
**Town of Nags Head
Planning Board
February 17, 2026**

The Planning Board of the Town of Nags Head met on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, in the Board Room at the Nags Head Municipal Complex.

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

Members Present

Meade Gwinn, David Elder, Beverly Head, David Thompson

Members Absent

Basil Belsches, Brad Carey, Valerie Netsch

Others Present

Kelly Wyatt, Joe Costello, Lily Nieberding

Approval of Agenda

Chair Gwinn called for Approval of the Agenda. David Elder moved to approve the agenda as presented. Beverly Head seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Public Comment/Audience Response

None

Approval of Minutes

Chair Gwinn asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20th, 2026, meeting. David Elder moved to approve the minutes as presented; Beverly Head seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

Special Use Permit/Site Plan Review submitted by Albemarle & Associates, Ltd on behalf of Coastal Bluewater Capital, LLC and TW's Bait and Tackle for construction of a Group Development, including two buildings to accommodate retail and art gallery uses and their associated accessory storage spaces. The property is zoned C-2, General Commercial and is located at 2230 S. Croatan Highway, Nags Head.

Planning Director Kelly Wyatt presented this item explaining that the Board had seen this item previously at the prior month's meeting. The proposal involves the construction of a group development at 2230 S. Croatan Highway (zoned C-2, General Commercial), submitted by Albemarle & Associates Ltd on behalf of Coastal Bluewater Capital, LLC and TW's Bait and Tackle. The scope of work includes converting recently approved storage space between two existing buildings to retail, constructing two additional buildings, one with two units (one dedicated to storage, the other

combining retail and storage), and a third building furthest west dedicated to art gallery and storage use. The site plan reflects adequate parking, stormwater management, and septic infrastructure.

Staff noted that at the January meeting, the Board found the project compliant with all use and development standards, including lot coverage, parking, stormwater management, and buffering. The sole outstanding concern was architectural design, which at that time did not fully satisfy the Town's commercial architectural design criteria. The Board had directed the applicant and architect to revisit the design and incorporate additional architectural elements, while agreeing to keep the special use public hearing on track for March. Ms. Wyatt confirmed the public hearing had been advertised, sign placed on the property, and that adjacent property owner notification letters had been sent.

Staff presented the revised architectural design for all three buildings, highlighting the following improvements: the elimination of the gambrel roof in favor of pitched roofs; reduced and varied roofline heights to create a one-story appearance; enlarged dormers incorporating double-hung windows (faux where necessary, which staff noted has been accepted previously); faux shutters on elevations; larger, more architecturally proportioned columns with column trim; a combination of horizontal lap siding on the lower portions and vertical board-and-batten siding above; roofed entry features to clearly designate entrances; and the addition of gable brackets. Ms. Wyatt stated that the revised designs now clearly meet the intent of the Town's commercial architectural design standards and recommended approval of the Group Development, including the revised architectural scheme.

Board members expressed appreciation for the revisions. Mr. Thompson noted the designs looked great. Chair Gwinn commended both staff and the applicant for the collaborative effort, stating the buildings would blend in nicely and look more residential in character. Staff in turn expressed appreciation for the Board's willingness to keep the special use process on schedule during the revision period.

There being no further discussion, David Thompson moved to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit/Site Plan Review as presented. Beverly Head seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of a Site Plan Review for construction of an 8,305 square foot Dare County EMS Station and associated improvements. The property is zoned SPD-C Village Commercial-1 and is located at 105 W. Seachase Drive.

Ms. Wyatt presented noting that this item was a resubmission of a site plan previously reviewed and approved by the Board and heard by the Board of Commissioners in December 2024. The proposal is for the construction of an 8,305 square foot Dare County EMS Station at 105 W. Seachase Drive (zoned SPD-C Village Commercial-1). The resubmission was necessitated solely by the expiration of the one-year site plan approval; the applicant is now ready to pull permits but did not do so before expiration. Staff confirmed that nothing substantive has changed in the site plan.

