

**TOWN OF ST. JAMES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 1, 2026**

The St. James Town Council met in Regular Session at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, in the Earl Dye Council Chamber.

**Council Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Board, Councilors Dennis Barclay, Bill Miller, and Lynn Dutney

**Excused:** Mayor Jean Toner

**Staff Present:** Town Manager Jeff Repp, Finance Director Pauline Haran, and Town Clerk Jamie Burns

**Others Present:** Wes MacLeod of Anchorpoint Planning, Town Attorney Grady Richardson, Samuel Franck and Emily Sullivan of Ward and Smith, PA, David Hopkins of Harbor Development Corporation, Jay Atkinson of Canal Associates, LLC, State Port Pilot Reporter Eliot Duke, and approximately 29 residents.

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Pro Tem Board opened the meeting at 4:02 p.m. He informed the audience that Mayor Toner was absent due to illness and that he would be presiding in her stead.

All in attendance joined Mayor Pro Tem Board in honoring our flag.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Pro Tem Board asked if there were any changes to the agenda as submitted. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilor Dutney moved to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Pro Tem Board asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilor Miller moved to approve the consent agenda which includes the minutes from the March 4, 2026 Regular Meeting and the February 26, 2026 Budget Retreat Meeting. The motion passed unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. Conditional Zoning and Conditional Rezoning Application Submitted by Ward and Smith, PA (Continued from 3/4/2026).**

*The public hearing is being continued from the March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

Town Manager Jeff Repp entered ten documents into the public record as exhibits for the conditional zoning and rezoning hearing, noting that several had been originally submitted at the February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting and subsequently updated as of March 25<sup>th</sup>. The documents included a staff report, the conditional zoning application, an affidavit of publication of the public hearing, the concept plan, planning board conditions, modified and pending conditions, a table of permissible uses, the conditional zoning adoption ordinance, two email correspondences from resident Robert Sylvester (2967 Irwin Drive) that he requested be entered into public record and the Committee Drive right-of-way and roadway maintenance agreement recorded with Brunswick County.

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Mr. Repp then invited Wes MacLeod of AnchorPoint Planning to provide a summary of significant changes since the February hearing. Mr. MacLeod noted the project had previously been recommended for approval by the Planning Board in November, following a community meeting held in October at the Homer E. Wright Event Center, as required by the conditional zoning process. He stated that since the February meeting the most significant development since that time concerns tree requirements. The developer team hired Davey Resources Group to prepare a tree report and analysis, leading to a simplified approach based on the type of development; single-family lots requiring trees of certain sizes and smaller lots having additional tree planting requirements. Mr. MacLeod emphasized that no tree planting requirements currently exist in the town's zoning code, and that the developer's commitment represents a voluntary agreement.

Town attorney Grady Richardson stated that the application has undergone legal review, and they are fine with conditions, terms and provisions of the documents assuming council wishes to move forward.

*Public comment:*

Sam Franck of Ward and Smith, PA representing the applicant and landowner, provided an overview of the overall project. He described it as a proposed mixed-use development featuring up to 1,902 residential homes and neighborhood commercial uses such as restaurants, grocery shops, and services. He noted the property is largely in unincorporated Brunswick County and currently subject to a 2018 PUD approval that already contemplates the same number of homes. The development will generate annual tax revenue for the town. Core utility services would continue to be provided by Brunswick County. Public roads within the development would be dedicated to the town which would make the town eligible for Powell Bill funding from the state.

Mr. Franck emphasized two points regarding the relationship between the new development and the existing St. James Plantation community: first, the town's consideration of annexation, zoning, and the development agreement has no bearing on the ownership, membership, or management of the Clubs at St. James; and second, the new development will be entirely separate from St. James Plantation, with its own homeowners association. He noted that the development rights to annex additional land into the private planned community have long since expired.

