

**RECORD OF MINUTES  
DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2025  
9:00 A.M.  
OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
MANTEO, NC 27954**

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

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Dennis Robinson, Chairman; 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  
Aaron Tuell, Public Relations Manager

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Margaret Boshek, Dawn York, and Hunter Freeman, Moffatt & Nichol; Andy Garmin, Town Manager; Joe Costello, Kelly Wyatt, and Greg Davies, Town of Nags Head; Justin LeBlanc, Ocracoke Access Alliance [virtual].

The Vice 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. Ms. Judge noted the passing of Ms. Geneva Perry.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Ms. Chasen moved to approve the meeting minutes from August 28, 2025 meeting. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously (11-0). [This approval was later tabled, see Old Business]

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Justin LeBlanc, Executive Director of the Ocracoke Access Alliance, spoke about the new organization, which was formed to advocate for greater state and federal investment in ferry services, NC-12, and other critical infrastructure, ensuring continued safe and reliable access.

**LIVING SHORELINE PRESENTATION:** Andy Garmin, Nags Head Town Manager, provided an overview of the work leading up to the living shoreline project and the selection of the Soundside Event Site as one of three project locations. He noted that while the Town received grants to design and construct the living shoreline at the Soundside, it would become the Tourism Board's responsibility to maintain it. He then turned the floor over to Margaret Boshek.

Margaret Boshek reviewed what a living shoreline does, examples of different types under consideration, and costs associated with them, what type of maintenance is involved with a living shoreline, where the living shorelines would be placed [although called the Harvey Access site, the living shorelines would be around the west side of the Soundside Event Site] the types of living shorelines already in place in Dare County, and what type would be best at the Harvey Access site (presentation on file). The Board discussed the ones that were already in place, with David Hines asking what the one in Kitty Hawk was made from, noting that it was

failing. Margaret Boshek noted that her company did not construct but would find out [it was constructed of vinyl and wood].

She noted that a response was needed before the end of September to stay consistent with their timelines. Mr. Wheless asked if the permit required maintenance. Margaret Boshek responded that the permit did not but the grants received did require it.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus that they were generally supportive of the project and would report back to Staff on which style living shoreline they felt most desirable at the location.

**BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT:** Mr. Clissold reviewed the meals and occupancy receipts received. Receipts for fiscal year 2025-2026 were down 1.84 % compared to 2024-2025.

**EVENT GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS:** Mr. Overman and Lee Nettles reviewed the work of the grant committee in evaluating the requests and put forth the following event grant award recommendations:

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Requested Amount</i>	<i>Recommended Amount</i>
Algonquian Indians of NC	2026 Annual American Indian Festival & Powwow	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
		Max eligible (\$10,800 req)	
Chicamacomico Banks Fire & Rescue	2025 Shuck Hatteras Oyster Festival	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 7,500.00
Dare County	A250 Celebration	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Dare County Arts Council	Artrageous Kids Art Festival 2026	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
	2026 Dare Arts Pride Project	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Dare County Restaurant Association	OBX Taste of the Beach 2026	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
		Max eligible (\$30,000 req)	
Eastern Surfing Association OBNC District	ESA 2026 Mid-Atlantic Regional Surfing Championship	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Elizabethan Gardens	2025 Winter Lights	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 22,000.00
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Assoc	2026 Coastal Gardening Festival	\$ 5,550.00	\$ 3,000.00
First Flight High School	2025 Good Guys vs Cancer Basketball Tournament	\$ 28,000.00	\$ 14,500.00
First Flight Society, Inc.	122nd Anniversary of the Wright Brothers Flight	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
		Max eligible (\$10,000 req)	
First Flight Society, Inc.	2026 Wilbur Wright's Birthday Celebration	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 750.00
Garage Band Charities	2026 OBX Rod & Custom Festival	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 17,500.00
		Max eligible (\$25,000 req)	
Hatteras Village Civic Association	Hatteras Village Offshore Open 2026	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 7,500.00
		Max eligible (\$22,400 req)	
NC Coastal Federation	2026 Hatteras Island Oyster Roast	\$ 4,700.00	\$ 3,000.00
OBX Pride Inc.	2026 Outer Banks Pride Fest	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
		Max Eligible (\$45,200 req)	
Outer Banks Conservationists	2025 Christmas Past	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Outer Banks Health Development Council	ThriveOBX Month	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 14,000.00
Outer Banks SPCA	2026 Bark in the Park	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
Outer Banks Sporting Events	2026 Flying Pirate Half Marathon	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
	2026 Running of the Leprechaun	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,000.00

