



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN – REGULAR MEETING  
COMMUNITY BUILDING  
223 E BAY ST, SOUTHPORT NC 28461**

August 4, 2025 | 9:00 AM

**Present Members:**

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

**Absent Members:**

**Staff Present:**

City Manager Noah Saldo, Public Information Officer ChyAnn Ketchum, Community Relations Director Allayna Taylor, Police Chief Todd Coring

**Others Present:**

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**A. Call to Order**

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

**B. Invocation**

**C. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Alt led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**D. Public Comment**

Jason Robbins -

Mr. Robbins, speaking as broker in charge of Coldwell Banker Seacoast Advantage Office, addressed item 2 on the agenda regarding event ordinance and process improvement. He described Howe street closures during events create challenges for his business, including delivery disruptions, GPS misdirection, and accessibility issues for clients with limited mobility. Robbins emphasized that while events are planned months in advance with known logistics, businesses often don't learn about street blockages until they're already happening. He requested better proactive communication and suggested workshopping solutions with businesses on affected streets including South Howe

Street, South Davis Street, East Bay Street, East Nash Street, and East Moore Street.

City Manager Noah Saldo read two emailed comments.

Andrew Miller questioned the transparency of the recent license plate design competition, specifically why the winning submission appeared to be an example design and requested information about who created it.

Roscoe Ingalls, a property owner in the historic section, strongly opposed regulations being proposed by the historic committee.

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

A motion was made by Alderman -- and seconded by Alderman -- to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **F. Special Recognition**

1. John Moseley from the NC Maritime Museum on the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Burning of Fort Johnston

John Moseley from the NC Maritime Museum presented a report on the 250th Anniversary of the Burning of Fort Johnston event held on July 19th. He reported remarkable success with 220 people attending indoor presentations and 387 people waiting for the infantry and artillery demonstration. The total estimated attendance exceeded 1,500 people over the weekend. Moseley thanked the city for support and outlined future plans continuing through 2033, including potential collaborations with Bald Head Island on the British invasion of 1776. He also expressed interest in hosting World War II USO reenactments, noting he has records of the actual USO that operated at Fort Johnston during the war.

#### **G. Agenda**

1. Animal Protective Services (APS)- Alderman Mosteller

Alderman Mosteller began by clarifying this was a discussion about reinstating the Animal Protective Services department as a separate department, not about personnel. She emphasized her appreciation for the police department while arguing that maintaining quality APS services requires recruiting a subject matter expert with specific skills including ordinance implementation, TNR program management, grant writing, community education, and relationship building with state organizations and local veterinarians.

Alderman Mosteller detailed the unique responsibilities of the APS position, arguing these duties differ significantly from sworn police officer work and shouldn't be placed within the police department's chain of command. She highlighted the community's 2018 shift from animal control to animal welfare approach and the success of the standalone department from 2018-2023.

Alderman Mosteller praised Dr. Travis of River Road Animal Hospital for her volunteer contributions, including supporting the TNR program, providing emergency medical care, and hosting the city's temporary holding facility. She argued these professional relationships require a department head-level APS professional with authority to represent the department.

Mosteller moved to reinstate the Animal Protective Services department as a standalone department reporting directly to the city manager with the APS officer serving as the department head, effective immediately. Alderman Rebecca Kelley seconded.

Alderman Lowe Davis questioned whether this constituted a personnel issue that should be handled by the city manager rather than the board. City Manager Saldo clarified that while it could go either way, state statute allows the board to create, abolish, or change the structure of city departments, making the motion proper as long as it doesn't veer into personnel matters.

Police Chief Todd Coring expressed surprise at the discussion, noting he hadn't been aware of concerns despite previous budget discussions. He described how APS was integrated into the police department under the previous city manager, emphasizing that nothing about APS operations had changed. Coring detailed the benefits of the current structure, including improved communications through the CAD system, radio coordination, and officer support for calls.

Chief Coring noted that current APS officer Kate Marshall had resigned and that interim coverage was in place with Officer Ward shadowing Marshall to learn procedures. He reported having 14 applications for the position and emphasized their commitment to maintaining professional standards.

Alderman Davis inquired about continued police support if APS became separate, with Chief Coring explaining the enhanced communication benefits of the current structure while noting they would continue providing assistance as needed.