Regarding conditions, Mr. Franck highlighted Condition 14 (tree preservation), noting that rather than a replacement-based approach, the parties agreed to focus on what will be planted going forward, using a specific list of native canopy and understory trees. He also noted conditions relating to the retention of trees within wetlands, a required multi-use path along primary roads, a parking standard for commercial uses, restrictions on underground fuel storage tanks in commercial areas, building façade and design standards, LED lighting with minimized spillover, and limits on monument signage.

Councilor Dennis Barclay offered remarks for the public record regarding the future residents of St. James North. He explained that they will become town residents, vote in town elections, pay the same 6-cent property tax rate, have use of the Homer E. Wright Event Center, and have their own HOA and amenities. He reiterated that they would not have access to plantation gates, POA amenities, beach club facilities, or club memberships.

Town attorney Grady Richardson stated he had no additional comments beyond confirming that the documents were under legal review and that he was satisfied with the conditions and terms.

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No members of the public signed up to speak specifically on the rezoning item beyond the applicants' representatives.

*A motion was made by Councilor Bill Miller at 4:22 p.m. to close public comment on the conditional zoning and conditional rezoning hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lynn Dutney. The motion passed unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)*

**B. Proposed Development Agreement between the Town of St. James and Harbor Development Corporation, Canal Associates, LLC and D.R. Development Corporation (Continued from 3/4/2026).**

*The public hearing is being continued from the March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

Town Manager Jeff Repp entered four documents into the public record: the development agreement (most recently updated and posted with the public agenda), a staff memo, the development agreement ordinance, and the affidavit of notice of publication.

Town attorney Grady Richardson provided updates on the development agreement, noting diligent work on provisions including trees and other conditions. He identified two primary issues he had been working to resolve: language pertaining to the drainage easements over the storm debris tract to be conveyed to the town and ensuring adequate access along Committee Drive. He expressed satisfaction with the resolution of both matters, noting that the recently recorded Committee Drive easement by the developer provides access that would satisfy title insurance standards. He also noted that two minor clerical adjustments had been made to the final version of the agreement: removal of an unnecessary reference to the tower parcel in Section 8(a), and removal of a specific county designation from the notary block to accommodate signatures that may occur outside Brunswick County.

*Public Comment:*

Mr. Franck described the purposes and highlights of the development agreement. He explained that the agreement establishes the rules governing the relationship between the town and the landowner for the life of the development. He highlighted the mutually beneficial land swap involving the town's cell tower lease property in exchange for a more useful storm debris tract for the town, the commitment to dedicate primary public roads; and an express clause capping residential density at 1,902 units, with any increase requiring formal amendment and council reconsideration.

Four members of the public offered comment.

Tom Milner (4401 Pineland Drive) questioned the developer's motivations, arguing the half-million-dollar tax revenue benefit seemed too generous without corresponding value to the developer. He expressed concerns that the project would diminish property values. He also raised concerns about impacts to water pressure and the community's standards, noting that the development will bring 1,900 additional homes and infrastructure demands.

Anita Pedvis Leftick (3105 Moss Hammock Wynd) asked whether the agreement would include written provisions ensuring that future St. James North residents would never have access to St. James Plantation amenities. She also raised questions about fire department funding.

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Mayor Pro Tem Board responded that Troon operates independently as a private company, with the town having no control over membership decisions. The POA controls gate access and new residents would not be POA members. He also noted the fire department already serves this area and would receive additional revenue from new residents.

David Kuncio (2792 Marsh Point Lane) expressed dismay about the development process and questioned how the community ended up with 1,900 new homes when residents were only interested in restaurants and retail.

Terry O'Toole (3261 Moss Hammock Wynd) raised a question about gate security, which Mayor Pro Tem Board clarified is managed by the POA.

Mr. Franck provided additional clarification, noting the development would proceed regardless of annexation with the question being whether it would be under Brunswick County or town jurisdiction. He acknowledged uncertainty about the precise build-out timeline, estimating a best-case scenario of eight to nine years and potentially two and a half times that in a slower market. He also clarified that the club's membership policies are controlled by parties not present and are entirely unaffected by the actions before council.

