

TOWN OF ST. JAMES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2026

The St. James Town Council met in Regular Session at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, in the Earl Dye Council Chamber.

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

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

Others Present: State Port Pilot Reporter Eliot Duke and 9 residents.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Toner opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance joined Mayor Toner in honoring our flag.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Toner asked if there were any changes to the agenda as submitted. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Board moved to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously. (Vote: 5-0)

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Toner asked if there were any changes to the minutes included in the consent agenda. There were none. Councilor Dutney made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which consists of the minutes from the March 19, 2026 Work Session and the minutes from the May 6, 2026, Regular Meeting. The motion passed unanimously (Vote 5-0).

MAYOR/COUNCIL/STAFF REPORTS:

a. Cancellation of 2026 Fireworks Display

Town Manager Jeff Repp reported with disappointment that the Town's planned July 1st fireworks display, intended to mark the nation's 250th anniversary, has been cancelled following the St. James Property Owners Association's (POA) refusal to grant a variance to its aerial fireworks prohibition (Rule 1.13.0.1) that was adopted in late 2025 and sent to the town in early 2026.

Mr. Repp presented a detailed timeline of events leading to the cancellation. The Town formally requested the exception on March 3rd, emphasizing it was for the nationwide 250th celebration and that they had no desire to continue fireworks beyond this year. The POA responded with concerns requiring additional insurance coverage and town indemnification beyond what was provided by the fireworks company and which the town provided in writing to the POA.

Despite the town attorney working for several weeks seeking to find a solution to meet the POA's additional concerns, including addressing drought conditions that would be handled by the Brunswick County Fire Marshal, the POA issued the final denial of the request on May 21st. A meeting on June 1st with town staff, attorneys and Troon representatives

TOWN OF ST. JAMES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2026

concluded that while there was a legal way to proceed, it would cause extreme hardship among the parties and potentially jeopardize working relationships with the POA and that the town did not want to put the Clubs at St. James/Troon in that position.

Mayor Toner and all four Council members delivered formal statements expressing deep disappointment. Mayor Toner noted that despite meeting POA requirements including insurance, indemnification, and agreement to abide by fire marshal safety requirements and day of event orders, the POA denied their request. She confirmed that the Town-sponsored free patriotic concert with Brunswick Bands would still proceed on July 2nd at the Wright Event Center. Mayor Pro Tem Board explained that the Town Council had unanimously voted at their February financial retreat to hold a “wow event” for the 250th anniversary, having previously examined using drones but determining several issues. He indicated the Town had received clearance from both Troon and the St. James Fire Department and could have proceeded without POA permission but chose not to create conflict and turned to legal counsel for advice. He additionally noted that a municipal fireworks display does not usually violate local ordinances that ban the private use of fireworks. Councilor Miller noted the community’s large patriotic population, including many veterans, and expressed disappointment over inadequate communication and collaboration from community partners. Councilor Barclay noted the previous year’s fireworks were largely successful, with no problems and rave reviews from residents who attended. He emphasized that safety is the town’s number one priority, noting their strong relationship with the fire department.

b. Water Pressure Project Update

Town Manager Mr. Repp provided an update on the ongoing water pressure project in coordination with Brunswick County, with a projected completion date of September 3, 2026.

- The project addresses below-standard water pressure (under 40 psi) experienced by numerous properties within the Town, particularly during early morning irrigation hours. The goal is for everyone to be above 40 psi or higher.
- Phase 1 involves installation of a 16-inch pipeline running parallel to NC-211 between Midway Road and the main gate, along with a pressure reducing vault constructed near the water treatment plant.
- Phase 2 includes looping improvements and upsized piping at three locations within the Town to address area-specific pressure deficiencies.
- Phase 3, involving a new line along Middleton Boulevard connecting further into the Town, has been delayed due to environmental permitting issues related to crossing conservation areas. Staff continue to work with the state on approvals.
- A key element of the project is the installation of a check valve at the intersection of Middleton Road and NC-211, which will create a closed system, allowing the County to regulate water pressure specifically within the Town. Currently, pressure increases at the treatment plant gets dispersed throughout the system beyond St. James. The effect is that they can’t increase the pressure enough to offset the problems the town is having.
- As of the most recent invoice, the project is 61% complete by cost and 60% complete by time.

