



ORIENTAL TOWN BOARD REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, September 8, 2026 6PM

507 Church Street, Oriental, NC

4 Mayor Sally Belangia officiating

5 **Call to Order**

6 The Mayor called the Meeting to order, established a quorum with all members present, along
7 with the Manager, Finance Officer, Officer DeStefano, and 16 members of the Public and started
8 with the Pledge of Allegiance.
9

10 **Approval of the Agenda**

- 11 • MPT Jordan asked to add the replacement of the Air Conditioner in the large Board room to
12 the Agenda at 6B. LO seconded. 5-0.

13 **Public Comment**

- 14 • Sandy Barber spoke to flooding on Hodges St affecting (water coming in to garages, lower
15 floors, etc) of those on the duck ponds and asked to have the roads closed when that happens:
16 Discussion: Board agrees it is an issue. Manager notes current barricades are all plastic and
17 would float- we would have to create or purchase new barricades. Then there is a logistical
18 question of what happens if it happens on a weekend? Are we authorizing overtime to call
19 staff in to move barricades? Board adds the item to their workshop to get logistics right.
- 20 • Jim Kellenberger noted the 75th Anniversary of Rotary- that on Sept 0, 1951 Bill Mason
21 incorporated the Oriental Rotary chapter and on Sept 10, 2026 they will celebrate.
- 22 • Charlie Overcash noted the 25th Anniversary of 9/11 to be commemorated in front of the Bean
23 as it normally is. First Responders will be making the walk representing the 110 floors
24 climbed that day, and end with the remembrance on Hodges St.

25 **Consent Agenda**

- 26 • Minutes from 8/11 and 9/1 Approved on a Motion by IC, Second by PJ-5-0.

27 **Town Manager's Report-**

- 28 • Water valve project: Valve installation was underway, with possible service interruptions.
29 Work paused temporarily while a site issue was addressed involving extension of a driveway
30 and pipe near recently cleared Town property.
- 31 • Dinghy dock: The dock and seawall area were rebuilt from the seawall to the road. Work
32 included installation of polyvinyl sheeting to ground level, backfill, gravel, new stringers,
33 decking, and railing.
- 34 • Annual audit: Fieldwork was completed ahead of schedule. The auditor reported that the work
35 looked good and was expected to present the final report at the October 13 meeting.
- 36 • Christmas decorations: Repairs will be coordinated with Duke Energy's contractor; a start date
37 had not yet been established.
- 38 • Water meter readings: A former employee of the meter-reading contractor had estimated
39 approximately two dozen readings. Town staff reread the affected meters, corrected the
40 accounts believed to be impacted, and the contractor refunded a portion of its fee.

- Snow removal: The Town's drainage contractor was considering providing snowplow services. Pricing was expected at a later date; storm-preparedness funds may be used for winter storms.
- Police grant: The Police Department received a grant for an emergency-management trailer equipped with barricades, cones, and related supplies.
- State budget survey: The Town's property-tax and budget trends were generally consistent with comparable North Carolina municipalities. Town-controlled fees had not been increased; solid-waste costs may rise when the current contract expires.
- Ferry toll meeting: Manager Miller and the Mayor attended the NCDOT meeting. Written comments were due to NCDOT by September 14.
- Fiscal year closing: Preliminary June figures showed revenues exceeding expenses by approximately \$406,000, subject to audit adjustments and transfers to restricted accounts. Approximately \$5.5 million in new residential value had come onto the tax rolls.
- Current-year finances: Because Town and County tax rates were adopted later than usual, tax bills were delayed. The General Fund was temporarily approximately \$208,000 behind and the Water Fund approximately \$12,000 behind while awaiting revenues. Occupancy-tax receipts were approximately \$3,000 below the prior year's comparable period.
- Short-term rentals: The Board discussed maintaining an accurate inventory of rentals and enforcing licensing and occupancy-tax requirements. Staff had recently contacted an identified unlicensed operator.
- Legislative changes: Staff reviewed changes involving e-bikes, land-use and general ordinances, municipal height-limit exemptions, and increased penalties for improper dumping. The Town does not enforce private HOA restrictions.

Water Advisory Board Report

Roger Huth provided additional information on the water-system projects. The first phase of the valve project was nearing completion, although an issue affecting one of the final valves could result in a change order. After that work is completed, the second valve phase was expected to begin within four to six weeks, with project completion anticipated by early December.

The Town continued comparing an on-site booster-station build with a prefabricated option and was seeking complete installation pricing. The scope of the broader water-treatment-plant refurbishment will be finalized after valve and booster-station costs are known, likely near year-end or early 2027.

Budget Amendments

Manager Miller reviewed amendments previously directed by the Board, including the mower purchase excluding recoverable sales tax, professional fees for the town manager search, related General Fund appropriations, and a \$3,550 Water Fund transfer to support repair and maintenance expenditures (gate replacement at WTP). She also reported the transfer of \$24,646 from tourism savings to the General Fund for Christmas-light restringing, with additional funds retained for possible fixture replacement. Motion to approve by PJ, Second by CM. 5-0.

