

THE TOWN OF SWANSEA
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 10, 2026
6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Mayor Doris Simmons
Pro Tem Michael Luongo
Councilwoman Angie Alley
Councilwoman Melissa Williams
Councilman Tom Daugherty

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 by Mayor Doris Simmons.

The town had a quorum for the meeting.

Councilman Luongo did the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance was given by all.

The Mayor shared information regarding the South Carolina Community Development Association Annual meeting. From May 6-8, 2026, in Florence.

Councilman Luongo added some additional information, with the Registration cost: \$280 (members)/ \$325 (non-members)

Council agreed that only one attendee may be appropriate due to budget constraints.

Councilman Dougherty stated he did not think it was a good use of taxpayer money to send all to the meeting. The decision was postponed until the March 23 meeting.

The Mayor requested that Council members acknowledge emails to confirm receipt.

The Mayor proposed adjusting the meeting structure to begin the meeting at 5:00 p.m., conduct an Executive Session from 5:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., then begin the public meeting at 6:00.

Atty: Ron Scott, legal advisor, clarified that if the meeting starts at 5:00 P.M., it must be publicly advertised as such. Changing the meeting time would require an ordinance amendment.

There was no vote; Council leaned toward using Special Call Meetings as needed rather than changing the Ordinance.

The Mayor shared the status of the Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Swansea has been offered assistance.

The Town does not have a valid Comprehensive Plan. The last known version is 20 years old and missing.

The Mayor stated that the town does not have one. What the constituents saw before were just pictures.

John Hanson of the Midlands Council of Government (OG) offered to complete the plan in 6 months. In addition to being able to split the cost over two Fiscal years.

An additional contract would be necessary for assistance with zoning and annexation.

There was a discussion about whether the Hospitality Tax (H-Tax) fund could be used legally; Attorney Ron Scott noted it was a gray area, and only tourism-related portions might qualify.

Council discussed forming an H-Tax Commission Advisory Board made up of Residents and Business Owners. The purpose is to review and recommend eligible uses. Council will have volunteer recruitment.

Councilman Luongo wanted to know how out of compliance the town is.

The Mayor responded that it should be updated every 10 years. The last time it was done was 20 years ago.

Councilman Lungo shared what the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan are. Legally required by the local government by the act of 1994, allows the creation and updating of these plans.

Councilwoman Alley wanted to know whether H-Tax could pay for it on 7/1/2026 and use some of the funds for the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilman Dougherty was concerned as to who notifies the town that it should be updated.

The Mayor informed Council that the town is being considered for a Homeland Security Cybersecurity Grant via SLED. If awarded, this grant could fund upgrades to computers and Cybersecurity Systems. The town is awaiting an application for details. The Mayor indicated they would put our name on the list for possible grant funding.

The Town Park Rules: Councilwoman Alley told Council she sent an email regarding the Park Rules to the Town's Attorney. Attorney Scott shared that he and Attorney Dickey were discussing the Park Rules. He wanted Councilwoman Alley and the Council to know that the Attorney and staff are drafting Park rules that focus on hours of operation, respectful use of the property, and the avoidance of First Amendment violations. A draft will be presented at the March 23 meeting as a summary of what they discussed and researched. The town has to be careful...First amendment auditors...lawsuits... not inexpensive.

There is free Wi-Fi at the Park with a current contract that runs until November; early cancellation would incur penalties. The service will not be renewed after expiration.

Attorney Scott told Council that, if not every other year, they spend a 2-day retreat, uninterrupted time to address some of the big picture issues.

Councilman Dougherty thanked Atty Scott for sharing such a great idea.

Councilwoman Alley serves as the town's Event Coordinator. Their goal is to plan different types of events throughout the year. In addition to looking at less costly, further-down-the-road, bigger events. She shared the following: an Easter Sunrise Service on April 5 at 6:30 AM and a Community Sunrise Service at Town Park, with multiple churches participating, that will bring the community together. This is no cost to the town. There is a printed flyer for everyone so the information can get out there to the citizens. The community is invited to bring flowers for a shared cross. If, in fact, there is anything they want to do for town events, please let her know.

The Memorial Day service will continue as in the Past years.

Mayor's reminder to the Council of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Council discussed planning a special event. Ideas included planting a commemorative tree, though the cost is high. However, they could do a tree and use it as a celebratory piece.

The longtime organizer of the Christmas Parade, Ms. Riley, is stepping down. The town is seeking a new volunteer coordinator. They will begin talking about it in June, and she will provide her with the information.

Councilman Dougherty wanted to revisit the Easter Sunrise Service and asked that they share this information with your congregants and parishioners at your church. This can be a very powerful thing. When we all come together as one community, and he says over 95% is of the Christian faith, what a powerful thing, and they are going to put a cross together and ask everybody to bring a flower to put in the Cross. They are going to have pictures taken around the cross. Councilman Dougherty stated, "With all of us together for an ecocommunal service. He feels they will benefit from it. He is very passionate about this and believes it would be great for all of them to come together as one community.

The Mayor shared that the town has several businesses that are redoing their signs. Lexington Medical Center rebranding, Stedham's temporary banner and future permanent sign; Hardee's sign replacement coming soon. In addition to the Hilltop Restaurant renovations being paused, there is interest from a new auto parts store, and the town is experiencing increased zoning, annexation, and development activity. There are a lot of activities for change in the town.

Mayor asked, if there was a motion to Adjourn to Executive Session for 1. Discussion of personnel matters related to Town Commissions and Boards 2. Receipt of legal advice regarding business license fees, procedures, and enforcement. 3. Receipt of legal advice regarding Town policies and procedures.

A motion was made by Councilman Luongo and seconded by Councilman Dougherty. Motion Passed Unanimously

The Mayor asked if there was a motion to Adjourn from the Executive Session. A motion was presented by Councilwoman Alley and seconded by Councilman Luongo. Motion Passed Unanimously

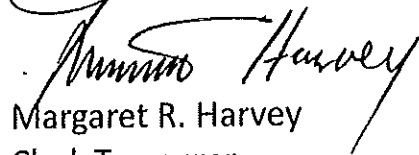
The Mayor stated that no actions were taken during the Executive Session.

The Mayor had no other business to discuss; therefore, he asked the council if there was a motion to adjourn.

A motion was presented by Councilman Luongo and seconded by Councilwoman Williams. Motion Passed Unanimously

Meeting Adjourn

Respectively Submitted,



Margaret R. Harvey

Clerk Treasurer

Town of Swansea

803 568 2835

7:30