Staff reviewed compliance across all applicable standards. Lot coverage is compliant and is being reduced compared to existing conditions on the former bank site. Height remains compliant. The project continues to meet the Town's architectural design standards, and it will additionally proceed through Village architectural review, which was expected to occur later that week. Since the Board's prior review, the Village at Nags Head has requested a change from a metal roof to cedar shake, which staff identified as the only material change to the plans. Ms. Wyatt noted this change is consistent with Village architectural preferences and that all other elements remain as previously approved.

Parking remains compliant, with 22 spaces provided against a required minimum of 13, and most of the parking is constructed as permeable surface. Landscaping, buffering, vegetation preservation, and interior parking lot landscaping all meet requirements. Carolina Water Service confirmed in writing its capacity to serve the facility, documentation that was not available at the prior review. The Town engineer's review of traffic circulation and stormwater management, as well as reviews by the fire department and public services department, remain satisfactory.

Mr. Elder commented favorably on the parking design, specifically expressing appreciation that parking spaces had been removed from the front apron of the facility, noting this would be beneficial to EMS staff and that parking in front of a garage door was generally undesirable. Ms. Head remarked that the Village would likely be very pleased with the cedar shake roof selection given her familiarity with the Village's architectural preferences.

Chair Gwinn raised a question regarding the median cut on 158 for access to the EMS station, specifically whether the median to the west of the cut would be removed or remain. Engineer Michael Robinson and Assistant County Manager, Dustin Peele, clarified that the median landscaping on the east side of the cut would be trimmed back approximately 18 inches to maintain sight lines, but that the median itself would remain, as it provides a useful staging area and prevents large vehicles from being encouraged to make wide left turns into the station. Mr. Elder agreed, noting that the median configuration provides a practical "pause station" for vehicles, particularly given traffic conditions. Mr. Peele further explained that the wide pavement behind the median would allow construction vehicles to make the turn during the build phase, and that the area would be temporarily graveled until paving is complete. Chair Gwinn noted his primary concern had been large equipment attempting a left turn into the station; Mr. Peele confirmed that they didn't want to encourage large trucks making that turn.

There being no further discussion, David Elder moved to recommend approval of the Site Plan. Beverly Head seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Report on Board of Commissioners Actions – February 4th, 2026

Ms. Wyatt noted that at their meeting, the Board of Commissioners addressed two Planning items on the consent agenda. The first was the TW's Bait and Tackle special use request (discussed earlier in the meeting), and the second was a request for a public hearing related to lighting for the pickleball court. Both items are on track for public hearing, with the Board of Commissioners scheduled to make decisions on them at their March 4th, 2026, meeting.

Town Updates

None

Discussion Items

Planning & Development Director's Report – February 4th, 2026

Ms. Wyatt provided a departmental update on several ongoing initiatives. With respect to the Septic Health Advisory Committee, staff noted the committee was unable to meet in January but that a meeting was planned for late February. Staff reported that a response from the Division of Water Infrastructure regarding the zero-interest septic loan program is still pending but that the process appears to be moving in a positive direction.

Ms. Wyatt highlighted the work of Environmental Planner Conner Twiddy, reminding the Board that a group from Mount Pleasant Water Works visited Nags Head less than a year prior to study the Town's septic health initiative as a model for their own program. That program is now operational, and Mount Pleasant is hosting a "septic health think tank", a one-day event bringing together practitioners dealing with on-site wastewater challenges and has invited Conner to present.

Ms. Wyatt also reported that in the wake of recent storms and high winds, the Town's sand relocation program had seen a significant surge in applications as well as dune management cost share applications. Staff noted that the storm appeared to have substantially increased public participation in the program this year.

Mr. Elder commented on the observable changes to the beaches following the recent storm event, noting how dramatically and quickly the shoreline moves and how the volumes of renourished sand continue to migrate in ways that are not fully predictable.

Regarding Dowdy Park and arts and culture events, Ms. Wyatt reported that Event Coordinator, Paige Griffin, had hosted a Winter Market the prior Saturday to strong attendance. The Arts and Culture Committee is preparing an end-of-season recap and forward-looking presentation for the Board of Commissioners at their March 4 meeting. Chair Gwinn asked whether participation data from these events, including attendance figures and visitor origin information, could be shared with the Planning Board. Ms. Wyatt confirmed that Paige tracks this information closely, including vendor feedback, and offered to have Paige present to the Board at a future meeting.

