



Municipal Park Foundation Board Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

6:00 PM

VIRTUAL

Minutes - Draft

1. Call to Order, Roll Call

Present: Blythe, Coan, Colson, Daniels, Frazier, Freeman, Pepper-Alston

Staff Present: Town Administrator - Watkins

Not Present: Ott

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Civility Pledge

Chair Blythe introduced and led the newly written Municipal Park Civility Pledge, reaffirming the Board's commitment to respectful dialogue, collaboration, and service to the community.

5. Approval of the meeting minutes of September 9th.

Ms. Frazier moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 20th. Chair Blythe seconded. All voted in favor, motion carried.

6. Event Review and Recommendation: *Life in the Lowcountry Event*, September 5-6, 2026

Chair Blythe introduced the agenda item and invited John Deso, in partnership with the Gifted Artist Foundation, to present the proposed two-day cultural and arts festival.

A. John Daso and Takeya White Presentation:

- Mr. Daso presented a long list of the numerous large festivals, events, and youth programs he has hosted across many states and metropolitan areas in the past.
- The Life in the Lowcountry Event would focus on Lowcountry culture, Gullah Geechee heritage, arts, crafts, music, and youth engagement to be held at the Town of Awendaw Municipal Park.

- The proposed event would include artists/artisan vendors, youth art activities, cultural storytelling and historical presentations, live music (Saturday) and gospel performances (Sunday).
- All event costs (tents, security, porta-potties, insurance, cleanup, parking logistics) to be fully funded by the Gifted Artist Foundation.
- No request for Town of Awendaw funding.
- Foundation expressed interest in paying a park use fee above the current special events fee (estimated \$1,000–\$1,500).

B. Board Discussion

- Board members requested clarification on:
 - Site layout and logistics
 - Parking, cleanup, liability, and insurance
 - Financial implications and potential revenue for the Town
- It was noted that:
 - The Park is still in early operational stages.
 - The Town currently lacks formal event policies, fee schedules, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).
 - The board acknowledged this event represents new territory and could help inform future policy development.
 - Ms. Watkins indicated Liability insurance and legal agreements would be handled similarly to past events.
- Overall, the Board expressed strong support for the event concept and its alignment with the park’s mission, provided the Town is not financially responsible and appropriate safeguards are in place.

C. Motion to recommend approval of the “Life in the Lowcountry” event at the Municipal Park in September

- Vice-Chair Pepper-Alston moved to approve the “Life in the Lowcountry” event, Mr. Daniels seconded. All voted in favor, motion carried.

7. Discussion and consideration of Budget and Operation Items:

A. Mowing and Bush Hogging

- The Board discussed current mowing and bush hogging practices at the park. It was noted that mowing is currently performed on an as-needed basis without a formal contract or defined scope of work. Board members expressed concern regarding inconsistent mowing patterns and the need for bush hogging, particularly around the lake shoreline, which has become overgrown.
- Consensus and Direction:
 - No formal motion was made.
 - The Operations Committee will develop a detailed scope of work for mowing and bush hogging, including frequency and service areas.

- The scope will be brought back to the Board in January for review.
- Upon approval, staff will issue an RFP to establish a regular maintenance contract.

B. Allocation of Park Improvement Funds

- The Board reviewed the current capital improvement budget, noting:
 - \$60,000 total allocated for park improvements.
 - \$25,000 designated for gate improvements (RFPs already issued).
 - Approximately \$35,000 remaining for additional improvements.
- Mr. Colson discussed an idea forwarded by Mr. Ott to consider creating a small discretionary fund to allow the Park Board to address minor maintenance needs without seeking Town Council approval for each item.
- Ms. Watkins suggested incorporating a defined threshold (e.g., \$3,000–\$5,000) into the park maintenance budget and addressing this during the January budget and ordinance discussions with Town Council.
- Potential Improvement Ideas Discussed:
 - Fishing dock or platform
 - Covered shelter or gazebo
 - Picnic area with seating and grills
 - Permeable surface gathering areas
 - Interpretive or historic-themed structures
- Consensus / Direction
 - Board members will brainstorm improvement ideas and bring suggestions to the January meeting.
 - These items will also be included in discussions with Town Council.

8. PARD Grant Update with Benches and New 2026 PARD Application

A. Bench Selection

- Ms. Watkins presented bench options for installation along the berm, emphasizing durability, low maintenance, and suitability for a passive park design. Discussion included materials, anchoring methods, maintenance considerations, and aesthetics.
- Motion to direct the Town Administrator to proceed with PARD grant funds for plaza-style benches in cedar color. Chair Blythe moved to approve the benches, Ms. Frazier seconded. All voted in favor, motion carried.

B. 2026 PARD Grant Application

- Staff reported receipt of the 2026 PARD grant application. The Board reviewed prior PARD grants and matching fund requirements.
- Motion to authorize the Town Administrator to proceed with submitting a Letter of Intent for the 2026 PARD Grant. Mr. Colson moved to approve, Chair Blythe seconded. All voted in favor, motion carried.

9. Joint Meeting with Town Council – January

- The Board discussed scheduling a joint meeting with Town Council to address:
 - Park Board ordinance updates
 - Event procedures and fees
 - Maintenance responsibilities
 - Authority and spending flexibility
 - Small discretionary funding authority
- Target Date: January 13, 2026 (with flexibility for alternate date/times)

10. Public Comments

- None

11. Board Member Comments

- Chair Blythe provided an update on the gate and fencing project approval by Town Council; staff will assist with project management and invoicing.
- Ms. Watkins - security cameras have been delivered and will be installed at park entrances and rear access points.
- Vice-Chair Pepper-Alston commented on the positive progress and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

12. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.

Date: Dec 9, 2025

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