



# STAFF REPORT

## Town of Nags Head

### Planning & Development Department

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To: Board of Commissioners

From: Kelly Wyatt, Director of Planning & Development  
Paige Griffin, Event Coordinator  
Arts & Culture Committee Members

Date: February 23, 2023

Subject: Committee for Arts and Culture Update

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Planning Staff and members of the Nags Head Committee for Arts and Culture will be providing a brief presentation to the Board of Commissioners at their March 1, 2023, meeting. The intent of the presentation is to highlight efforts by the Committee during the 2022/2023 Season, and to provide information on what the Committee would like to achieve during the upcoming 2023/2024 Season.

#### **2022 Season**

The 2022 Farmers Market season was another successful one. With the summer market application process going entirely virtual through online submissions, we were able to track and manage the number of applications received. Anticipating keeping the online application open for seven days, we had to close it after only three when approximately 130 applications were received. In an effort to keep parking manageable and concerns and conflicts to a minimum, it was determined that the Committee for Arts and Culture would only select 60 vendors for participation in the 2022 Summer Market. Of those approximately 60 vendors, 27 of those were given preference because they specialized in consumables (fresh fruit, vegetables, cheeses, baked goods, fermented foods, sauces, etc.). Of those 27 producers/consumables, three (3) of them were new to the market including Gutsy Grains, Donna's Delights, and Charis Coffee Shop.

While many of our vendors were local it is important to note that many came from as far as Currituck, Swan Quarter, Columbia, Hertford, Edenton, and Elizabeth City. Their participation in the market is vital to its success and we feel fortunate to have them there.

In addition to the vendors, there were several community partners present at each of the markets, including Endless Possibilities, NEST, Beach Food Pantry, CSI, SPCA, Outer Banks Hospital and the Saving Lives Taskforce.

The market's visitation peaked in the month of July with upwards of 600 visitors, however all of the markets were very well attended this year, averaging approximately 550 visitors at each market. As always, the Town's Event Coordinator, Paige Griffin made notable efforts to interact and connect with as many visitors as possible. She

noted that in addition to locals and day trippers from Elizabeth City, Sunbury, Edenton, Hertford, and Virginia, many of the out of state visitors were from Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana, Tennessee, and Florida.

While Covid-19 restrictions have eased over time, staff continued to put the safety of our vendors and visitors first by putting up hand-washing stations and providing hand sanitizer for the safety and convenience of those in attendance.

The 2022 Summer Concert Series was also very successful with 8 bands performing.

We held four (4) Holiday Markets this season. Three of these markets were held on Saturday mornings and one was held on a Thursday evening. These markets had approximately 75 vendors participating with visitation of over 350 people per market. The number of vendors participating increased from the previous season. Due to the dates and times of the Holiday Markets, we did not encounter parking conflicts with Nags Head Elementary School so we made an effort to accommodate applicants who were unable to participate in the summer markets. Of the 75 vendors participating in the Holiday Markets, 26 of those offered consumables and we had several new vendors in attendance, including Zebi Candles, Too Jam Good, Beans and Beats, Abbi's Teas & Things and Modern Coastal Cookery. As in previous years, the Town received many compliments from both visitors, locals, and vendors on the festive atmosphere, holiday music, and holiday lights.

This season, three family friendly movies were shown at Dowdy Park, the Croods, Raya and the Last Dragon, and the Book of Life. We were able to provide free popcorn for everyone in attendance.

We held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>. This event was very successful, with many return visitors from the previous year. We were also very fortunate again this year to have Santa Claus fit us into his schedule and visit with each of the children in attendance. The Fire Department was integral in making sure he arrived safe and sound. Enough cannot be said about the town departmental collaboration to make this event both safe and successful. The Public Works Department decorating the park in Christmas lights thoughtfully and beautifully, prepping areas to host a fire pit, the Fire Department taking great care of Santa, seeing to it that the fire pits were lit, maintained, and extinguished safely, and Planning Department staff serving hot chocolate, hot apple cider and cookies to keep everyone warm throughout the evening. This is an event that we would love to continue and expand upon if possible.

We were fortunate to hold a new event this season. On December 20<sup>th</sup> we held the first Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt at Dowdy Park. Event Coordinator Paige Griffin and volunteers from the Committee for Arts and Culture gathered at Dowdy Park earlier that day and "hid" upwards of 350 candy canes in and around the east side of the park. Not knowing what to expect from this first-time event, it was wonderful to see how many families turned out to participate and we were able to receive feedback on opportunities for improvement in the coming years.

Advertisement was kept to a minimum for the 2022 Markets, Tree Lighting and Candy Cane Hunt with the use of Facebook and Instagram only. Social media response continues to be positive and encouraging.

## **2023 Season**

The Committee for Arts and Culture has already been discussing the upcoming 2023 Dowdy Park Farmers Market Season. With the last day of school at Nags Head Elementary School being on June 9<sup>th</sup> and beginning on August 29<sup>th</sup>, the committee would like to hold the market each Thursday during this timeframe, beginning on Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup> and running through August 17<sup>th</sup> for a total of ten (10) markets. Previous seasons have accommodated approximately 16 markets. However, once Nags Head Elementary School resumes in late August, we will be unable to hold markets during the week. We intend to keep the total number of vendors to 50 this season, including the vendors participating in the young entrepreneur program.

The 2023 Summer Concert Series is anticipated to kick off June 14<sup>th</sup> through August 16<sup>th</sup> with a performance each Wednesday evening from 6:30 – 8:00pm. Event Coordinator, Paige Griffin is putting together a wonderful line-up of bands with a variety of genres.

In addition to continuing the four (4) Holiday Markets, we would like to consider offering two other market opportunities. The first, a small (25 vendor maximum) Tuesday night market geared towards family friendly activities, incorporating children's crafts and educational opportunities, a pet market with SPCA, a second-hand clothes market, book exchange market, Master Gardener/what to plant/when and where market, etc. The ideas are still flowing, and we are open to suggestions. The frequency of these potential smaller markets is still under consideration and input from the Board of Commissioners would be most welcome. The second market opportunity would be to host a once-a-month Winter/Off-Season Market on the second Saturday during the months of January, February, March, and April. This market would be for producers, consumables only, and would provide our vendors and visitors with continuous opportunity to sell and purchase fresh meat, eggs, produce, prepared foods.

The committee would like to continue offering fitness opportunities, showing family friendly movies, organizing Kids Day at the Park, and growing next year's Tree Lighting Ceremony, Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt, and Holiday Decorating Contest. The committee has been discussing the possibility of new projects and events including the creation of Dowdy Park Farmers Market T-Shirts, initiating a public art and pedestrian safety project to paint an intersection within the Town and to host a story-telling event within the Town.

Interest in these community events continues to grow and gain momentum and as such the committee is continuing to explore sponsorship opportunities.

Planning Staff, Event Coordinator Paige Griffin, and members of the Committee for Arts and Culture will be available for questions and to seek input from the Board of Commissioners following the presentation.