Town of Nags Head
Planning Board
October 21, 2025

The Planning Board of the Town of Nags Head met on Tuesday, October 21st, 2025, in the Board Room at the Nags Head Municipal Complex.

Planning Chair Megan Vaughan called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. as a quorum was present.

Members Present

Megan Vaughan, Meade Gwinn, David Elder, Molly Harrison, David Thompson, Basil Belsches, Brad Carey

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Kelly Wyatt, Joe Costello, Lily Nieberding

Approval of Agenda

Chair Vaughan called for a motion to approve the agenda. David Elder moved to approve the agenda as presented, Meade Gwinn seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Public Comment/Audience Response

John Cece, a resident of Nags Head for 25 years, addressed the board regarding sea turtle conservation. He identified himself as a volunteer with the Network for Endangered Sea Turtles (NEST) and explained they have started an initiative to address and reduce beach lighting. He noted a concerning trend where turtle nesting in Nags Head has been declining in recent years, with turtles moving northward to other areas. Research indicates sea turtles avoid beaches with excessive lighting. Mr. Cece requested to work collaboratively with the town and engineers to address this issue, emphasizing the importance of incorporating appropriate lighting at the beginning of projects rather than retrofitting existing lights, which would be more cost-effective. He mentioned they are applying for grants to help fund lighting improvements and would like to continue discussions with the town on this matter.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Vaughan asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 16th, 2025, meeting. David Elder moved to approve the minutes as presented; David Thompson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

Consideration of a Vested Right/Special Use/Site Plan Amendment submitted by Albemarle & Associates, Ltd. on behalf of Nags Head Church for expansion of the parking lot.

Planning Director Kelly Wyatt presented a site plan and explained that the site plan amendment request is for Nags Head Church's parking lot expansion and storage shed relocation. The proposal had been reviewed previously by the Board but was in front of them again due to the expiration of the previous approval. She explained that the property is located at 105 West Soundside Road in the R-2 medium-density residential zone. The church, which operates as a Special Use within the zone, is seeking to add 42 parking spaces to address overlap between services. Ms. Wyatt detailed the requirements and compliance aspects of the proposal, including that the property lies in an X flood zone but adheres to the local elevation standard of 9 feet. The storage shed would need to meet flood requirements depending on its size, with an emphasis on regulatory base flood elevation for larger structures.

Ms. Wyatt noted that the proposal required major modification approval due to its scope, which includes expanding parking from the 97 spaces currently available—the minimum required based on the sanctuary's capacity of 272 seats. The expanded parking area is intended to address issues arising from multiple services and overlap, as congregants often park along the roadside or in grassy areas when existing parking spaces are full. The site plan includes considerations for buffering and landscaping, with small portions of buffer adjacent to Soundside Road and protective yards planned along residential boundaries to ensure compliance. Interior parking lot landscaping requirements are met, and preserving over 48% of the site's natural vegetation exceeds the town's stipulations.

The project has approval from Dare County Health Department and the Town Engineer, who reviewed traffic circulation and stormwater management components to ensure they meet public safety and environmental standards.

Ms. Wyatt noted that she as well as the applicants, Mike Morway from Albemarle Engineering and a representative from the church were present and available to answer any questions for the Board.

Ms. Wyatt confirmed for Chair Vaughan that the new lighting proposed for the area is compliant with town codes, featuring shoebox fixtures equipped with full cutoff and a color temperature below 3,000 Kelvins.

Ms. Wyatt confirmed for Mr. Belsches that the applicants are proposing an additional 42 parking spaces.

Pastor Terry Moore, representing the church, addressed the Board and highlighted the practical implications of the expansion, particularly in alleviating traffic and parking congestion. He explained that congregants often arrive in more than one vehicle per family, deviating from past behaviors where families would arrive together in a single car. This shift has exacerbated the shortage of parking as the sanctuary reaches its occupancy, leading to roadside parking and logistical challenges. The expansion would not only improve accessibility for congregants but would also accommodate the growing attendance and operational dynamics observed in the church community.

Chair Vaughan inquired about whether the expansion would alleviate parking on the side of Soundside Road, and Mr. Moore confirmed it would.

There being no further questions or concerns, Meade Gwinn moved to recommend approval of the Vested Right/Special Use/Site Plan Amendment as submitted. David Thompson seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Consideration of a Site Plan Amendment submitted by Albemarle & Associates, Ltd. On behalf of Coastal Bluewater Capital, LLC and TW's Outdoor Outfitters for expansion of storage space between the existing retail store and the existing storage building.

Ms. Wyatt explained that the site plan amendment for TW's Outdoor Outfitters proposes a 4,774 square foot storage addition between the existing retail store and storage building at 2230 South Croatan Highway. The property is zoned C-2 General Commercial.

