Town of Nags Head
Planning Board
December 16, 2025

The Planning Board of the Town of Nags Head met on Tuesday, December 16th, 2025, in the Board Room at the Nags Head Municipal Complex.

Acting Chair Meade Gwinn called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. as a quorum was present and took a moment to introduce and welcome two new members: Beverly Head and Valerie Netsch.

Members Present

Meade Gwinn, David Elder, David Thompson, Basil Belsches, Brad Carey, Beverly Head, Valerie Netsch

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Kelly Wyatt, Joe Costello, Lily Nieberding

Approval of Agenda

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

Public Comment/Audience Response

None

Approval of Minutes

Acting Chair Gwinn asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 18th, 2025, meeting. David Elder moved to approve the minutes as presented; David Thompson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

Sketch Plan Review submitted by Albemarle & Associates, Ltd on behalf of Coastal Bluewater Capital, LLC for construction of two buildings to accommodate retail and accessory storage uses. The property is zoned C-2, General Commercial and is located at 2230 S. Croatan Highway, Nags Head.

Planning Director Kelly Wyatt began her presentation by explaining she would project the site plan on screen while walking through the staff report. She noted this was one of two sketch plans to be reviewed that morning.

Ms. Wyatt oriented the board members to the site, pointing out that Highway 158 was on one side of the screen and Satterfield Landing on the other. She identified the existing TW's retail structure and the existing TW's storage building. She reminded the board that just two months prior, they had heard a request to construct a structure between the storage and principal buildings for storage purposes noting that the applicants are now proposing to convert that to retail.

The second major element of the proposal is construction of a new 6,750 square foot detached building divided into two units. Unit 1, the westernmost unit, would consist of 2,500 square feet of retail space and 1,000 square feet of accessory storage. Unit 2 would consist of 3,250 square feet of storage only, with no retail component. Ms. Wyatt noted that the two buildings are proposed to be connected via a covered walkway.

Additionally, the plan includes construction of a new 3,000 square foot detached building consisting of 2,000 square feet of retail and 1,000 square feet of accessory storage.

Ms. Wyatt emphasized that the property had recently been combined from two lots into one, as required by previous Site Plan approval.

Because of multiple buildings on one property, Ms. Wyatt explained this would be considered a "group development" under the UDO, which she defined as "a group of buildings on a single site which are occupied and used for professional offices, retail, personal services, indoor recreation, and restaurant". She stressed that the storage shown would have to be accessory to the retail use.

Regarding the sketch plan process, Ms. Wyatt explained its purpose noting that per the UDO it is required for all new development in cases where the new construction or addition has a total habitable area that is 5,000 square feet or greater.

Ms. Wyatt then detailed the zoning compliance review.

- The use is permitted in the C-2 district. The property is in an X flood zone but will need to meet the local elevation standard of 9 feet.
- Maximum lot coverage in C-2 is 55%, and the project comes in at 53.4%, making it compliant.
- Building height is a maximum of 35 feet, and when reviewing the architectural elevations, it appears to be exactly 35 feet.
- Landscaping requirements, including buffering where parking areas adjoin street rights-of-way, a 25-foot commercial transitional protective yard adjacent to residential uses to the south, and requirements for three rows of plantings. Interior parking lot landscaping will also be required, though not shown at this sketch plan phase.

  For the preservation and landscaping standard, Ms. Wyatt explained that commercial projects must either preserve 10% of existing mature vegetation on-site or replant 15% of the lot area if land disturbance has already occurred. She believed the site had already been cleared, so fresh landscaping will likely be required.

- Regarding parking, Ms. Wyatt noted the site plan referenced a reduction for bicycle racks but there was a discrepancy in the numbers that would need to be corrected. She confirmed that 20% of parking surfaces would need to be permeable materials, which appeared to be met with the new parking design.
- As far as signage, though not required at this phase, Ms. Wyatt included information for awareness since they didn't yet know what the retail spaces would be. She explained the different signage allowances based on road frontage - more signage facing Highway 158 versus a two-lane road like Satterfield Landing.

- For architectural design standards, Ms. Wyatt explained that the existing TW's structure was built under previous regulations requiring 100 design points. The recently approved storage addition maintained those 100 points. However, the two new structures would need to comply with current standards, either achieving 150 design points or complying with all standards in Division 2 of the commercial design code. She noted the plans showed roof articulations, residential-style windows, covered porch elements, rafter tails, and gable brackets, indicating awareness of architectural requirements.

Ms. Wyatt then summarized the technical department reviews: Building inspection will wait for full plans; Town Engineer wanted vehicle padding exhibits for emergency access, loading berth compliance, stormwater calculations for the 4.3-inch rainfall event, NCDEQ permits, proper culverts for the driveway cuts on Satterfield Landing, and sediment/erosion control plans. Public Services confirmed the dumpster location was compliant with front-load vehicles. Fire department needed fire lane markings shown, and police had no concerns at this time.

