

**RECORD OF MINUTES  
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD  
THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025  
9:00 A.M.  
OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
MANTEO, NC 27954**

**ATTENDING:** Dennis Robinson, Chairman; David Hines, Vice Chair; John Head, Assistant Treasurer; Tonia Cohen, Secretary; Mark Ballog, Brenda Chasen, Terry Gray, Richard Hess, Wally Overman, Mike Siers, and Jay Wheless, Legal Counsel.

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Tod Clissold, Treasurer; Mark Batenic, and Tess Judge.

**STAFF:**

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

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Philip Ruckle, The Coastland Times.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. The Board then recited the pledge of allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Mr. Siers moved to approve the agenda. Second by Mr. Gray. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Mr. Hess moved to approve the meeting minutes from March 20, 2025 meeting. Second by Ms. Chasen. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no public comments made. No written comments were received.

**CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS:** The Chair noted the recent Visit NC Tourism Conference and the Bureau and Rental Companies work with StaySense [a booking engine].

**BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT:** Mr. Head reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2024-2025 were up 1.05 % compared to 2023-2024.

Staff reviewed the recommendation for an audit firm. Ms. Chasen moved to hire Carr, Riggs & Ingram to perform audit services pursuant to the costs outlined in their proposal. Second by Mr. Siers. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

David Hines arrived at 9:12 a.m.

Diane Bognich reviewed the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Following the review, Mr. Siers moved to set a public hearing for the proposed fiscal year 2025-2026 budget for Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 9:15 in the Creech Memorial Boardroom, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Office, Manteo. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously (10-0).

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:** Mr. Siers reviewed the Personnel Committee recommendation to add the Community Engagement Manager and the Owned and Shared Media Manager to the “exempt” employee classification.

Mr. Overman moved to add the Community Engagement Manager and the Owned and Shared Media Manager to the “exempt” employee list. Second by Ms. Chasen. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

**OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU UPDATES:** Lee Nettles noted:

- Reviewed Visit NC Tourism Conference, particularly the programming about the National economy and travel planning
- Ongoing work with booking engines for both hotel/motel and rental home agencies on [outerbanks.org](http://outerbanks.org)
- Letter of Support for area Federal lands and workers still in draft mode while confirming facts and figures
- Marketing dashboard and visitation

Jeff Schwartzberg reviewed:

- the April 9, 2025 Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee meeting
- the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mission Mixer, co-sponsorship of the “The Cigarette Surfboard” documentary premier
- survey work to improve voluntourism opportunities-from how they are promoted to the types of help needed with the non-profits.
- Midgett Realty incorporated the Outer Banks Promise into the staff shirts

Lorrie Love noted:

- the RIPE booking engine was ready to go and visitors were able to book directly with a hotel/motel property
- the Outer Banks National Soft-Shell Week (formerly Soft Shell week) would be May 12-17, 2025, and Lee Nettles played the new jingle for the National Soft-Shell Week. So far, 30 restaurants are participating.
- 11<sup>th</sup> Annual OBX Tourism Summit November 6, 2025 at the Hatteras Marlin Club

Aaron Tuell reviewed recent articles and public relations work with:

- Conde Nast Traveler
- USA Today
- Travel + Leisure
- U.S. News Travel
- Our State
- Conde Nast Traveler
- Islands
- Group Travel Leader
- Visit NC Media Mission Mixer in Washington DC

**OLD BUSINESS:** There was no old business before the Board.

**NEW BUSINESS:** There was no new business before the Board.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** Ms. Chasen noted the Town of Duck is looking at slightly raising the tax rate, and update on the Herron Property and art projects associated with the Herron Property.

Mr. Head gave kudos to the staff for their preparedness and hard work with meetings outside of the Board meetings.

Mr. Ballog wondered about a “homeowners” week or weekend event(s).

Mr. Siers noted repairs to a pipe that would have a section of 158 closed for up to three weeks and reminded people to use the beach road in that area.

Ms. Cohen noted that the motels/hotels were in the midst of “bus season” with Senior and Student trips.

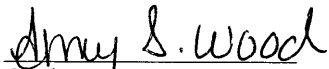
Mr. Hess noted meeting visitors at the Chowder Cook-off who came specifically for Taste of the Beach, coming back for Soft-Shell week, and were planning a vacation to coincide with the Seafood Festival.

Mr. Gray noted moving and landscaping in Kill Devil Hills and the upcoming bike week and reminded people to be on the lookout for bikes and drive carefully.

**SET DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in Curtis Creech Memorial Boardroom, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Office, Manteo, NC.

The Chair asked if there was any further business before the Board. Hearing none, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

**ATTESTED:**



Clerk, Dare County Tourism Board