



# STAFF REPORT

## Town of Nags Head

### Planning & Development Department

---

To: Board of Commissioners  
From: Kelly Wyatt, Director of Planning & Development  
Paige Griffin, Event Coordinator  
Art & Culture Committee Members  
  
Date: February 29, 2024  
Subject: Committee for Art and Culture Update

---

Planning Staff and members of the Nags Head Committee for Art and Culture will be providing a brief presentation to the Board of Commissioners at their March 6, 2024 meeting. The intent of the presentation is to highlight efforts by the Committee during the 2023/2024 Season, and to provide information on what the Committee would like to achieve during the upcoming 2024/2025 Season.

#### **2023 Season**

The 2023 Farmers Market season was yet another successful one. The online application was open for just under two weeks and we received approximately 130 applications. To manage parking and minimize concerns and conflicts, the Committee for Art and Culture decided to select only 60 vendors for participation in the 2023 Summer Market. However, we ended up with an average of 66 vendors participating. Out of these, 37 were given preference because they specialized in consumables such as fresh fruit, vegetables, cheeses, baked goods, fermented foods, and sauces.

While many vendors were local, we also had participants from as far as Currituck, Swan Quarter, Creswell, Columbia, Hertford, Edenton, and Elizabeth City. Their presence at the market is crucial to its success, and we are grateful to have them.

The market saw its highest visitation in July, with upwards of 1,000 visitors. This was during the Fourth of July weekend and unfortunately led to parking issues. Despite this, all markets were well attended throughout the season, averaging approximately 650 visitors each.

The 2023 Summer Concert Series was also successful, with 10 bands scheduled and 9 performing. Additionally, our first season offering Family Fun Nights was a hit.

We organized four Holiday Markets, three on Saturday mornings and one on a Thursday evening. These markets featured approximately 78 vendors and saw over 350 visitors per market, with an increase in vendor participation compared to the previous season. Fortunately, these markets did not conflict with Nags Head Elementary School,

as sometimes happens during our summer markets. The festive atmosphere, holiday music, and lights were well-received by visitors, locals, and vendors alike.

The 3rd Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 25th was a success, with many returning visitors. Santa Claus also made an appearance, adding to the festive spirit. The event was made possible by collaborative efforts from various town departments, ensuring both safety and success. This is an event we hope to continue and expand upon, potentially adding more lighting and decorations to the park.

On December 14th, we hosted the 2nd annual Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt at Dowdy Park. Learning from the previous year, we divided participants into two age groups, which was well-received. The event was a quick but enjoyable experience for the locals.

The Winter Markets are still occurring, however the first two (January 13<sup>th</sup> and February 10<sup>th</sup>) were very successful and visitors have expressed so much appreciation for the ability to continue to pick up fresh foods from our wonderful vendors in the off-season.

Social media response continues to be positive and encouraging, reflecting the community's ongoing support for these events.

## **2024 Season**

The Committee for Art and Culture has been actively discussing the upcoming 2024 Season Events. To address parking concerns, we have scheduled markets from June 13th, 2024, through August 15th, 2024, aligning with the period when Nags Head Elementary School is not in session. This timeframe allows for ten (10) markets, as we are unable to hold markets during the week once school resumes.

As the market's popularity grows, it becomes challenging to maintain a manageable number of vendors while accommodating both seasoned participants and new artisans. Paige has informally surveyed previous market vendors, of which there is anticipated to be approximately 24 returning vendors specializing in perishables and consumables, 36 returning artisans, and potentially 13 new perishable vendors, leaving little to no space for new artisans to be accepted.

The 2024 Summer Concert Series is set to begin on June 12th running through August 21st, featuring performances each Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. Event Coordinator Paige Griffin is putting together an exciting lineup of bands spanning various genres. While we regret the absence of the 82nd Airborne Division Band in 2024, we are optimistic about the possibility of welcoming the Military Rhythm and Blues band this season.

In addition to the four (4) Holiday Markets, the committee intends to continue offering Family Fun Nights. These monthly evening events, held from June through September, each revolve around a theme. We are exploring themes such as storytelling, an evening with the Corolla Wild Horse Fund (and Riptide) among others. Vendors that complement each theme will be invited, providing local artisans with further engagement opportunities.

We plan to host Winter/Off-Season Markets again in the coming season, building upon their positive reception last season. These markets exclusively feature producers and consumables, offering continuous opportunities for vendors and visitors to purchase fresh meat, eggs, produce, and prepared foods.

Thanks to the acquisition of our own movie equipment, facilitated by Art and Culture Committee member Jeremy Russell, we can now schedule and screen movies more frequently, pending the acquisition of our annual movie licensure. We hope to be showing several movies in the coming year.

Furthermore, we aim to continue offering weekly fitness opportunities, family-friendly movie screenings, organizing Kids Day at the Park, and expanding next year's Tree Lighting Ceremony and Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt. Despite limited participation in the Holiday Decorating Contest over the past two years, we are exploring new strategies to reignite interest in the event moving forward.

The committee remains committed to the Art Mast Project, with local artists Kate Lawrence and Jackie Koenig currently working on art panels slated for installation this summer.

Additionally, we are considering several new projects and events for the upcoming year, including a public art and pedestrian safety initiative to paint an intersection within the town, collaborating with a local artist to create a mural at the skate park, and organizing a "Paint & Skate" gathering to engage the community in collaborative mural creation. Other ideas include establishing a nature loom at Barnes Street Park, potentially screening movies at the park, and brainstorming new concepts and ideas for Whalebone Park following upcoming improvements.

As always, the Committee for Art and Culture will participate in the 35th annual Artrageous Kids Art Festival on Saturday, May 11th, from 10 am to 2 pm at Dowdy Park, with the theme "Creativity stARTS here"!

As the interest in our community events continues to surge, we are actively exploring sponsorship opportunities each season.

With the increased workload and responsibilities, our staff, particularly Paige Griffin, is feeling the strain of managing effectively while maintaining the unique atmosphere and safety of our events. Therefore, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners consider including funds for seasonal part-time help at the market. We envision this position being needed for approximately 10 hours/week through the height of the season offerings (approximately 10 weeks). The total request would not exceed \$5,000.

Members of the Planning Staff, Event Coordinator Paige Griffin, and representatives from the Committee for Art and Culture will be available following the presentation to address any questions and seek input from the Board of Commissioners.