Outer Banks Wedding Association	2026 Wedding Expo Weekend	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Roanoke Island Historical Association	Lost Colony Wine, Beer & Culinary Festival	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
The Secotan Alliance	In the Spirit of Wingina 3	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Theatre of Dare	Into the Woods	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
	Max eligible (\$10,000 req)		
Town of Manteo	Meet Me in Manteo for the Holidays	\$ 16,600.00	\$ 10,000.00
	2025 Manteo New Years Eve Event	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
	Max eligible (\$57,355 req)		
Town of Nags Head	2026 Kelly's St. Patrick's Day Parade	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 4,500.00
	Total Amounts	\$ 435,350.00	\$ 209,750.00

Following discussion, Mr. Head moved to approve the recommend Event Grant awards. Second by Ms. Chasen. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (11-0).

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

- Construction on the boardwalk and gazebo was underway and the Town of Nags Head was beginning broader discussions of sound side boardwalks around the area to the south [Whalebone, Outlet Mall].
- Blue Room monthly research report and visitation.
- recent additions to staff. Austin Horner joins as Tourism Services Coordinator and Anna Leigh Chapman joins as Public Relations Assistant.

Jeff Schwartzberg was attending the Outdoor Economy Conference. Lee Nettles gave a summary:

- of the recent Long Range Tourism Management Plan Special Committee Meeting
- Outer Banks featured in the 2025-26 NC Trail Town Guide
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Non-Profit Knowledge Series on September 26<sup>th</sup>
- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Outer Banks Volunteer Week October 11-18th

Lorrie Love reported on:

- attendance at the Student & Youth Travel and the S.P.O.R.T.S Conferences
- upcoming Tourism Summit
- Travel Guide Advertising Sales

Aaron Tuell reported on:

- filming wrapped for the second season of Outer Banks Edge
- GoPro partnership filming in September [this was later cancelled due to Hurricane Imelda]
- potential for a second round of voluntourism videos
- recent media coverage

**OLD BUSINESS:** The Vice Chair asked to revisit the minutes from August. Ms. Chasen moved to reconsider the approval of minutes from the August 28, 2025. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (11-0).

The Vice Chair asked that the minutes to reflect his concerns regarding the boardwalk bidding in more detail. The Clerk noted that she had the audio and her notes and could make those changes.

Ms. Chasen moved to table the minutes pending those additions. Second by Mr. Hess. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously (11-0).

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

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

- Mr. Head noted that the beaches in Buxton were taking a beating. He also expressed concerns with using reef balls for the living shoreline, mainly due to exposure above the waterline.
- Ms. Chasen noted the upcoming Duck Jazz Festival
- Mr. Clissold was congratulated on his new granddaughter
- Ms. Judge reviewed a recent visit to Hatteras Island with the North Carolina Department of Transportation
- Mr. Ballog noted the weather was keeping restaurants busy and reminded people to appreciate the day trip and second home owners in the fall
- Ms. Cohen noted an increase in student trip bookings at the Ramada
- Mr. Hess noted the upcoming Seafood Festival and invited the Board member to come help set up for the festival. He also noted that Karen Brown would be retiring as director of the Chamber in 2026.

**SET DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in Curtis Creech Memorial Boardroom, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Office, Manteo, NC.

The Vice Chair asked if there was any further business before the Board. Hearing none, the Vice Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:46 a.m.

**ATTESTED:**

Amy S. Wood  
Clerk/Dare County Tourism Board