Mayor Alt questioned the safety benefits of the current structure, with Chief Coring explaining how CAD integration allows real-time location tracking and immediate response capability.

Mayor Pro Tem Mosteller argued that safety had always been maintained

through cooperative relationships and that other city departments operate safely without police integration. She emphasized the need for a subject matter expert as department head to continue building the program established over five years as a standalone department.

Kate Marshall, the current APS officer, was invited to speak about her experience. She explained that animal welfare nationally is moving away from policing toward separate departments, citing Elizabeth City's recent transition. Ms. Marshall described restrictions she experienced working under police chain of command in her previous position in Ohio, where animal treatment decisions were influenced by supervisory preferences rather than animal welfare expertise.

Ms. Marshall emphasized the critical nature of life-and-death decisions regarding sick or injured animals, noting these require immediate determination based on animal sheltering experience and budget considerations. She explained that while Chief Coring had allowed her to operate autonomously, this was not typical chain of command structure and created uncertainty for future officers who might lack the confidence to make independent decisions.

Alderman Kelley questioned why a separate department was necessary if the current autonomous arrangement was working, with Ms. Marshall explaining this was only possible because of the current leadership's approach, which might not continue under different supervision.

Ms. Marshall also noted the loss of grant opportunities since joining the police department, explaining that organizations like Petco Love no longer provide grants due to the larger budget pool associated with police department classification.

Discussion continued regarding the pros and cons of both structures, with various board members expressing concerns about consistency, professional relationships, and operational effectiveness.

Alderman Kelley made a motion to call the vote. Alderman Spencer seconded the motion.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion resulted in a tie:

Aye - Alderman Lai  
Aye - Alderman Spencer  
Aye - Alderman Kelley  
Nay - Alderman Lowe  
Nay - Alderman Carroll  
Nay - Alderman Mosteller

Due to the tie, the Mayor cast the deciding vote in favor of the motion. The motion carried, 4–3, with the Mayor breaking the tie.

Mayor Alt then asked Alderman Mosteller to reinstate her motion.

Alderman Mosteller made the motion to reinstate the Animal Protective Services department as a standalone department reporting directly to the city manager with the APS officer serving as the department head. The second was made by Alderman Kelley.

The motion was put to a vote.

Aye - Alderman Mosteller

Aye - Alderman Carroll

Nay - Alderman Lai

Nay - Alderman Spencer

Nay - Alderman Kelley

Nay - Alderman Davis

The motion failed 4-2.

## 2. Event Ordinance and Process Improvement

Community Relations Director Allayna Dail Taylor presented a proposed event ordinance to establish a formal process and permit for events impacting normal flow in Southport. The initiative was driven by feedback from downtown business roundtables, nonprofit partners, and city departments indicating the current process lacks clarity and communication.

The ordinance would designate the Community Relations department as the central contact point, coordinating with city staff and organizers to review events based on safety, logistics, and city resources. The process includes a \$100 application fee, waived for city-sponsored events, with other costs following existing fee schedules based on event size and scope.

Director Taylor addressed Jason Robbins' public comment concerns by explaining the ordinance would require lettering businesses and residents within the event footprint plus one block radius, providing better advance notice than currently exists. She clarified this wouldn't guarantee city approval but would establish structured review processes.

The ordinance requires events with 500+ expected attendees to obtain permits, including vendors in the count. Director Taylor and City Manager Saldo discussed the threshold, wanting to avoid including smaller community building events or weddings while capturing large-scale events requiring

street closures.

Alderman Mosteller asked detailed questions about insurance requirements, fire safety plans, notification processes, and approval timelines. Director Taylor explained that insurance certificates would be required at step 2 of the process, with options for annual policies or single-event coverage through platforms like Eventiny at \$54-100 for million-dollar policies.

Fire safety plan requirements would vary by event size and be determined by the fire marshal, ranging from basic first-aid kits to on-site EMS depending on the event's scope and fire department assessment.

Alderman Davis reminded the board of the policy requiring public hearings for new ordinances, suggesting delay for proper public notice despite the ability to proceed immediately.

Mayor Alt suggested adding weather-related closure authority to ensure city officials can shut down events during dangerous conditions, noting previous experiences where event organizers resisted closure despite safety concerns.