Ms. Wyatt presented the proposed site plan to the Board and reviewed the applicable zoning regulations:

- Existing Structure and Storage: The existing principal retail structure is 9,072 square feet, with the existing accessory storage at 4,250 square feet. The addition would bring total storage area to 9,024 square feet, which still technically remains subordinate to the principal retail use. This meets the definition for accessory use, which must be incidental and customarily found in conjunction with the principal use and subordinate in area, extent, and purpose.
- Lot Coverage and Recombination Requirement: The proposed improvements would slightly exceed the 55% maximum lot coverage permitted within the C-2 zoning district. As a condition of approval, the applicant has agreed to recombine their lot with a vacant lot under the same ownership to the west. This recombination is necessary to meet the lot coverage requirement, ensuring that the total lot area is large enough before any building permits are issued.
- Building Height and Architectural Compliance: The building height would be approximately 30 feet, complying with the maximum allowable height of 35 feet in the district. Despite the architectural design standards having increased since the original structure's approval in 2005, the project maintains compliance with the 100-point design standard initially required, this is accomplished through the addition of porch roof and column trim.
- Parking Requirements and Restriping: No additional parking is required for the new storage space, as the Unified Development Ordinance does not have a specific parking requirement for storage. However, the site plan notes that existing parking spaces may be restriped from 10 feet to 9 feet wide, which would align with current standards and keep parking compliant.
- Project Approvals: The project has received approvals from the Dare County Health Department, Town Engineer, Fire and Public Works.

Ms. Wyatt noted that there was potentially a second phase to the project but would let the applicants address that. Ms. Wyatt stated that she, as well as Mark Kasten, architect on the project, John DeLucia, engineer and Chris Greening, the owner, were present and available to answer any questions from the Board.

John DeLucia from Albemarle & Associates addressed the Board and noted that the building would include a sprinkler system, and coordination with Deputy Fire Chief, Shane Hite, determined that a fire hydrant would be required as part of the safety measures in compliance with the North Carolina Fire Prevention Code.

Chair Vaughan inquired about the long-range plan for the property. Mr. DeLucia stated that they are working on the back portion right now but had to get more survey information. When they come back in front of the Board again, a few things on the plan will likely change.

Chris Greening, owner of the property, confirmed for Chair Vaughan that there could be online sales. Mr. Greening confirmed for Mr. Gwinn that when the project started there was an intention of having some workforce housing, but this was no longer the case.

Mr. Greening explained that the storage expansion was essential for maintaining adequate inventory during the off-season. This will allow his business to remain stable and ensure continued year-round employment for staff, addressing the challenges brought by seasonal fluctuations and external factors like tariffs.

Mr. Elder expressed concerns about the safety of the intersection at Satterfield Landing, noting the area experiences quite a few accidents. Other board members acknowledged this concern but agreed it pertained to future planning rather than the current application.

Meade Gwinn made a motion to recommend approval of the site plan amendment with the contingency of lot recombination. David Elder seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of a Site Plan Amendment submitted by Albemarle & Associates, Ltd. On behalf of Golasa Holdings and Outer Banks Sports Club for expansion of the fitness gym to include a two-story addition, outdoor gym area, and tennis court.

Ms. Wyatt presented the site plan amendment for Outer Banks Sports Club, which includes a new two-story, 4,538 square foot attached addition on the south side of the existing building, an additional 1,795 square feet of floor area within the existing building, an outdoor fitness training area and a tennis court.

The property is located at 2423 South Croatan Highway and is zoned C-2 General Commercial.

Ms. Wyatt presented the site plan as well as proposed elevations and floor plans and reviewed the applicable zoning regulations:

- The existing site currently exceeds the 55% maximum lot coverage at 56.6%, but the proposal will reduce coverage to 53.8% through parking lot reconfiguration and use of pervious materials.
- The two-story addition will be approximately 31.5 feet tall, complying with the 35-foot height limit.
- The design complies with Division 2 architectural standards, featuring pitched roofs, dormers, lap siding, and residential-style windows, and Ms. Wyatt commended the architect for the effort put into the design elements.
- The required parking is 65 spaces for indoor fitness use (73 if outdoor areas are included), and the site will provide 81 spaces.
- No new lighting is being proposed for the building, though future lighting for the tennis court would require permits.
- The site has approvals from Dare County Environmental Health and the Town Engineer for stormwater management. Public Works and the Fire Department also reviewed and approved the proposal with Ms. Wyatt noting that a sprinkler system and fire hydrant will be included as part of the project.

Ms. Wyatt stated that she, as well as Mark Kasten, architect on the project, John DeLucia, engineer and Manny Golasa, the owner, were present and available to answer any questions for the Board.

