



Municipal Park Foundation Board - Special Called Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 2026

6:00 PM

Minutes - Draft

1. Call to Order, Roll Call

Awendaw Park Board Present: Chair Blythe, Coan, Colson, Daniels, Frazier, Pepper-Alston

Awendaw Park Board Absent: Ott

Staff Present: Town Administrator - Watkins

Special Guests: Deputy Chief Sims, Awendaw McClellanville Fire Department
Captain Phillips, Awendaw McClellanville Fire Department

2. Prayer - the meeting opened with the Lord's Prayer, led by Chair Blythe.

3. Civility Pledge and Pledge of Allegiance, led by Mr. Pepper-Alston.

4. Approval of April Special Called Meeting Agenda

A. Motion: Mr. Pepper-Alston moved to approve the April 1 special called meeting agenda. Ms. Frazier seconded the motion, all voted in favor, motion carried.

5. Awendaw/McClellanville Fire Department presentation on controlled burning and training in the Awendaw Municipal Park.

A. Deputy Chief Brett Sims and Captain Patrick Phillips presented a draft proposal for a cooperative partnership between the Fire Department and the Town regarding prescribed burning and wildfire management at the Awendaw Municipal Park.

- The presentation outlined a proposed three-year rotating prescribed burn plan intended to improve ecological health, reduce hazardous fuel buildup, create a safer wildfire buffer, and support long-term habitat management.
- Captain Phillips explained that the park's approximately 290 acres should not be burned all at once, but instead divided into smaller burn units to create a mosaic of different growth stages that would better support wildlife, native vegetation, and safer fire management practices.

- The proposed plan identified 12 burn units grouped into rotating sections, with the grassy area around the pond proposed for more frequent annual burning to preserve visibility and open lake views.
 - Fire Department representatives explained that some proposed burn divisions would depend on future trail development and firebreak establishment. Existing roads could serve as firebreaks in some sections, while other areas would require field review, flagging, GPS marking, and contracted trail/firebreak installation.
 - The board discussed the feasibility of integrating future trail development with fire management infrastructure and noted that some low or wet areas may require rerouting rather than boardwalk construction to minimize long-term maintenance costs.
 - Fire Department representatives noted that the department could assist with planning, training, and limited field work, but that heavy equipment work and trail construction would likely require outside contractors or assistance from the South Carolina Forestry Commission.
 - The presentation also highlighted possible grant opportunities related to trails, habitat restoration, pollinator areas, and “fire wise” community planning.
 - Discussion included the long-term need to evaluate forest thinning and potential restoration toward a more historically appropriate longleaf pine ecosystem.
 - Board members asked questions regarding prescribed burn qualifications, timing, vegetation regrowth, wildlife impacts, and whether a reported bald eagle nest would affect implementation.
 - Fire Department representatives explained that controlled burns would require a formal burn plan approved by the South Carolina Forestry Commission and would only be conducted under specific weather and safety conditions.
 - They further explained that the presence of protected species such as bald eagles would not necessarily prevent prescribed burning but would require adjustments to burn timing and planning to avoid nesting season impacts.
 - The board expressed support for the concept and discussed forwarding the recommendation to Town Council for further consideration, along with a possible future intergovernmental agreement and ordinance language to support controlled burns and fire training activity in the park.
- B. Motion: Ms. Frazier moved to forward the prescribed fire department partnership to Town Council. Mr. Daniels seconded the motion, all voted in favor, motion carried.

6. Approval of Park Budget Version 3.20.26

- A. Mr. Colson presented the revised budget version dated March 20, 2026, explaining that the draft had been adjusted to better align with the Park Master Plan by focusing only on Phase 1 expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year rather than combining

Phase 1 and Phase 2 items.

- The board discussed that the revised version reduced capital expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year while keeping the overall planning framework intact.
 - Phase 1 items discussed included the gravel parking area, entrance fencing and controlled access, security cameras, signage, initial trail development, and lake access.
 - It was noted that the overall summary page remained substantially the same, but the revised budget clarified how projects were organized by phase.
 - The board also discussed signage funding and confirmed that grant funds remain available for additional signage. Possibilities mentioned included alligator warning signs, additional entrance signage, and future trail-related signage.
 - Board members confirmed that the revised budget reflected the version previously discussed with Town Council during the budget retreat.
- B. Motion: Mr. Colson moved to approve the budget as presented. Ms. Frazier seconded the motion, all voted in favor, motion carried.

7. Board Member Comments

- A. Mr. Frazier reported receiving additional information regarding a possible bald eagle nest in the park area and stated that she had identified a South Carolina contact who may be able to confirm whether a nest has already been logged and mapped.
- B. Chair Blythe shared that the Lowcountry Ride event planned for April 11 would include lunch and that board members were invited to attend; RSVP information would be shared for planning purposes. She also noted that the park signs had been installed. Discussion followed regarding the placement of one sign at the entrance, with some concern that it may be oriented in a less visible direction than intended. Board members discussed the possibility of adjusting its placement.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Daniels moved to adjourn the meeting, Chair Blythe seconded, all voted in favor, motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

Date: Apr 1, 2026

Prepared By:

Christopher R. Ott.

Municipal Park Board Secretary

Note: These meeting minutes are not verbatim. To watch the full meeting video, please visit the town's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/TownOfAwendaw