

**RECORD OF MINUTES
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD
THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017
9:00 A.M.
CAMP HATTERAS CONFERENCE BUILDING
24798 NORTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY 12
RODANTHE, NC 27968**

ATTENDING: Susie Walters, Chair; Leo Holland, Vice Chair; Tonia Cohen, Secretary; Stuart Pack, Treasurer; Ervin Bateman, Assistant Treasurer; George Banks, III, Myra Ladd-Bone, Bambos Charalambous, Mike Hogan, Wally Overman, Pat Weston, Martha Wickre, and Jay Wheless, Legal Counsel.

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Nancy Caviness

STAFF:

Lee Nettles, Executive Director
Diane Bognich, Director of Administration
Lorrie Love, Tourism Sales and Events Manager
Amy Wood, Clerk to the Board/Administrative Specialist

OTHERS: Dave Hallac, Superintendent; and Michael Barber, Outer Banks Group, National Park Service; Alexa Nota, Alicia Thorpe, and Chase Davenport, Outer Beaches Realty; Terry Ponton, Avon Property Owners Association; and John Griffin, Chicamacomico Life Saving Station.

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. The Board then recited the pledge of allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The Chair asked to add items under the Steering Committee report. Mr. Banks moved to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Ladd-Bone seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Ms. Weston noted that she had misunderstood the motion regarding the repeal of the plastic bag ban and she actually was opposed to the repeal of the ban and in favor of the resolution. Mr. Holland moved to approve the March 16, 2017 meeting minutes. Mr. Charalambous seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Charalambous moved to approve the minutes from the April 6, 2017 Special Meeting. Mr. Holland seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Superintendent Hallac updated the Board on beach nourishment in Buxton, opening dates at Park Service campgrounds and lighthouses, the passenger ferry to Ocracoke, and workshops for businesses that operate within the National Park Service sites.

John Griffin showed the Board the recognition plaque for the restricted funds Chicamacomico received. The plaque is painted on an original cedar shake from the 1911 lifesaving station. He noted as a fund raiser, in conjunction with the Dare County Arts Council, other cedar shakes were given to local artists and these completed shakes would be auctioned off. The proceeds from this auction will be split between the Arts Council and Chicamacomico.

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT: Mr. Overman reported on the Highway 12/US 158 intersection traffic management issue. Mr. Overman has heard from the State Highway Patrol, who noted that the additional summer troopers would likely be stationed around the Bonner Bridge and south, and not at the intersection. It was noted that the waterpark in Currituck might also impact where the troopers would be stationed. The Highway Patrol did say they would try to have someone there when possible but noted that “the intersection fell within the confines of Kitty Hawk and therefore it was up to Kitty Hawk to man the intersection.” The County and Town Managers met at a later date and created a tentative agreement that, during the 12 weeks that traffic was an issue, Duck, Southern Shores, Kitty Hawk and Dare County Sheriff’s Office would provide three (3) days coverage of the intersection (i.e. each entity listed would supply manpower three days).

The Board discussed House Bill 531 (HB531) and the impacts the bill would have on the Board/Bureau, and community, should it pass. Not only would the Restricted Fund Grants (Short Term, Natural, Historic, Cultural, Fireworks, and GOSPL) cease to exist, but current funding for The Soundside site development would no longer be available. Diane Bognich and Lee Nettles pointed out that should any damage happen to the Bureau’s Administration Building or Welcome Center, no repairs could be made as they come from the restricted fund as well.

Mr. Wheless noted that at this time, the restricted fund grants applications and contracts had no legal language regarding what would happen if the funds could no longer be disbursed legally and that, if possible, a contingency plan to help complete the funding should be explored. He also noted that if the Board continued to pay out the grants if this bill passes, they would be in violation of the law and personally liable for the funds.

The Board discussed alternate funding methods. Mr. Overman asked if the funds would be redirected to the County and Towns. Staff noted that the bill specified only the items the funds could be used for, reading the portion of the bill that listed these.