Alderman Mosteller requested fee consolidation sheets to clarify costs for different types of events, noting current confusion about barricade, fire, and other fees.

Discussion covered notification methods, with Director Taylor explaining the current lettering requirement would be event organizer responsibility with verification checklists. Board members discussed expanding to text and email notifications for businesses and residents who opt in, while maintaining compliance with government communication requirements.

Alderman Lowe Davis moved to schedule a public hearing and discussion and decision on the event ordinance for August 14th. Alderman \_\_\_\_\_ seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### 3. City Welcome Sign Replacement

Director Taylor reported the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) notified the City that several "Welcome to Southport" signs are in poor condition and require replacement. She explained that replacement signs are available as a complete package, including fabrication, printing, and installation, at a cost of \$2,500 per sign. There are four signs total, with two identified by NCDOT as needing immediate replacement or removal due

to their condition.

Director Taylor noted that the City could choose to replace all four signs at once to ensure consistency and uniform lifespan moving forward. The proposed updated design would include "Welcome to Southport," the City's tagline "Home of the Salubrious Breezes," and a reference to the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival.

Alderman Davis asked whether all of the signs are dilapidated. Director Taylor confirmed that all are in rough condition, and that NCDOT has indicated that two must either be replaced or will be removed due to their condition.

Alderman Spencer asked whether the deterioration includes the rider signs, such as those honoring Quinton McCracken and referencing the Fourth of July Festival. Director Taylor confirmed that it does and explained that a proposed updated sign could read: "Welcome to Southport, Home of the Salubrious Breezes, Location of the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival since 1795."

Alderman Kelley stated that she did not support including the phrase "Salubrious Breezes," expressing concern about its interpretation. Alderman Davis reacted with surprise to the comment. Director Taylor responded that the final design would be based on the preference of the Board.

Mayor Alt then directed the discussion toward funding, asking whether funds were available if the Board chose to proceed with replacement at an estimated total cost of \$10,000.

City Manager Saldo confirmed that sufficient capital funds are available for the project, stating that the City could cover the estimated \$10,000 cost for replacing all four signs.

Mayor Alt stated he would entertain a motion from the Board regarding how to proceed.

Alderman Kelley expressed her preference to replace the signs using the existing design and language, specifically excluding the phrase "Salubrious Breezes."

City Manager Saldo clarified that the current signage includes references such as "Home of Quinton McCracken," "Fourth of July Festival," and "Bird Sanctuary," and noted that the Board could approve replacing the signs with the same elements currently displayed, with or without modifications such as the tagline.

Alderman Kelley asked for confirmation that “Salubrious Breezes” is not currently included on any of the signs. Director Taylor confirmed that it is not presently displayed but explained that it is the City’s tagline and had been suggested as part of an effort to create uniform signage moving forward.

Mayor Alt noted that any motion would need to be clearly defined.

Alderman Mosteller asked whether the updated design would replace the state flag with the City seal. Director Taylor confirmed that the City seal would be incorporated into the new signage as part of the update. Alderman Mosteller also inquired about the wording related to the Fourth of July Festival, noting that the proposed phrasing “Location of the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival since 1795” would be longer than what is currently displayed. Director Taylor acknowledged that it is more extensive but stated that the wording has been approved.

Alderman Spencer asked whether the festival designation would remain on rider signs. Director Taylor explained that while the current configuration uses rider signs, the proposed design would incorporate the information directly onto the main sign panel as a single, unified piece.

Alderman Carroll noted that one of the existing signs already includes a festival reference on the main sign, though not with the expanded wording. Mayor Alt confirmed that the updated signs would be slightly larger to accommodate the revised design.

Alderman Kelley pointed out that one of the signs includes a rider recognizing Quinton McCracken and stated that honoring local individuals in this manner should be preserved. Director Taylor responded that the City could choose to retain existing rider signs or replace only the main “Welcome to” portion, noting that removal of riders is also an option depending on the Board’s direction.

Alderman Kelley also questioned whether the City still holds a “Bird Sanctuary” designation. Alderman Mosteller confirmed that the designation remains in effect under the City’s animal welfare ordinance.

Alderman Davis suggested that the signage could alternatively include a designation such as “Tree City USA.”

