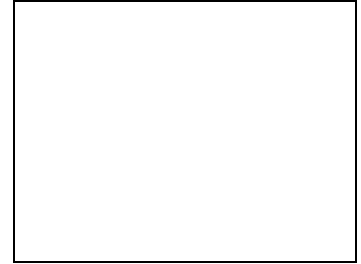




MINUTES TEMPLATE



COMMITTEE: Visitor Services Advisory Committee

Time Meeting called to Order: 8:02am

MEETING DATE: January 13, 2026

Time Meeting Adjourned: 8:54am

MEMBERS PRESENT via ZOOM: Mary Malavase, Chair, Matt Peel, Vice Chair, Garison Beale, Liz Holland, Peter Morrison and Niles Parker

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT via ZOOM: Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Director of Culture & Tourism and David Sharpe, Visitor Services Coordinator, Deana Weatherly, Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator

GUESTS PRESENT: Peter Burke, Executive Director, Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	VOTES / ROLL CALL
1 Welcome VSAC Members	David welcomed the committee members to the meeting and took the roll call of members and staff.	
2 Approval of Minutes	The December 9 meeting minutes were approved 5-0. Chair Malavase abstained citing her absence from that meeting.	
3 Conversation with Peter Burke, Executive Director, Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce	Peter recapped Christmas Stroll Weekend, December 7-9. Visitor numbers were approximately the same as last year, measured by Placer AI and other indicators. Thursday saw an unexpected uptick in attendance, possibly due to weather forecasts or pent-up demand from the previous year's blackout. Regarding National Grid, he noted improved coordination following last year's power outage, increased visibility and preparedness despite actual issue last year being an underground cable. The Chamber Director then reported about Santa Claus' arrival by coast guard cutter on Saturday. For safety, a new landing area on Straight Wharf was chosen as the old one was crowded and people too close to the water. Santa's route only went up Main Street which helped with crowd management. Peter then briefly discussed the fight on Federal Street which overshadowed the positive coverage of Stroll overall. Committee members discussed various issues including open-container behaviors, store "sip and shops" offering alcohol without permits, having more messaging to encourage responsible behavior, possibly revisiting one-day pour permits and keeping Stroll family-friendly. Peter added there is a need for consistent communication to businesses about alcohol rules and maybe bringing seasonal community service officers back for Stroll weekend. It was also noted that fire and licensing inspectors actively monitored restaurant capacities and compliance. It was also noted that the Whaling Museum had a record attendance on Saturday with more than 1000 people.	

Executive Director Burke briefly reported on the Christmas tree lighting on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Participants felt the event, though smoother than past years, seemed more oriented toward high-profile visitors than locals. It is hoped that. It can return to a more "local" feel in future years.

Peter Burke disconnected at 8:36am.

4 Director's Report Shantaw reviewed the Placer AI annual data. There were 754,000 unique visitors in 2025, a .08% decrease from the year before. The busiest days were Thursday–Sunday with Saturday being the strongest. Top visitor home regions: New Canaan, Hingham, Wellesley, Darien, Boston, Weston, Palm Beach, Brooklyn, Greenwich. Top arrival points: Logan Airport, LaGuardia Airport followed by the Steamship Authority and Hy-Line.

New event and film permit applications launched January 2.

There is a Black History Month celebration planned for February 6th at the African Meeting house and the next door Higgenbotham House. It is a partnership with NHA, Chamber and the Boston Museum of African-American History

Shantaw then reported that the Cultural Council grant cycle is starting. Cultural District received a \$15,000 grant.

5 Visitor Services Coordinator Report David reviewed the overall 2025 statistics adding that visitor numbers continue to grow steadily. Airport visitor numbers rising due to larger aircraft (JetBlue using Airbus 220) as well as the desk is better staffed than in recent years. David noted that the office is open Monday – Friday and closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays thru the winter.

Mary asked about being able to track the electronic downloads of Travel and Lodging brochures. David explained that the town has switched to different software and he can't get the numbers.

The group briefly discussed that smaller number of restaurants open during the winter, noting that Fusaros has closed and may not reopen until April.

Peter asked about the Stranded Passenger plan. Shantaw reported that a detailed the strategy is being developed. There are two categories. The first is a natural disaster/ emergency. The high school becomes emergency shelter with MEMA involvement. The other is visitor choice/ preventable stranding using the nightly hotel vacancy list and coordinating with police dispatch. The Public Safety Building serves as a warm, safe, monitored space. Shantaw noted that the town cannot place stranded visitors in private homes or businesses. It was suggested that the hotels should offer discounted "stranded passenger" rates.

6 Cultural Affairs and Event Coordinator's Report Deana reported 302 events were permitted last year, many in the summer and only 63 days with no events.

\$5,700 in state cultural grants were awarded to island organizations.

Deana added that she is preparing for return of Children's Beach programming and the major seasonal events Daffodil, Film Festival, etc.

Shantaw will connect with Mary with regard to planning for Daffy 50. Over 50,000 daffodil bulbs were planted this past fall.

Signature _____