John DeLucia from Albemarle and Associates then addressed the board. He explained that the building approved last month as storage would be converted to retail. The reason for the previous approval was to get the foundation and shell started before spring season. Mr. DeLucia outlined the development timeline, saying parking lots would likely go in next year with buildings following later. He clarified the uses: the connecting building would become retail, eliminating the previously shown loading zone and avoiding disturbance to existing turnstone parking. The existing building would remain storage for TW's, as would one unit in the new building, with a garage door and loading zone for deliveries. An overhead door would be added to the existing building to facilitate the connection. Addressing the bicycle rack issue Ms. Wyatt raised, Mr. DeLucia acknowledged they couldn't have four racks as shown, only three as currently approved. He believed the westernmost building would likely be an art gallery, though he showed it as retail since retail parking standards are more stringent (1 per 250 square feet versus 1 per 350 for galleries). If it remains retail and parking is tight, they could adjust by adding 250 square feet to storage and reducing retail by the same amount. Regarding pedestrian connectivity, Mr. DeLucia mentioned discussions with the owner about potentially asking the Town to allow sidewalk installation on Satterfield Landing. He explained the existing stormwater pond was state-approved with complex underground systems that would be difficult to relocate. He also assured the Board that existing Leland Cypress trees and landscaping wouldn't be disturbed.

Mr. Gwinn asked about previously discussed on-site workforce housing, Mr. DeLucia responded that they would have loved to do employee housing, but they didn't have enough parking or sewage capacity. He detailed the septic system locations, with existing buildings using tanks and drain fields in one area, while new buildings would have separate systems handling about 400-450 gallons per day.

Mr. Elder asked about the dumpster location, which Mr. DeLucia said would be relocated and shared by all buildings, easier to access than in the previously approved plan.

During board discussion, Mr. Elder expressed several concerns. He questioned how a facility of this size with significant storage would function, particularly regarding online sales and parking standards for storage space, noting the total was about 14,000 square feet.

Mr. Elder also raised concerns about signage, noting the existing signage policy was accurate for when it was written, but is no longer accurate due to changing lighting technology. He observed that the current site has "a lot of signage on the building" lit in various methods that seemingly diverge from what the understanding of our policy is for signage.

He worried about the flow of the site and noted that it created "a lot of questions in my mind that aren't satisfied by what I see here to see how it is going to work other than as a very, very large retail space."

Mr. Thompson responded to Mr. Elder's concerns, acknowledging it was a large project but expressing confidence that TW's "does a great job of maintaining their facilities and the grounds, there's not clutter, there's no weeds and things growing. It looks good." He believes the property will be maintained similarly.

When Meade Gwinn asked about internal access between units 1 and 2, Mr. DeLucia clarified that there wasn't planned access as they intended to have two rental spaces for other businesses, with TW's remaining the anchor tenant out front.

Mr. Belsches commented this was his first sketch plan review and felt it provided "a roadmap to the applicant of what they're going to have to work on in their final product." Mr. Belsches believed the questions raised in the staff report were what needed to be answered and felt that they were on the right path.

Mr. Carey noted that while he thought it was a good use of space, the only improvement needed was having a pedestrian right of way/path to connect the areas so people wouldn't need to drive between parking lots. Ms. Wyatt acknowledged this had been recognized internally as well as by the property owner.

Ms. Wyatt agreed this was the purpose of sketch plan review - not to have all answers but to identify issues early.

Mr. Thompson commented positively on the aesthetics: "Architecturally speaking, I think great care has been given to the aesthetics of the project. And I think it will ultimately look good."

Ms. Netsch agreed, noting that the applicant had already taken steps towards making it meet all the architectural standards.

As no formal action is required for sketch plan review, Ms. Wyatt confirmed they just needed acknowledgement that the applicant understood the path forward and would bring it back when ready.

Sketch Plan Review submitted by Michael Robinson, P.E. on behalf of Tar Heel Motel of OBX, LLC to construct a two-story, 26-guest room, hotel. The property is zoned C-2, General Commercial and is included within the Hotel Overlay District and is located at 7001 S. Croatan Highway, Nags Head.

Kelly Wyatt introduced the second sketch plan of the morning, submitted by Michael Robinson on behalf of Tar Heel Motel OBX LLC. The project scope includes construction of a two-story, 26-unit hotel with parking below and associated site improvements. Ms. Wyatt detailed the project elements while displaying the site plan: construction of the hotel with parking below, a swimming pool, a pool house with restrooms, a dog run, and other site amenities. She explained this was actually two properties and includes the existing Tar Heel Motel adjacent to South Virginia Dare Trail, which had its own site with a pool and noted that they applicant is proposing to remove the existing pool to rework septic for the entire project, combining septic systems for both existing and proposed structures, then relocating the pool to a new location.

Ms. Wyatt stated the existing motel has many nonconformities as it was developed prior to current zoning but emphasized that nonconformities can exist as long as they're not increased, and this application wouldn't increase any nonconformities. In addition, access would be retained from Virginia Dare Trail using the existing entrance and exit, with the drive aisle flowing onto the proposed property and connecting at East Glidden Street. Ms. Wyatt appreciated that no new cut is proposed onto Highway 158.