Director Taylor reiterated that all four signs are in deteriorated condition, with two in such poor condition that North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has indicated they must either be replaced or removed. She noted that if the Board chose to replace only two signs at this time, one of the remaining signs, such as the one on Caswell Avenue, could remain in place temporarily. She suggested that replacing two signs now would allow the City

to establish a consistent design for future replacements while managing costs.

Alderman Kelley stated that this approach aligned with her motion, but emphasized the need to determine the exact wording and design of the signs. She clarified that her motion included removing the phrase “Salubrious Breezes” and replacing only the two most deteriorated signs, with consideration given to replacing the remaining two signs at a later date unless there is a cost advantage to replacing all four at once.

Director Taylor confirmed that she had been quoted a flat rate of \$2,500 per sign, with no identified cost savings for replacing all four simultaneously.

Alderman Lai commented that while he is familiar with Quinton McCracken and supports honoring him, many visitors may not recognize the name.

Alderman Mosteller asked which specific signs are in the worst condition. Director Taylor stated she did not have the full correspondence in front of her.

City Manager Saldo indicated that the most deteriorated signs are likely located on NC 211 and East Leonard Street.

Alderman Kelley agreed with that assessment and asked when NCDOT planned to remove the signs. Director Taylor explained that NCDOT has been waiting on direction from the City, noting that the project originated during a previous administration, was tabled for a period of time, and has recently been brought back forward for consideration.

Alderman Kelley asked whether the existing signs could be auctioned or otherwise repurposed to help offset replacement costs of the other signs. City Manager Saldo stated that once removed, the signs would be considered surplus property and could potentially be retained and disposed of in a manner such as auctioning.

Alderman Kelley then formally stated her motion: to replace the two signs identified as most deteriorated, to exclude the phrase “Salubrious Breezes,” and to proceed with the language “Home of the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival” and inclusion of the City seal.

Mayor Alt asked if there was a second to the motion which was provided by Alderman Lai.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **H. Manager's Report**

City Manager Saldo provided several updates to the Board.

He reported on the City's specialty license plate initiative, noting that 110 pre-applications have been received toward the required 500. He stated that applications have been submitted from both within North Carolina and out of state. He encouraged interested individuals to obtain an application at City Hall, through the City's website, or by contacting the Public Information Officer.

City Manager Saldo also provided an update on stormwater maintenance efforts. He stated that Public Works crews will be working throughout the week in the areas of Fodale Avenue, Cape Harbor Drive, and Memory Lane to clean stormwater ditches and improve system flow in those areas.

He congratulated staff, including Ms. Taylor and other departments, on the success of the recent food truck rodeo event, noting strong attendance from both residents and visitors.

City Manager Saldo further informed the Board that an updated list of active capital projects had been provided at their seats. He explained that the list outlines the status of major projects, including next steps and timelines. He added that the City plans to publish this information on the City website and update it monthly to keep both the Board and the public informed.

City Manager Saldo concluded his report.

## **I. Mayor's Comments**

Mayor Alt provided an update regarding discussions related to the potential development of a YMCA facility in the City. He explained that the concept originated following discussions surrounding the Waterway (formerly Indigo) project, when Alderman Carroll suggested exploring the possibility of a YMCA. This led to a series of meetings involving representatives from the YMCA, Bald Head Island Limited, Brunswick County, and the organization that operates senior centers in the area.

Mayor Alt reported that Bald Head Island Limited has agreed to fund a feasibility study to evaluate whether a YMCA facility could be developed within the City. He stated that the funding has already been provided to the City, and that the Board will take formal action at an upcoming meeting to amend the budget and transfer the funds to the YMCA to initiate the study. He noted that the results of the feasibility study will be presented to the City for review and further discussion.

Mayor Alt also highlighted the Manager's Roundtable initiative, noting that it provides an opportunity for local businesses to meet regularly with City staff. He stated that these meetings are anticipated to occur monthly and described the effort as a positive step toward improving communication and engagement with the business community.

Mayor Alt then discussed broader communication challenges between the City and the public. He referenced recent public feedback related to the Waterway project, noting that despite proper notification and adherence to required processes, some members of the public appeared to have misunderstandings about the project, including concerns about access points. He emphasized that the public hearing process functioned as intended, with citizens providing input, staff and boards reviewing feedback, and recommendations being developed for further consideration.