Manny Golasa, representing the Sports Club, explained that the facility would include four pickleball courts operating during regular gym hours (5:30 AM to 10 PM weekdays, shorter hours on weekends). The new children's gym would target ages 5-12 and was inspired by a similar facility in Virginia Beach.

Mr. Golasa confirmed for Chair Vaughan that during summer, the gym is primarily used by visitors, while locals tend to use it during the off-season.

Board members expressed enthusiasm for the children's gym concept and the outdoor components of the project with Ms. Harrison noting that it was nice to see three thriving businesses in Town.

There being no further discussion or concerns, Molly Harrison moved to recommend approval of the Site Plan Amendment as presented. Meade Gwinn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Initiation and consideration of text amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance, Flood Damage Prevention ordinance to revise and clarify the Town's elevation standards and required freeboard.

Deputy Planning Director Joe Costello presented proposed text amendments to the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, in response to the Town's 2024 Community Rating System (CRS) audit. The amendments primarily involve housekeeping and clarification of language to match the current National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) model ordinance.

Key points included:
- Clarifying that the town always maintains one foot of freeboard throughout its jurisdiction.
- Better defining "The Village at Nags Head" in ordinance language.
- Updating the definition of "development" to include storage of equipment or materials.
- Clarifying elevation standards for AO zones east of Beach Road.
- Ensuring proper references between the flood prevention ordinance and town definitions.

Mr. Costello explained to Mr. Belsches and the Board that the CRS is a voluntary program that rewards communities for adopting stricter regulations to reduce loss of life and property. Communities receive points for various measures, and Nags Head's current classification provides residents with a 25% discount on flood insurance premiums in special flood hazard areas.

Molly Harrison moved to initiate and recommend approval of the text amendments. Meade Gwinn seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Report on Board of Commissioners Actions – September 3rd, 2025

Ms. Wyatt provided a report on the Board of Commissioners' actions from their October 1st meeting. Of note: the request for public hearing on the Town's crowd gathering permit process was approved on the consent agenda and a public hearing was held to hear a text amendment, with regards to parking spaces, which was approved unanimously.

Also at the BOC meeting, Ms. Wyatt gave a presentation on the Division of Water Infrastructure zero-interest septic loan program, which will offer loans to high-risk properties (those adjacent to water bodies, without recent maintenance, and with elevations below 3 feet). Ms. Wyatt noted that the Town is working to increase participation in its Septic Health Initiative, which offers free inspections, a $250 rebate for tank pumping, and low-interest loans for repairs.

Planning Board members discussed strategies to increase participation in the septic programs and methods to identify failing systems. Mr. Elder suggested examining water usage data as a potential indicator of septic issues. Ms. Wyatt noted that while the town cannot require septic contractors to report on their work, both the town and county can address reported violations. Mr. Gwinn suggested including the health risks of septic failure along with available remedies on the door hanger. Mr. Belsches mentioned that the Septic Health Advisory Committee (of which he is a member) includes knowledgeable members working on various initiatives.

Continuing with her report, Ms. Wyatt noted that Mr. Costello provided an update on the Estuarian Shoreline Management Plan; an update was given on the Commercial Outdoor Recreation Overlay District discussions, and Ms. Wyatt gave the Commissioners an update on Dowdy Park Farmer's Markets. Ms. Wyatt noted that the town conducted a survey of farmers market vendors, finding that the majority were very satisfied or satisfied with the market. Follow-up meetings were held with vendors to review results and plan for future markets. Ms. Wyatt confirmed for Ms. Harrison that Nags Head artists receive preference for both farmers market and holiday market vendor selection.

Town Updates

None

Discussion Items

Planning & Development Directors Report, October 1st, 2025.

Ms. Wyatt confirmed that they had already touched on almost everything in her Director's Report but would be happy to answer any questions. There were no questions related to the report.

Planning Board Members' Agenda

Mr. Elder raised concerns about businesses displaying items outdoors that function as advertising, specifically mentioning kayaks, boats, and other products with signage attached. He asked for clarification on what constitutes signage versus outdoor storage or display, particularly when items have branding or sale information attached. Ms. Wyatt acknowledged the complexity of the issue, explaining that the town had previously conducted a similar review with the local business committee to better define the line between storage, display, advertising, and attention-getting devices. Mr. Thompson compared the situation to outdoor furniture at hardware stores and vehicles at car dealerships.

Ms. Harrison complimented the staff on the organization and thoroughness of the meeting packets, noting their clarity and accuracy. Other board members echoed this appreciation for Planning staff as well.

Planning Board Chairman's Agenda

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by David Elder. The time was 10:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lily Campos Nieberding