Staff and Legal Counsel will work together to confirm disclaimer language for the grants agreements and contracts, articulating that is a law makes disbursement of these funds illegal, or if the Tourism Board is disbanded, the Tourism Board is not liable for those expenses.

Ms. Cohen moved to direct staff to send letters to any entities in the restricted funds grants process (from those in the application process to those in the reimbursement process), noting potential effects that HB531 would have on those contracts/reimbursements should it pass. Mr. Pack seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Overman moved to suspend all future awards and extensions for grants from the restricted fund. Ms. Weston seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board did not consider the Natural, Historic, and Cultural Grant Extension request from Hatteras Island Ocean Center as the Board had just moved to suspend all future awards and extensions. Mr. Banks asked for additional information on this project (employees, visitation, hours of operation, etc.) should this matter come before the Board in the future.

BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT: Mr. Pack reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2016-2017 are up 3.54% over 2015-2016 actual receipts.

The Board discussed how HB531 would impact this budget. Mr. Overman and Lee Nettles noted options for a local bill that would add “positive/negative” impacts of tourism to the enabling legislation (HB225).

Mr. Pack reviewed the first draft of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. Diane Bognich reviewed the timeline for the budget process.

BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT (continued): Mr. Pack moved to hold a Public Hearing on the proposed Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget at 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices. Mr. Bateman seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business before Board at this time.

NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Charalambous asked the Board to consider changing the time frame for [general fund] event grants. Lee Nettles noted this was a topic for the planning session following the meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS: There were no Board Member comments made at this time.

SET DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 9:00 a.m., with a Public Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Budget will be held at 9:15. The meetings will be held at the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices on Roanoke Island.

The Board took a 20 minute break. Mr. Bateman and Mr. Charalambous were excused at 10:30 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:45 a.m.

PLANNING SESSION: Lee Nettles reviewed progress on the Three Year Strategic Goals, then moved into the following items for the planning session.

- **Travel Guide:** Lee Nettles discussed the gap between production cost and advertising sales over the years. However, it cost less than a quarter (\$.25) to fulfill a visitor guide request. Staff is conducting a survey, using an audience that had previously requested a visitor guide, and current findings are that the guide is still relevant-demand for the guide is still high. The Board reached consensus to keep producing the guide at this time.

Mr. Holland was excused at 11:00 a.m.

- **Event and Established Event Developer (EED) Grants:** The Board discussed options for the Established Event Developer Grant, such as eliminating the program, one year funding instead of three year funding, changing the requirement for creating a new event, capping amount of funding received, cap the amount given to a beneficiary, creating a tier system for events, or changing the peak season dates (it was suggested May 15-September 15, or June 1 to August 30). The Board noted that the EED Grants needed to change and sent the issue to the grants committee to come up with a recommendation.

The Board discussed changing the dates for "peak season." Staff was asked to gather information and statistics from local businesses regarding when business picks up for the season and to provide information regarding the events that could be affected by the date changes.

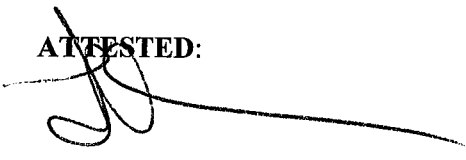
Mr. Overman reported that HB531 had died in committee. The issue may come up again in the Senate.

- **Welcome Centers:** The Board discussed the drop in welcome center users versus those using the rest rooms. Lee Nettles noted that, overall, the cost per visitor remains at \$3 (\$11 at the Weather Station). Potential exhibits at the Weather Station, location of the Hatteras welcome center, advertising, incentives to come into the welcome centers, and signage were also discussed. The Board recommended using the Government Education Channel to promote the welcome centers for vacation planning needs, and talking with North Carolina Department of Transportation regarding signage/advertising. Staff will look into the potential to do a survey regarding the welcome centers. The Board agreed to close the Hatteras Island Welcome Center for the month of December.

Ms. Weston was excused at 12:15 p.m.

Ms. Wickre moved to adjourn. Mr. Banks seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

ATTESTED:



Secretary, Dare County Tourism Board