

**RECORD OF MINUTES  
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025  
9:00 A.M.  
OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
MANTEO, NC 27954**

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

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Mark Batenic, Terry Gray, Tess Judge, and Mike Siers.

**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 Schwartzberg, Community Engagement Manager  
Aaron Tuell, Public Relations Manager

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Philip Ruckle, *The Coastland Times*; Chris Sawin, Outer Banks Community Foundation; John DeLucia, Albemarle & Associates; and Luke Halton, The OBX Way.

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. Gray moved to approve the agenda. Second by Mr. Overman. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Mr. Head moved to approve the meeting minutes from June 19, 2025 meeting. Second by Ms. Chasen. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chris Sawin shared a video and the idea behind, and formation of, the Trusted Partner program, and how people could join the program. No written comments were received.

**STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT/CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS:** The Chair thanked the Board members for their flexibility with changing the meeting date.

Staff, along with John DeLucia, reviewed the bidding process, from advertising to the pre-bid meeting, and rebidding [one bid was received on the original deadline, The project was rebid, and one bid was received then], for the construction of the boardwalk at the event site. One qualified bid was received from Millstone Marine. In addition to the bid, Millstone proposed using timber framing for the gazebo, which was an additional \$400,000.

The Steering Committee recommended accepting the bid from Millstone Marine [\$2,503,685.00] with the additional cost for wood beam construction [\$400,000.00] and a contingency of 15% [\$435,550.00], totaling \$3,339,235.00. Lee Nettles reminded the Board that this expenditure would need to have the Dare County Commissioners consent as well [scheduled to be on the September 3, 2025 agenda and consent was given].

Mr. Hines expressed his concerns, primarily focused on ensuring due diligence and transparency in the bidding and contracting process. He questioned whether it was appropriate to award the boardwalk construction project to Millstone solely because they were the only bidder, despite their trusted reputation and prior experience. Mr. Hines asked if re-advertising the project might attract more bids. He emphasized he wasn't necessarily advocating for a rebid but wanted to ensure all options were thoroughly considered and that the decision wasn't made simply out of convenience.

Mr. Hines was also concerned about the advertising of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ), questioning if the limited response was due to insufficient visibility. Specifically, he asked if more contractors might have seen the opportunity if it had been posted in more prominent outlets, such as through Dare County channels. In addition to his concerns about the bid process, Mr. Hines emphasized the importance of reviewing the actual contract before approval. He supported moving forward with the project but stated he would feel more comfortable if approval was contingent upon legal and executive director review of the final contract.

Following discussion, Ms. Cohen moved to approve the expenditure subject to a suitable contract reviewed and approved by Legal Counsel and the Executive Director. Second by Mr. Hines. Mr. Ballog asked how long the project was expected to take. John DeLucia replied that it would take five months. Mr. Hess asked if construction would interfere with events at the site. John DeLucia noted that staging would be done with this in mind and impacts should be minimal. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT:** Mr. Clissold reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2024-2025 were down 8.63 % compared to 23<sup>rd</sup> 023-2024.

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

- the newly released 2024 Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties.
- the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Marketing Plan Summary
- the new marketing dashboard and visitation figures

Lorrie Love reported on:

- early bird registration for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Tourism Summit
- familiarization tour with luxury travel planners
- upcoming events at the event site

Jeff Schwartzenberg reported on:

- the Inaugural “Tourism for Good” Volunteer Week October 11-18, 2025
- new software to create a volunteer hub to provide local non-profits a way to schedule, manage, and communicate with volunteers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NPO Knowledge series at College of the Albemarle September 26, 2025
- the Bureau’s participation in a national study on destination stewardship

Aaron Tuell reported on:

- finalizing interviews for the second season of the Outer Edge series
- a collaborative sponsorship with GoPro
- published articles
- upcoming media and influencer trips

Mr. Ballog asked if there were any celebration planning for America's 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration. Lee Nettles and Jeff Schwartzberg noted that Dare County had a working group for this and plans were under way.

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

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

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** Mr. Hess noted that, according to Metro Rentals, tent rentals for weddings were up for 2026.

Mr. Overman noted an upcoming event celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of World War II. The event takes place September 6, 2025 at Dare County airport.

Ms. Chasen noted the Town of Duck is getting ready for their fall events, including the Jazz Fest.

Mr. Head noted that while Highway 12 was good, the beachfront in Buxton was damaged. He also noted that more long term rentals were coming into the market.

**SET DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting is scheduled for September 18, 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 10:25 a.m.

**ATTESTED:**

  
Clerk, Dare County Tourism Board