Town Hall Boardroom Air Conditioner

83 The 13-year-old air-conditioning unit serving the Boardroom had a failed compressor. The
84 Board agreed that full replacement was more prudent than replacing the compressor and
85 discussed authorizing prompt action once pricing was received.

PJ made a MOTION to Allocate an amount not to exceed \$10,000 for replacement of the Town Hall Boardroom air-conditioning unit and authorize Manager Miller to make the expenditure. LO second. 5-0.

86 **Town Manager Search**

87 The Board reviewed the revised consultant contract resulting from the September 1 meeting.
88 Staff confirmed that the Board had already approved the contract subject to the requested
89 corrections, so no additional vote was required. Following execution, the Board will meet
90 with the consultant to establish the search process and will retain review of the position
91 advertisement.

92 **Proposed Ferry Tolls**

93 The Board discussed NCDOT's proposed ferry-toll structure, including a reported annual
94 charge of \$150 per vehicle. Concerns included the effect on local commuters, active-duty
95 military personnel, veterans, families with multiple vehicles, school transportation, and
96 commercial users. Residents were encouraged to submit comments by the September 14
97 deadline; forms and contact information were available through the Town. Motion by PJ,
98 second by CM. 5-0.

99

100 **Police Report**

101 Officer DeStefano presented the monthly activity report and announced a September 11
102 memorial walk beginning at 8:30 a.m., with a moment of silence planned for 8:46 a.m.
103 Participants would walk from the Bean, across the bridge, and return. Residents were
104 encouraged to attend and support local firefighters and others affected by the events of
105 September 11.

106 The Oriental Police Department established a Facebook page for verified public-safety
107 information, including incident updates and emergency information for hurricanes, floods,
108 snowstorms, and other events. Residents who do not use Facebook may contact the
109 department directly.

110 **Commissioner Items**

111 **Parks and Recreation.** Discussion was deferred until the Board could meet with the Parks
112 and Recreation Committee chair.

113 **Strategic Plan.** Commissioner Cooper reported that the strategic-planning work begun
114 during the Board's spring training in New Bern had been delayed during the budget process.
115 Commissioner Jordan volunteered to assist with completing the plan for public review.

116 **Hodges Street Flooding.** Commissioner Cooper relayed concerns about vehicles creating
117 wakes when driving through floodwater on Hodges Street, causing water to enter nearby
118 businesses and homes. The Board discussed establishing an objective closure threshold,

identifying suitable barricades or signs, designating responsibility for deployment, consulting affected businesses, and obtaining engineering input as needed. Staff will develop a comprehensive plan for Board consideration in October.

Street Maintenance and Paving

Mayor Pro Tem Jordan presented an update on planned street maintenance and paving. Approximately \$331,931 was immediately available, with additional possible funding from year-end surplus and approximately \$37,000 in pending FEMA administrative reimbursement. The maximum potential amount discussed was approximately \$768,931, subject to audit adjustments and required transfers to restricted accounts.

The Board's goal is to bundle work to reduce the cost impact of contractor mobilization, which was \$25,000 during the Town's prior paving project and is expected to be higher now. Candidate streets included:

- Ragan Road from Lupton to Neuse;
- Mildred Street from Broad Street to the river;
- Church Street from Broad Street to Freemason Street; and
- Potentially Vandemere Street and South Water Street.

The Board noted that Church Street may require additional preparation because of the elevation difference at the gutter. After receipt of the final audit report in October, the Board expects to refine the scope and consider authorizing the work for bid.

Quarterly Meeting

Reschedule the quarterly meeting from September 24 at 9:00 a.m. to October 1, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

The October 1 agenda will include the strategic-plan outline, ADA Transition Plan, update on the town manager search, and Hodges Street flooding plan.

Closed Session

Enter closed session to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6). PJ Motion, CM Second. 5-0.

Following the closed session, the Board returned to open session upon a motion and second. The motion to reopen by CM, second by PJ, passed 5-0

Town Manager Employment Agreement

The Board reported that Manager Miller agreed to continue serving until the earlier of the new manager's start date or June 30, 2027. The proposed modification also adjusted compensation retroactively. Funds for the adjustment would come from the budget contingency line item. The Board noted that retaining Manager Miller was expected to be more economical and operationally sound than hiring an interim manager during the search. BA#7 proposed to move funds. Unanimously accepted.

Commissioner Comments

- 152 • The Oriental Rotary Car Show was announced for October 10.
153 • The Old Front Porch Music Festival was announced for the preceding weekend.
154 • Faye Bond's 103rd birthday and Faye Bond Day were noted for September 29, with a
155 community celebration planned at Mariposa.
156 • The Board reconfirmed that the October 1 workshop agenda would include the strategic plan,
157 ADA Transition Plan, town manager search update, and Hodges Street discussion.

158 **Adjournment**

159 **Motion: PJ** To adjourn the meeting. Second DMc, 5-0.

160 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote; the meeting was adjourned at 7:18PM

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Sally Belangia, Mayor

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Diane H. Miller, Town Manager/Clerk

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168 Approved: _____, 2026