*Councilor Miller made a motion at 4:44 p.m. to close the public hearing on the development agreement. The motion was approved unanimously (Vote: 4/0)*

**MAYOR/COUNCIL/STAFF REPORTS**

Mayor Pro Tem Board highlighted several items of community interest, referencing the town's recently distributed news and notes email.

- *Water Pressure Project:* Town Manager Repp reported that State Utilities is currently installing a 12-inch water main along NC-211 from the main gate to Midway, funded through a \$4,000,000 joint project between the town and Brunswick County using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This will create a dedicated pressure zone for St. James, which does not currently exist. The project is approximately 10% complete and is expected to be finished by June or July 2026. Water pressure within St. James should significantly improve. A second phase extending the 12-inch line down Middleton Road is pending environmental easement approvals, which appear likely to be granted.
- *Fuquay-Varina Inter-Basin Transfer:* The council voted at its prior meeting to oppose the proposed withdrawal of 6,000,000 gallons per day from the Cape Fear River for processing and disposal in the Neuse River system, joining the county and other local municipalities in opposition due to downstream impacts.
- *NC-211 NCDOT Project:* The ongoing road improvement project is approximately two-thirds complete and remains on schedule for substantial completion by mid-summer 2027, with final landscaping and finishing work expected in the six months thereafter.
- *Tree Negotiations:* Mayor Pro Tem Board offered personal thanks to the developer for their willingness to work with the town on specific modifications to the original concept design, particularly the elevation change requirement to incorporate the 100-year flood level and the comprehensive tree planting requirements. He acknowledged his role in the tree condition negotiations with the developer, describing the outcome as a practical and attractive approach that will result in the planting of native canopy and understory trees. He noted that the existing vegetation on the property consists largely of scrub trees and prickly

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undergrowth following two timbering operations, a fire, and flood damage from Hurricane Florence, and that heritage trees and wetland trees will be preserved.

- *One-Cent Tax Sunset:* Finance Director Pauline Haran confirmed that the town's disaster recovery fund is expected to reach its \$1,500,000 target by the end of the current fiscal year. The council indicated its intention to sunset the one-cent tax for the next fiscal year, with the fund to be supplemented by reserves and excess revenues going forward.
- *Fourth of July Fireworks:* Mayor Pro Tem Board noted that fireworks are being pursued for the town's Fourth of July celebration, in recognition of the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A drone show was considered but set aside in favor of a more traditional and memorable display.
- *Planning Board Vacancies:* The town is seeking one new planning board member. Interested residents were directed to contact the town clerk.
- *Offshore Wind Farm:* Mayor Pro Tem Board noted that the federal administration recently cancelled the proposed offshore wind farm in Brunswick County, which the town has consistently opposed. The cancellation was accompanied by an agreement with an energy company and a redirection of investment toward natural gas power development.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Motion to Approve Ordinance 2026-01 of Annexation of Approximately 137.85+ Acres and Being Located Contiguous to the Town's Municipal Boundaries and Adjacent to the Town's Event Center and Town Hall.**

Town Manager Jeff Repp introduced the annexation item, noting that a public hearing on the annexation had been held in December and that the council packet included a full explanatory memorandum and a copy of the ordinance. Council agreed to reopen public comment to allow residents who had signed up specifically on the annexation item to speak.

*Mayor Pro Tem Board requested a motion to reopen public comment regarding annexation. A motion was made at 4:58 p.m. by Councilor Miller. The motion was approved unanimously (Vote: 4/0).*

*Public Comment:*

Tom Milner (4401 Pineland Drive) spoke in opposition to the annexation, characterizing the annexation as something that benefits the developer far more than the existing residents. He argued that by annexing the new development, the town is lowering its own standards and potentially diminishing the value of existing properties in exchange for tax revenue. He acknowledged the development would proceed under the county's approval regardless but urged the council to decline the annexation and allow the development to remain subject only to county standards.