TOWN OF ST. JAMES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2026

- Two new fire hydrants are being installed by Brunswick County in locations identified by the fire department as underserved. One will be near the tennis court on Beaver Creek and one at the Plantation Services shredding area.

Mayor Toner welcomed the update positively, noting the project would be completed within the year as previously identified.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

NEW BUSINESS

26-15 Motion to Adopt Ordinance 2026-05 – FY 2026-2027 Budget and Fee Schedule

Town Manager Jeff Repp presented Ordinance 2026-05, adopting a balance budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 as required by state law. Key highlights included:

- Total budget: \$5,765,600 in both revenues and expenditures
- The major highlight was a tax rate reduction from \$0.06 to \$0.05 due to reaching the \$1.5 million target for the debris recovery fund, which will actually reach closer to \$2 million by the end of the fiscal year.

Prior to the motion, Mr. Repp and Mayor Toner briefed the Council on two pieces of state legislation with potential future budget implications:

- House Bill 1089 would place before voters a constitutional amendment authorizing the General Assembly to cap the amount of revenue local governments may collect based on assessed value increases. No specific cap figure has been identified.
- A separate amendment would limit state income tax to 3.5%, down from the current 3.99%. This could reduce state revenue and likely diminish the state's ability to provide its customary 25% match on federally declared disasters, potentially passing that cost to local governments.
- FEMA is also considering raising caps for federal disaster declarations significantly, potentially making fewer events eligible for federal assistance.
- Mayor Toner elaborated on concerns discussed at the morning's Brunswick County mayor's meeting. She explained that St. James manages its budget responsibly, saves for future events, and maintains a disaster recovery fund, though even \$2 million would not cover major disasters. The proposed amendments could disincentivize fiscal responsibility and conservative spending while encouraging municipalities to maintain higher budgets. Mayor Toner expressed concerns about funding public safety needs, noting 50 percent cost increases for fire department equipment in recent years.

No public comment was received on the budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Board made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-05, adopting the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027. The motion was approved unanimously (Vote: 5-0)

TOWN OF ST. JAMES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2026

26-16 Motion to Accept the Architectural Services Proposal from Sawyer, Sherwood & Associates for the Expansion of the Homer E. Wright Event Center in the lump sum design fee amount of \$450,000.

Mr. Repp presented the proposal from Sawyer, Sherwood, & Associates for expansion of the Homer E. Wright Event Center, with a lump sum design fee of \$450,000. The proposal includes various engineering consultants for civil, structural, and mechanical work. Three separate contracts will be handled outside this fee: surveying services, environmental services, and geotechnical work. The \$30,000 from the cancelled fireworks budget will help offset the \$50,000 increase from earlier estimates. Mayor Pro Tem Board clarified this was only for design and engineering work, not actual construction costs. In response to Councilor Miller's inquiry about the anticipated timeline, Mr. Repp indicated approximately six (6) months from start to completion, though he would need to verify the specific details.

Mayor Toner invited public comment. There was none.

Councilor Dutney moved to accept the architectural services proposal from Sawyer, Sherwood and Associates for the expansion of the Homer E. Wright Event Center in the lump sum design fee amount of \$450,000. The motion was approved unanimously. (Vote: 5-0)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Boyer (3458 Beaver Creek Drive) expressed disappointment about the cancelled 250th anniversary fireworks celebration and frustration that no POA representatives were present to explain their decision. She questioned whether funding fireworks through donations or company distributions could have made a difference but was informed it was a location issue rather than funding related. Ms. Boyer stated her intentions to attend the next POA meeting for answers.

Tim Walsh (2859 Pine Forest Drive) asked about future fireworks plans, questioning whether next year would be different or if fireworks are permanently cancelled.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:48 pm Mayor Pro Tem Board made a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. (Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Toner adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved,

Jamie Burns, Town Clerk

Jean R. Toner, Mayor