

She referenced existing tree regulations and noted that two trees on her property require removal due to safety concerns, including recent storm damage. She expressed concern about requirements related to tree replacement, particularly given proximity constraints near her home.

Ms. Spencer concluded by reiterating her support for historic preservation while expressing concern that the current standards may be too detailed or restrictive in certain areas.

Jesse Pierce – 320 College St

Mr. Jesse Pierce addressed the Board and stated that he is a lifelong resident of Southport and has also served the community in both law enforcement and the fire department. He noted that his property has been in his family for multiple generations and expressed a strong personal commitment to preserving its history.

Mr. Pierce expressed opposition to the proposed historic preservation overlay, stating that he believes property owners should retain the ability to make decisions regarding their own property without additional regulatory requirements. He stated that he does not believe permits or approvals should be required for actions such as tree removal, particularly when safety concerns are involved.

He questioned whether regulatory approaches are the most appropriate method for preserving historic character and suggested that alternative mechanisms, such as private deed restrictions, could be used by property owners who wish to ensure long-term preservation.

Mr. Pierce also expressed concern about the potential for future misuse or overreach of the regulations, noting that while current leadership may act in good faith, future decision-makers may interpret or apply the standards differently.

Additionally, Mr. Pierce raised broader concerns regarding consistency in regulation, particularly in relation to development activity. He referenced situations in which larger-scale tree removal associated with development projects has occurred, while individual property owners may face restrictions, and stated that this creates an imbalance.

He further expressed concerns regarding infrastructure and development impacts within the community, including stormwater and growth-related issues, and suggested that these matters should also be considered in the context of policy decisions.

Mr. Pierce concluded by stating that, while he appreciates the effort and intent behind the proposal, he does not support its adoption and believes that preservation efforts should rely more on individual responsibility and community pride rather than regulation.

Amy Patterson – 102 W Nash St

Ms. Amy Patterson addressed the Board and expressed appreciation for the effort that has gone into developing the proposed historic preservation standards. She stated that she has prior experience living in a historic district and noted the importance of balancing preservation with practical considerations, including the cost of restoration and the availability of appropriate materials.

Ms. Patterson stated that she supports the use of alternative materials where appropriate and shared her experience renovating her own home with the intent of preserving its historic character. She noted that the process of restoration can be time-intensive and costly, particularly

given the limited availability of specialized contractors, and emphasized the importance of considering project timelines within the approval process.

She raised concerns regarding areas adjacent to the proposed district, including the Yacht Basin, Bay Street, and Kingsley Drive, and expressed the opinion that these areas should be considered in preservation efforts to prevent further incompatible development. She referenced recent and ongoing development activity and expressed concern about the potential impact of new construction that may not align with the historic character of the area.

Ms. Patterson also encouraged the Board to review and align the proposed standards with existing tree permitting requirements to ensure consistency. She further noted that building code requirements may impact the ability to replicate original historic features and suggested that this be considered within the guidelines.

Additionally, Ms. Patterson raised questions regarding current development activity at a nearby property and expressed concern about whether appropriate permits and oversight are in place, as well as how such projects would be addressed under the proposed guidelines.

Ms. Patterson concluded by reiterating her support for preservation efforts while emphasizing the need for clarity, coordination with existing regulations, and consideration of ongoing and future development.

Sherol Lappala – 316 W Brunswick St

Ms. Sherol Lappala addressed the Board and stated that she resides within the proposed overlay district and also owns a rental property on Lord Street. She shared her background in city and regional planning and a course in historic preservation, noting that she has restored multiple homes within the historic district and has been involved in real estate in the area for approximately 20 years.

Ms. Lappala expressed appreciation for the work of the Historic Preservation Commission and stated that she supported the proposed design standards for useful guidance for property owners undertaking renovations, additions, or new construction.

However, Ms. Lappala stated that she does not support requiring property owners to go through a formal approval process for certain routine improvements. She expressed concern that requirements such as obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness for items including roof replacement, windows, doors, walkways, or significant landscaping changes would be burdensome and could result in delays.

She also raised concerns regarding the potential cost and administrative burden associated with the process, including the possibility of needing professional assistance to navigate approvals. Additionally, she noted that not all members of the Historic Preservation Commission reside within the district and therefore may not be directly subject to the regulations.

