

**RECORD OF MINUTES
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 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, Mark Batenic, Brenda Chasen, Richard Hess, Tess Judge, Wally Overman, Mike Siers, and Jay Wheless, Legal Counsel.

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Terry Gray.

STAFF:

Lee Nettles, Executive Director
Diane Bognich, Director of Administration
Amy Wood, Clerk to the Board/Administrative Specialist (Virtual)
Lorrie Love, Tourism Sales and Events Manager
Austin Horner, Tourism Services Coordinator
Anna Leigh Chapman, Public Relations Assistant

OTHERS ATTENDING: Luke Halton, The OBX Way; Bobby Outten, Dare County Manager; and Wendy Hoekwater, Net Growth Marketing.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mr. Siers moved to approve the agenda. Second by Ms. Chasen. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (11-0).

Mr. Hines arrived at 9:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Ms. Chasen moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2025 meeting. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Wendy Hoekwater thanked staff for the Tourism Summit and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT: Bobby Outten reviewed the history of and updated the Board on the construction of pickleball courts at the event site [The County originally approached the Board in August 2024]. The County would like to move forward with the construction of 10 courts at the event site, would manage and maintain the courts, work with the Board/Bureau on scheduling and bringing in tournaments, and asked the Board to pay for half the cost of the construction. The Board discussed the proposal and what other issues may arise once the courts are operable (for example lighting and bathrooms). Bobby Outten and Lee Nettles noted these would be addressed as needed. Bobby Outten noted that the County would prepare a Memorandum of Understanding.

Following discussion, Mr. Overman moved to authorize the property to be committed for this [pickleball courts] purpose and to authorize sharing half the cost. Second by Ms. Judge. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT (continued): Staff reviewed the request from the Town of Nags Head regarding shared costs for the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Grouse Street and US 158 (entrance to the event site). The Town asked the Board to contribute \$230,000 towards the signal. The Board discussed the type of signal, if police presence would still be needed at events, and the potential to add a traffic sign alerting motorists of the signal ahead.

Following discussion, Mr. Siers moved to approve an expenditure of \$230,000 for a traffic signal. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

Diane Bognich reviewed the request to change the name on the Tourism Impact Grant from Surf Pediatric Foundation to Everyone's Outer Banks, Inc. Surf Pediatrics applied for, and was awarded, a grant for Everyone's Playground, an inclusive playground. The Board and Legal Counsel discussed if a name change was allowed or would there need to be a new application for the project submitted. Upon further review, Legal Counsel found that a name change is allowable and would not impact the grant award.

Ms. Chasen moved to modify the Everyone's Playground Tourism Impact Grant contract. Second by Mr. Head. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

Diane Bognich reviewed the change of scope request for the Tourism Impact Grant award to the Avon Property Owners Association. The Association's application listed three access to be repaired with the grant. However, the award amount was lower than they requested and they then asked to change the scope of the grant to two access instead of three.

Mr. Hines moved to deny the change of scope. Second by Mr. Batenic. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT: Mr. Clissold reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2025-2026 were down 1.94 % compared to 2024-2025.

OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU UPDATES: Lee Nettles reviewed the:

- launch of the redesigned outerbanks.org
- season two premiers of The Outer Edge video series January 7, 8, and 9, 2026. The first showing will be in Kill Devil Hills, followed by Hatteras, and ending in Manteo.
- departure of Stephanie Hall, Owned and Social Media Manager. He plans to review the role and needs of the Bureau before filling the position.
- Blueroom Monthly Dashboard and Visitation numbers. The data shows that people are wanting to travel but using shorter booking timeframes and shorter stays.

On behalf of Jeff Schwartzberg, Lee Nettles reviewed:

- the next Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee meeting on January 14, 2026. He then listed the proposed new members for the Committee:
 - Fay Edwards, College of the Albemarle
 - Amy Montgomery, Outer Banks Hospital
 - Susan Rice, Non-Resident Property Owner
 - Bobby Stager, Waveriders

Mr. Hess moved to accept the new members to the Committee. Second by Mr. Overman. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (12-0).

- efforts to recruit, engage, and retain volunteers via the Volunteer OBX Portal

OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU UPDATES (continued):

Lorrie Love reported on:

- the marketing updates, strategic planning goals, and forward forecasts available for industry partners on outerbanks.org
- holiday hours for restaurants
- upcoming trade shows and the Soundside event calendar

On behalf of Aaron Tuell, Lorrie Love reported on:

- public relations eblast to over 400 journalists, highlighting local stories and noteworthy events on the Outer Banks
- upcoming article in the December 2025 issue of Travel & Leisure magazine

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

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

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS: The Chair thanked outgoing Board members Mark Ballog, David Hines, Mike Siers, and Wally Overman for their time and dedication to the Board.

- Mr. Clissold also thanked the outgoing members and noted that the Town of Manteo was ready for the holidays
- Mr. Head noted that while rentals were down it was still a solid year and that long term rental prices were coming down
- Ms. Chasen noted the Town of Duck shoreline stabilization project was ongoing
- Ms. Judge noted renovations of the restroom facilities at the site where the Bureau is located and the impacts it would have on the Welcome Center. Lee Nettles noted the welcome center would be closed while the renovations were ongoing and that the other welcome centers would be open and staffed.
- Mr. Siers thanked the Board their work, noting that it was great experience to be on the Board.
- Mr. Ballog gave an updated on the 12 Bars of Christmas passports, noting that about \$2,600 had been donated to local charities so far
- Mr. Overman thanked the Board and reflected on his time on the Board
- Ms. Cohen noted that the hotels were seeing a slump over the winter. Additionally, interviews for J-1 student workers were in progress at her property.
- Mr. Hess noted the search for an Executive Director for the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce was underway
- Jay Wheless noted his work with many Boards and felt that the Tourism Board was one of the hardest working Boards there was and the Bureau had talented, hardworking staff

SET DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2026 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 10:30 a.m.

ATTESTED:


Clerk, Dare County Tourism Board