

**RECORD OF MINUTES  
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 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; Mark Ballog, Mark Batic, Brenda Chasen, Richard Hess, Tess Judge, Wally Overman, and Jay Wheless, Legal Counsel.

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Tonia Cohen, Secretary; Terry Gray, and Mike Siers.

**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  
Aaron Tuell, Public Relations Manager  
Anna Leigh Chapman, Public Relations Assistant

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Philip Ruckle, The Coastland Times; Jim Gallagher, Ground Pros; Reid Parker, Carr, Riggs and Ingram. P.L.L.C; and Bryan Burhans, Outer Banks Forever.

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

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Ms. Chasen moved to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2025 meeting. Second by Mr. Head. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

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

Ms. Judge arrived at 9:05 a.m.

**FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 AUDIT PRESENTATION:** Reid Parker reviewed the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 audit. The Board received an unmodified opinion. He also noted that the audit had been accepted by the state. Following review, Mr. Hines moved to accept the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Audit. Second by Mr. Ballog. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

**STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT:** Lee Nettles reviewed the Tourism Impact Grant program and guidelines. The Board then reviewed the following Tourism Impact Grant Award recommendations:

- Avon Property Owners Association: \$27,750.00 for public access boardwalk replacement on Dolphin Lane, Due East Road, and Dune Way
- Community Care Clinic of Dare County: \$100,000.00 for the Dare Dental Clinic Expansion
- Dare County: \$125,000.00 for the Harriot Street Pathway Project
- Town of Kill Devil Hills: \$208,739.20 for the First Street Sidewalk Project
- Town of Kitty Hawk: \$49,434.00 for the Kitty Hawk US Lifesaving Station Memorial
- Town of Nags Head: \$750,000.00 for the Multi Use Path on US 158 from Carolista Drive to Soundside Road.
- Town of Nags Head: \$50,000.00 for the East Admiral Street Sidewalk
- Town of Nags Head: \$54,375.00 for the East Grouse Street Sidewalk
- North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island: \$30,000.00 for Protective Cabinetry for the James Melvin Paintings
- Outer Banks Conservationists: \$10,930.00 to improve Highway 64 crosswalk between the farm and pasture.
- Outer Banks Forever: \$150,000.00 for the Restoration of the Bodie Island Double Keepers' Quarters
- Town of Southern Shores: \$233,839.86 for the replacement of multi-use path from Hillcrest Drive to the northern border of town, using concrete.

Mr. Hines noted that was “ok” with the Lifesaving Memorial but he did not agree with the location of the memorial. He asked if the Town could find a different location and still use the grant award. Staff noted that a change of scope for the TIG contract could be done. Again, he noted he was ok with the project but not the location.

The Board discussed the matching tiers in the grant program, and discussions with North Carolina Department of Transportation about the crosswalk at Island Farm.

Following discussion, Mr. Hines moved to approve all the Tourism Impact Grant Awards with the exception of Kitty Hawk. Second by Mr. Overman. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Mr. Baticic moved to approve an award \$49,434.00 to the Town of Kitty Hawk for the Kitty Hawk US Lifesaving Station Memorial. Second by Mr. Head. Mr. Hines stated he is in favor of the project but not the location and that the town should find a new location for the memorial and request a change of scope. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

The Chair reviewed the RFP recommendation for landscaping services at the Soundside Event site. Mr. Hess moved to award a minimum one year contract with Caribbean Landscaping. 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 2025-2026 were down 1.60 % compared to 2024-2025. The Board discussed why the occupancy rate was down but meals were up. Mr. Clissold and Mr. Ballog noted that more people were eating out, especially when the weather was bad, and that food costs are up. Several members noted that reservations were still strong but rental rates were discounted.

Staff discussed the recommended purchase amount for a portion of Nags Head's ownership in the Soundside Event Site. Staff reviewed the history leading up to this portion purchase. Following discussion,

Mr. Clissold moved to pay the Town of Nags Head \$250,000 sooner than the closing date, pending the Town and Board attorneys schedule. Second by Mr. Baticic. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- 2026 Travel Guide had been printed and delivered
- the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Tourism Summit. He noted record attendance at the Summit and thanked Board members for attending.
- the Bureau won the North Carolina Tourism Industry Association Platinum Award for the Outer Edge Series
- fire damage to the southern electrical panel at the Soundside Event Site
- Living Shoreline progress. Staff continues to work with on revised plans based on the Board's comments. Lee Nettles noted that while three living shoreline projects were intended throughout Nags Head, there is now one project-the Harvey Access site (i.e. Soundside Event Site).
- Marketing Dashboard and Visitation

Jeff Schwartzenberg reviewed:

- the Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee held their last 2025 meeting and was ready to continue their work in 2026
- Volunteer OBX Portal to link non-profits and volunteers with one another and streamline the process
- work with Dare County Schools for a week long project May 2026 for the students
- the newly released State of Dare County Tourism Report

Lorrie Love reported on:

- 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Tourism Summit. She thanked the Board for attending and noted details for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Tourism Summit would be released in 2026.
- Work on an RFP to repair/rebuild the damaged electrical panel on the south end of the Soundside Event Site

Aaron Tuell reported on:

- October appearance on the Hampton Roads show and work for another takeover week with the show
- Work with Coastal Living and Our State magazines for upcoming articles
- Current and future media coverage for the Outer Banks

**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 Lorrie Love and staff for their hard work on the Tourism Summit.

- Mr. Clissold noted that the holidays were kicking off
- Ms. Chasen noted the Veteran's Day Ceremony in Southern Shores and that the Town of Duck would hold their first Night Out. The Town is also seeking representatives for their Parks and Recreation Committee.
- Ms. Judge reflected on the grant awards and the bustle of the summer and asked what could be done to help promote the impact the grants have on the lives of Dare County residents [Staff began work on a video to help share the Bureau's efforts to help with everyday life in Dare County].
- Mr. Ballog noted the Thanksgiving and Christmas preparations were amping up and asked everyone to encourage people to shop local
- Mr. Overman congratulated Mr. Clissold on his election to Mayor [Town of Manteo] and hoped everyone had a lovely Thanksgiving
- Mr. Hess reviewed the Seafood Festival, noting the good weather encouraged visitors to stay the whole day

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

**ATTESTED:**

Amy J. Wood  
Clerk, Dare County Tourism Board