Ms. Lappala questioned whether the level of regulation proposed is necessary, stating that many residents already take pride in maintaining and preserving their properties. She suggested that the design standards could be used as guidance rather than as enforceable requirements.

She further raised concerns regarding the potential staffing and administrative resources required to implement the program and suggested that the City may have other priorities to address.

Ms. Lappala concluded by reiterating her support for historic preservation in principle while expressing concern that the proposed regulatory process may be overly burdensome.

Bonnie Bray – 515 Quartermaster Dr

Ms. Bonnie Bray, a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, addressed the Board and stated that she resides outside of the proposed historic district. She noted that she and her husband were drawn to Southport because of its historic character and emphasized that the district's influence extends beyond its boundaries, impacting the broader community.

Ms. Bray stated that the historic district contributes to the City's identity, economic strength, and overall sense of place, and emphasized that preserving it benefits both residents within and outside of the district. She described Southport as a unique community and stressed the importance of protecting its historic character for future generations.

She acknowledged concerns raised regarding the proposed standards but emphasized that the document is intended to be applied on a case-by-case basis. She noted that Certificates of Appropriateness would be reviewed through a quasi-judicial process, providing property owners with an opportunity for a fair and transparent review.

Ms. Bray further stated that while the guidelines serve as direction, the process allows for consideration of individual circumstances. She expressed that preservation efforts should not rely solely on voluntary actions and emphasized the need for a formal mechanism to protect historic resources.

She encouraged the Board to move forward with the proposed overlay district, noting that prior efforts to establish such measures had not been successful. She stated that the current proposal reflects significant effort and local input and is tailored specifically to Southport.

Ms. Bray concluded by urging the Board to take action to preserve the City's historic character, emphasizing that without a regulatory framework, significant historic resources could be lost.

City Clerk Deviney stated that two emails had been received and would be read into the record.

Russell Family – 416 E Bay St

The Russells expressed concerns regarding the treatment of their property in relation to the proposed historic district overlay. The correspondence stated that while the existing structure on the property is newly constructed, the land itself holds historical significance, including its

association with the former Caroon Crab Factory and prior ownership by individuals noted in Southport's history.

The Russell family asserted that the property has been inconsistently treated in past City actions, including the denial of a variance request to build within a historic footprint and prior interactions with City staff. The letter also referenced concerns regarding potential future use of adjacent rights-of-way areas for public parking and questioned the rationale for excluding the property from the proposed historic district boundaries.

The correspondence requested that the Board reconsider decisions related to the property's exclusion from the historic district and emphasized the importance of consistent application of preservation standards.

Shelley Ploe Facchina –

Ms. Facchina expressed support for the proposed local historic district overlay. The correspondence referenced the Planning Board's recommendation for approval of the district, following its consideration at the June 19, 2025 meeting, and voiced agreement with that recommendation.

Mayor Alt announced that all individuals who had signed up to speak had been heard and requested a motion to close the public hearing.

A motion was made by Alderman Carroll and seconded by Alderman Kelley. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Alt then called for a brief recess. 8:40 pm – 8:50 pm

H. Committee Reports

Mayor Alt reconvened the meeting and proceeded to the next agenda item, Committee Reports.

Alderman Lai reported that the ABC Board had recently met, noting that sales were slightly down but remained strong overall, with expectations for improvement in the coming month.

No additional committee reports were presented.

I. Manager's Report

City Manager Saldo provided the Manager's Report, noting the ribbon cutting and that the Moore Street Bridge at Price's Creek had officially reopened following prior damage and reconstruction. He also announced that pre-orders for the City's specialty license plate would begin the following day, with a requirement of 500 pre-registrations before submission to the General Assembly.

J. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Alt provided comments to the Board indicating that he intends to bring forward several items in August for consideration. He stated that he would request the Board consider a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) amendment requiring that all text amendment recommendations be reviewed by the City Attorney during the Planning Board phase. He explained that this legal review would ensure compliance with applicable North Carolina statutes and relevant court rulings prior to submission to the Board of Aldermen. He further noted that the legal opinion should be provided in writing and included in both the Planning Board and Board of Aldermen meeting minutes to ensure clarity in the record.