He further noted that similar communication challenges exist regarding the City's stormwater efforts. Mayor Alt stated that the City has undertaken numerous stormwater improvements, including drainage repairs, ditch clearing, infrastructure upgrades, mapping, engineering studies, and grant-funded projects. He acknowledged, however, that these efforts are not always widely recognized or understood by the public.

Mayor Alt expressed concern that despite the City's ongoing work, there remains a perception that little is being done. He emphasized the importance of improving communication to better inform residents about City initiatives and accomplishments. He also encouraged collaboration with local media outlets, including *The State Port Pilot*, to help share information about City projects and positive outcomes with the community.

Mayor Alt concluded his comments by reiterating the need for more effective communication to ensure that residents are aware of the work being done on their behalf.

## **J. Board Comments**

Alderman Carroll expressed support for building on the City Manager's efforts to engage with local businesses and proposed the creation of an ad hoc committee to review how neighboring communities structure business advisory committees. He explained that the goal would be to establish a mechanism for businesses to provide regular feedback to the Board. Alderman Carroll stated that he would be willing to serve on such a committee and suggested that other Board members who own businesses in the City may also be appropriate participants.

Mayor Alt responded that the formation of committees is typically within the purview of the Mayor. While indicating he was not opposed to the concept, he asked whether the Board could delay action until the May 14 meeting to allow

time to determine whether an existing model or framework could be utilized. He referenced examples from neighboring municipalities, noting that the Town of Oak Island has an established business advisory board.

Alderman Carroll stated that he had already begun gathering information from Oak Island and had discussed the concept with the City Manager. He noted that staff may be able to compile relevant materials and present options without the need for a separate advisory committee to conduct that research.

Mayor Alt reiterated that while he wasn't opposed, he asked that Alderman Carroll request to postpone formal action until the May 14 meeting to allow staff to assemble the information for Board review.

Alderman Carroll agreed to delay the request and stated that he would provide the information he has collected to the City Manager so that it can be included on the upcoming agenda.

Alderman Davis clarified comments made earlier regarding communication with local media, noting that the City cannot direct coverage by *The State Port Pilot*. He stated that he understood the Mayor's comments to be a request or hope rather than a directive.

Alderman Davis suggested that, as an alternative method of improving public communication, the City could explore publishing a regular update in the newspaper. He proposed that the City Manager consider either purchasing space for a recurring report or determining whether the newspaper might be willing to provide space for such updates. He remarked that this could be an effective way to reach residents, as compared to more direct outreach methods.

Mayor Alt responded that he would defer that consideration to the City Manager to determine feasibility. He also reiterated that his earlier comments were not intended to direct the newspaper, but rather to express a desire for increased public awareness of City efforts.

Alderman Spencer expressed support for efforts to strengthen engagement with local businesses and stated that he would be willing to participate in any initiative or committee formed for that purpose. He noted a perceived disconnect between the City's focus on events that attract visitors and the needs of local businesses. Alderman Spencer referenced feedback from a recent Manager's Roundtable meeting, stating that some business owners indicated they do not experience increased success during large events. He emphasized the importance of reevaluating how the City interacts with and supports local businesses.

Alderman Kelley agreed with Alderman Davis regarding the need for improved communication with the public and supported the idea of utilizing *The State Port Pilot* as a mechanism to share the City Manager's weekly updates. She stated that providing regular information to the public could help demonstrate the work

being done by the City. Alderman Kelley also expressed appreciation to Director. Taylor and staff for their efforts.

**K. Closed Session NCGS 143-318.11**

1. Motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(6)-To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee  
(5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract

Mayor Alt stated that the Board would consider entering into Closed Session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11 for the purpose of discussing personnel (human resource) matters.

Mayor Alt then entertained a motion to enter Closed Session which was provided by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Lai.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Board entered closed session at 11:08 am.

A motion was made by Alderman Kelley and seconded by Alderman Lai to come out of closed session.

The Board came out of closed session at 12:38 pm

**L. Adjourn**

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

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:38 pm.



Dr. Joseph P. Hatem, Mayor

  
Tori Deviney, City Clerk

