

**RECORD OF MINUTES
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2024
9:00 A.M.
OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MANTEO, NC 27954**

ATTENDING: Monica Thibodeau, Chair; Tod Clissold, Treasurer; Dennis Robinson, Assistant Treasurer; Tonia Cohen, Secretary; Mark Batenic, John Head, Richard Hess, Tess Judge, Wally Overman, Mike Siers, and Jay Wheless, Legal Counsel.

EXCUSED ABSENCE: David Hines, Vice Chair; Mark Ballog, and Terry Gray.

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 Schwartzburg, Community Engagement Manager
Aaron Tuell, Public Relations Manager

OTHERS ATTENDING: Luke Halton, The OBX Way.

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 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. Hess. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Ms. Judge moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 18, 2024 meeting. Second by Mr. Head. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

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

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT: The Board reviewed:

- Tourism Impact Grant Extension request from the Town of Nags Head. The Town of Nags Head requested an extension to June 30, 2025 to complete the Whalebone Park restroom. While the Town does have the design and plan in place, they wish to work in the shoulder season as not to impact visitors to the park in season. Following review, Mr. Overman moved to grant the extension to June 30, 2025. Second by Mr. Hess. During discussion, it was noted that the extension would not have an impact on the budget as the awarded amount would be encumbered. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).
- Long Term Restricted Fund and Tourism Impact Grant Guideline modifications. Staff reviewed the changes made to both the Long Term Restricted Fund and the Tourism Impact Grant guidelines, which clarify what expenses are not covered by the grants, extension request deadlines, and materials submission.

Mr. Hess moved to adopt the modified Long Term Restricted Fund guidelines. Second by Mr. Siers. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Mr. Siers moved to adopt the modified Tourism Impact Grant guidelines. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

The Board reviewed the letter of support for the Area of Environmental Concern status for Jockey's Ridge. Mr. Siers moved to approve the letter of support. Second by Mr. Head. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT: Mr. Clissold reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2023-2024 were up 2.65 % compared to 2022-2023 actual receipts.

OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU UPDATES: Lee Nettles:

- Noted the training burn at Pamlico Jacks was completed and debris at the site cleaned up
- Attended the State of the County and the Outer Banks Chamber of Annual meetings, Outer Banks Community Foundation ribbon cutting, and upcoming North Carolina Travel and Tourism Board meetings
- Touched on the first meeting of the Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee meeting
- Reviewed the marketing dashboard. Visitation reports will be sent at a later date as several sites had not reported their numbers. The Board discussed how rentals were shaping up for the season, and more Airbnb properties switching over to long term rentals.

Jeff Schwartzberg reviewed the first Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee meeting and topics covered in that meeting.

Lorrie Love noted student groups are returning to the area after a hiatus and the 2nd annual Soft Shell week.

Aaron Tuell reviewed a recent appearance on the Hampton Roads show, and other public relations efforts.

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 noted the Town of Duck retreat and her representation on the housing task force.

Ms. Cohen noted one student group had checked in and expected more throughout the spring. She also noted hotels were not seeing the usual bump in reservations around tax refund time.

Mr. Siers thanked the Board for the grant extension.

Mr. Overman thanked the Board for the Wall That Heals grant and encouraged everyone to vote in the upcoming primaries.

Mr. Head and Mr. Hess thanked staff for highlighting key points in the budget & finance report.

Mr. Batenic asked if the new guidelines would be shared with the municipalities [they will be shared] and asked about retail figures.

SET DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2024 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 10:34 a.m.

ATTESTED:



Clerk, Dare County Tourism Board