Mayor Alt also stated that attention must be given to statutory “shot clock” deadlines governing Planning Board reviews. He emphasized that the legal review process must be structured to ensure deadlines are met in order to avoid automatic approvals or potential legal challenges. He indicated that he would request the Board direct the City Manager to develop proposed UDO language addressing these requirements. He referenced a recent situation in which a Planning Board action resulted in significant delays following a Board of Adjustment decision, noting concerns about potential liability and the need to avoid prolonged deliberations. He emphasized the importance of training and improved coordination among boards to prevent similar issues in the future.

On a separate matter, Mayor Alt discussed recent coordination with the Rural Planning Organization (RPO), noting that he and the Mayor Pro Tem have engaged with staff to advocate for inclusion of smaller, locally significant infrastructure projects. He referenced ongoing concerns related to a deteriorating culvert under Moore Street at Bonnets Creek, which has experienced repeated failures during storm events. He noted that while the RPO typically focuses on larger regional projects, local projects with significant public impact should also be considered. Mayor Alt further stated that recent collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the Cape Fear RPO, and City staff has been productive, and he expressed cautious optimism that additional progress may be made in the coming weeks.

K. Staff Reports

Staff reports were included in the agenda packet.

L. Board Comments

Alderman Lai commended staff and the Historic Preservation commission for their work on the historic district effort and thanked residents for their participation in the public hearing.

Alderman Spencer expressed appreciation for public attendance and input, emphasizing the importance of community engagement. He also raised concerns regarding property maintenance requirements and permitting processes, and noted broader concerns about regulation and storm resilience.

Alderman Kelley commented on the reopening of the Moore Street Bridge and ongoing coordination with transportation partners on additional projects.

Alderman Mosteller thanked staff and the Historic Preservation Commission for their work and acknowledged the upcoming resignation of the City's Animal Protective Services Officer, expressing appreciation for her service and requesting further discussion regarding the program's structure. She also requested that a previously discussed item regarding bed and breakfast events be brought back for further Board consideration by Planning staff.

Alderman Davis and Alderman Carroll had no comments.

Mayor Alt provided clarification regarding statutory authority over development agreements, noting that such authority rests with the governing body and not the Planning Board, and emphasized the importance of maintaining clear communication and collaboration between boards.

M. Closed Session NCGS 143-318.11

A motion was made to go in to closed session by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Lai. Motion carried unanimously

The Board entered closed session at 9:09 pm.

A motion was made to come out of closed session by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Spencer. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board came out of closed session at 9:45 pm.

N. Adjourn

Chief Coring addressed the Board regarding comments made earlier concerning the Animal Protective Services (APS) program. He stated that he was taken by surprise by the discussion and wanted to clarify the current status of the program and its operations within the Police Department.

Chief Coring explained that the APS program was incorporated into the Police Department following discussions with the City Manager at the time, and that he has remained committed to maintaining the program's standards and mission. He noted that APS remains an important and valued function of the department and emphasized that both he and his staff are dedicated to its continued success.

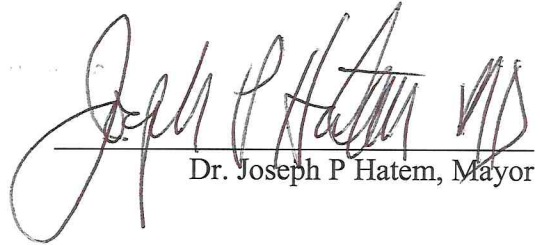
He further stated that he had recently received notice of the APS Officer's resignation and had not yet had a direct conversation with her regarding that decision. Despite this, he emphasized that there have been no known operational issues or concerns within the program and that coordination between APS and the Police Department has been positive.

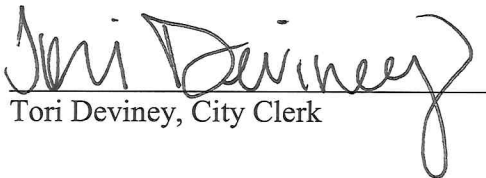
Chief Coring stated that the department has already identified an internal candidate to begin training and shadowing to ensure continuity of service. He emphasized that the program will continue without interruption and that the level of service to the community will be maintained.

He concluded by expressing his desire to reassure both the Board and the public that the APS program remains stable, that no negative circumstances led to the resignation to his knowledge, and that the department remains fully committed to carrying the program forward.

A motion was made by Alderman Carroll and seconded by Alderman Kelley to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.


Dr. Joseph P Hatem, Mayor


Tori Deviney, City Clerk