Mayor Pro Tem Board responded that if the council did not annex the property, the developer would only be required to comply with the 2018 county UDO, which carries a far lower flood elevation standard and no tree planting requirements. He argued the town has successfully negotiated meaningful improvements through the conditional zoning process that would not otherwise apply.

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Town attorney Grady Richardson confirmed that the annexation is a voluntary petition by the property owner, consistent with current state statutes governing annexation. He noted additional benefits to the town including the more suitable storm debris tract and the now-established Committee Drive easement.

Jeff Lavelle (2797 Golf Master Court) expressed that this is the most significant issue to come before the town in the ten years he has been a resident and urged the council to survey the townspeople before acting, arguing that a decision of this magnitude warrants broader constituent input. He expressed concern that long-term costs to the town could outweigh the projected tax revenue.

Barbara Carollo (3175 Inland Cove) stated that a survey would give residents an opportunity to weigh in and place the responsibility of the outcome on the broader community. She noted that many residents may be unaware of the details of the proposal.

*Mayor Pro Tem Board requested a motion to close public comment. A motion was made by Councilor Miller at 5:14 p.m. Motion passed unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)*

Councilor Miller thanked all residents who spoke, emphasizing that council members are themselves property owners and residents of the community. He expressed confidence that, having reviewed all documentation and spoken individually with neighbors and constituents, he understands both the concerns and the potential benefits. He noted that the development will occur regardless, and that annexation provides the town with greater regulatory influence over how it occurs. He cited stormwater management, tree requirements, road standards, financial underpinnings, and fire department support through additional volunteers and taxes, as tangible benefits of annexation. He acknowledged the legitimate possibility that reasonable people may disagree on the outcome and confirmed that council members had not coordinated their votes in advance.

*A motion to approve Ordinance 2026-01, Annexation of approximately 137.85 acres located contiguous to the town's municipal boundaries and adjacent to the town's Event Center and Town Hall was made by Councilor Dutney. Councilor Miller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)*

**b. Motion to Approve Ordinance 2026-02 Adopt the Conditional Zoning Proposal from Harbor Development Corp., D.R. Development Corporation; Canal Associates, LLC; and the Town of St. James.**

*A motion to approve Ordinance 2026-02 to adopt the conditional zoning proposal from the various developers listed, was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Dutney. The motion carried unanimously. (Vote: 4/0)*

**c. Motion to Approve Ordinance 2026-03 to Execute a Development Agreement between the Town of St. James and Harbor Development Corporation, Canal Associates, LLC & D.R. Development Corporation.**

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Wes MacLeod noted for the record that the motion should incorporate the two minor clerical adjustments described by Attorney Richardson.

*Motion to approve Ordinance 2026-03, to Execute the Development Agreement between the Town of St. James and Harbor Development Corporation, Canal Associates, LLC and D.R. Development Corporation, including the minor clerical corrections referenced by the Town Attorney, was made by Councilor Dutney and seconded by Councilor Miller. The motion carried unanimously. (Vote: 4/0).*

**NEW BUSINESS**

26-05 *Motion to Adopt a policy regarding the posting of Obituaries on the Town Website.*

Mayor Pro Tem Board noted that the policy establishes rules for the posting of obituaries on the town website, requiring submissions to come through the town office and to be submitted by a relative of the deceased.

*Councilor Miller made a motion to approve the obituary policy as published.  
Councilor Dutney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (Vote: 4/0).*

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Marjorie Burnside (3701 Fairfield Way) urged residents to direct their frustrations not at the council or the developer, but at the state legislature in Raleigh. She noted that Brunswick County is experiencing significant development pressure across the board, and that the county's 2018 UDO approval left the town with limited options. She expressed her view that the negotiated outcome represents the best available deal under the circumstances and thanked the council for representing residents at commissioner meetings and making difficult decisions with available options.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:30 p.m. Councilor Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously (Vote: 4/0)

Mayor Pro Tem Board adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved,

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Jamie Burns, Town Clerk

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Jean R. Toner, Mayor