Update on Estuarine Shoreline Management Plan.

Deputy Planning Director Joe Costello gave the Board an update on the Estuarine Shoreline Management Plan (ESMP), focusing on developing living shoreline strategies to protect against erosion, enhance ecological benefits, and improve recreational access. The plan encourages green approaches, incorporating living shorelines alongside existing hardened ones. Challenges include private ownership complications for public projects. Mr. Costello highlighted data collection at Villa Dunes Drive, which revealed less sediment movement than expected, leading to a shift towards town-assisted design, with homeowners taking on construction and maintenance to lessen town liability.

For Soundside Road, the focus narrowed to a berm section, aligning with stormwater projects, given concerns about breakwater islands. Ongoing erosion threatens property owners' riparian rights, necessitating joint action. Historical comparison showed significant erosion since the 1970s. The Harvey Living Shoreline project combines large offshore breakwaters and sills, with design accommodating catamaran access and maintaining beachfront views. A small beach nourishment area aims to improve public access despite regulatory approval uncertainties.

Addressing potential storm surges, Mr. Costello noted designs are over-engineered for resilience, with benefits including aquatic habitat support. Mr. Costello showcased subaquatic vegetation around Sugar Creek as a candidate for further living shoreline projects, possibly including oyster incorporation.

The presentation was well received by the Board with Mr. Elder suggesting the need for cohesive regional learning among isolated permitted projects. Chair Gwinn asked about possible using dredge material from the Roanoke Island project, but Mr. Costello noted logistical challenges concerning suitable materials and site conditions.

Update on Commercial Outdoor Recreation Overlay District

Mr. Costello updated the Board on the Commercial Outdoor Recreation District (CORD) study, underway for about a year. The Town's Comprehensive Plan envisions the Soundside activity node as a high-quality mixed-use area, yet the current CORD reflects more highway commercial development. The CORD is divided into: northern (Soundside Event Center, pickleball courts, boardwalk, speedway, First Flight Adventure Park, mini golf), central (outlets, catfish farms), and Causeway (restaurants, retail, water sports).

Mr. Costello noted that while the area has strengths like existing recreation businesses and approved hotel development, it lacks zoning protections and pedestrian connectivity. Opportunities lie in improving connectivity, revising zoning laws to allow outdoor recreation in group developments, and addressing SB 382 challenges. Key planning priorities are extending the boardwalk, promoting public art, enhancing sound access, adding shade trees, and fostering mixed commercial uses.

Mr. Costello sent letters and held an outreach meeting. At the meeting, few property owners attended but showed support, with limited opposition seen as tacit approval. Next steps involve presenting the plan to the Board of Commissioners at their upcoming retreat to get their feedback as well as targeting grants, and zoning amendments for outdoor recreation components.

Mr. Thompson praised staff's efforts for sustaining Nags Head's family-friendly appeal. The potential for wildlife and nature programming to bolster the CORD vision was discussed, with Mr. Elder emphasizing the area's rich bird life, like falcons and egrets, as a draw. He suggested hosting a birder at the Soundside Events Center to spark interest, noting that shoulder-season bird activity could boost tourism. Chair Gwinn proposed osprey nesting platforms with cameras for visitors and bird attraction. Ms. Head endorsed any initiative nurturing nature, aligning with tourism goals. Chair Gwinn commended staff for enhancing Nags Head's family-friendly and eco-friendly image.

Planning Board Members' Agenda

None

Planning Board Chairman's Agenda

Chair Gwinn stated that he wished to reiterate a priority he intends to continue raising: the need for workforce housing. He emphasized that as the Town plans for new businesses and economic activity in the CORD and elsewhere, there is a critical corresponding need to house the people who will work in those businesses. He called for the topics of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and workforce housing to be placed back on the Planning Board's agenda in the near term. Other Board members expressed agreement.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by David Elder. The time was 10:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lily Campos Nieberding