Mr. Thompson asked for clarification about access between the existing and new buildings, specifically about the fire lane and concrete paving shown between them and whether the new section would have beach road access. Ms. Wyatt confirmed the circulation would flow through and connect to Glidden Street.

Acting Chair Gwinn asked about height calculations, confirming that the 42.8 feet would begin at the 9-foot local elevation standard, not at existing grade. Ms. Wyatt explained that height would be taken from the LES/RFPE so as to not penalize someone for elevating to meet flood standards.

Mike Robinson, project engineer, introduced himself and outlined the project. Mr. Robinson confirmed that it had been reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers and there were no issues. Significant hydro work, including geological studies and slug testing, showed good soil permeability. Addressing parking, Robinson mentioned it's easily resolved with ample site space.

Mr. Carey asked about timeline and Mr. Robinson estimated being permit-ready in 6 to 12 months, with around a year for construction.

Mr. Thompson praised the architectural efforts. Ms. Netsch agreed and inquired about existing motel upgrades. Mr. Robinson confirmed that no upgrades were planned, noting recent repairs.

Mr. Belsches expressed hope that the murals would be preserved and Mr. Robinson confirmed that they would be. Ms. Netsch noted the hotel's unique character, to which Mr. Robinson agreed, acknowledging its contribution to the Town's overall character.

Mr. Elder considered the septic area an opportunity for open space, and he and Mr. Robinson discussed proposed pedestrian access.

Board Members expressed enthusiasm for the project and Ms. Wyatt confirmed that it would follow the same path as TW and will also require a public hearing.

Since this was also a sketch plan requiring no formal action, the board acknowledged the presentation and agreed to move it forward in the process.

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

Ms. Wyatt provided a report on the Board of Commissioners' actions from their December 3rd meeting. Of note:

The Board held a public hearing related to the flood damage prevention ordinance concerning freeboard standards on the oceanfront. The Planning Board had recommended approval, and it was adopted at the December meeting. Ms. Wyatt explained that Deputy Planning Director Joe Costello, who manages the CRS (Community Rating System) program, had provided them with that updated information and the audit is back on track. The Board also held a public hearing for a vested right special use permit site plan amendment for Nags Head Church regarding additional parking spaces and stormwater management and voted unanimously to approve it. Ms. Wyatt then shared highlights from her monthly director's report to the commissioners. She emphasized the great work of Public Services, Police, Fire, Event Coordinator, Paige Griffin, and various other staff for all their efforts in making the holiday activities, notably the Tree Lighting Ceremony special this year. Lastly, she noted the appointment of the two new members to the Planning Board.

Town Updates

Mr. Elder spoke regarding the group and crowd gathering permit conversation that went before the Board of Commissioners, saying he was very happy with the time, effort and energy put into it, recognizing that Dowdy Park has become a great community space within the Town.
Acting Chair Gwinn reflected on the park as well, noting that Nags Head is unique, it's a strip town, and Dowdy Park is like our town square… It gives charm and a family feel to the town. He complimented Event Coordinator, Paige Griffin for doing "a wonderful job."

Ms. Wyatt commented that in the coming year, Whalebone Park is going to be another park that we want to start dedicating some time and energy to. With the new pavilion and restrooms now open we will be looking at developing some programming for it as well.

Mr. Carey observed that the soundside boardwalk at the Event Site are coming along well and look nice.

Acting Chair Gwinn raised a suggestion someone had made to him about installing a pole with an osprey nest on the dock for observation opportunities, especially for children. He noted there was one near Sugar Creek but no good observation point, except from the restaurant. Ms. Wyatt explained that the current construction was part of the Visitor's Bureau project and wasn't sure if they'd considered an osprey pole and offered to mention the idea to them. Mr. Elder agreed and suggested a webcam for the nest.

Discussion Items

Planning & Development Directors Report, December 3rd, 2025.

This item was covered during the Report on Board of Commissioners Actions.

Planning Board Members' Agenda

Mr. Elder expressed ongoing concerns about e-bikes and electric vehicles on walkways, noting rapid technological advances and difficulties in recording accidents as these aren't classified as motorized vehicles. He differentiated between pedal-assist and throttle-powered vehicles, observing kids using these devices at speed. Mr. Elder suggested considering speed limits and possible prohibitions, especially as they move forward with boardwalk discussions. Mr. Gwinn agreed about the dangers of quiet vehicles, while Mr. Carey noted a 10-mph limit on the beach road multi-use path. Mr. Thompson acknowledged regulatory challenges and Ms. Wyatt stated there have been ongoing discussions with the police with regards to this topic.

Mr. Thompson praised the sketch plan process, which is useful for board familiarization before the approval stages. Ms. Wyatt noted anything over 5,000 sq ft requires a sketch plan, highlighting its early-stage value in identifying challenges. Mr. Elder recalled that early submissions reduce costs of unworkable ideas. Mr. Belsches inquired about chair elections, with Ms. Wyatt explaining that nominations will take place at the January 20th meeting, with her starting the meeting before a new chair is elected.

Planning Board Chairman's Agenda

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by David Elder. The time was 10:37 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lily Campos Nieberding