

## **This is Radio Hatteras with the weekly news summary for Sunday, February 15, 2026.**

**On Thursday, Feb. 12,** the Dare County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to place a one-quarter cent sales and use tax referendum on the November 2026 General Election ballot. The referendum allows Dare County voters to decide whether to fund the Parks & Recreation Recommendations and Implementation Plan developed by McGill & Associates.

The plan outlines long-term improvements to parks and recreation facilities countywide, including expanded field capacity, upgraded lighting, additional indoor program space, three splash pads, updating county playgrounds, outdoor trails and other enhancements. If approved, the sales and use tax rate would increase from 6.75% to 7.0%, generating an estimated annual revenue for the quarter-cent at \$6,100,958. After annual debt service, \$688,208 would remain for expanded operation and program expenses.

Certain items are exempted from the sales tax. Those exemptions are groceries, gasoline, automobiles and prescriptions.

No tax increase will occur unless the referendum is approved by voters in November 2026.

### **The Dare commissioners meeting last Thursday, February 12 was packed with action.**

**Fixing the Hatteras Medical Center property.** In January, the need to stabilize parts of the southern and eastern sides of the Hatteras Medical Center was addressed. In February, the project moved forward with the commissioners accepting bids and authorizing payment from cash reserves. Coastal Science and Engineering, Columbia, SC, will complete engineering, design, and required permitting for \$25,000. Northeastern Marine Inc., Kitty Hawk, will clear a few trees and dispose of brush for \$5,750 and supply and place 200 linear feet of rip rap for \$33,900.

**Parking at the Buxton Soccer Field.** For a long time, current parking at the teacher housing/soccer complex in Buxton has been inadequate and causes pedestrian safety concerns during sporting events. Commissioner Mary Ellon Ballance submitted letters she had received citing safety concerns. The commissioners agreed to fund designing, permitting and bidding to improve parking at the complex. The cost is \$24,000.

**Presentation of the Dare County Annual Comprehensive Financial Report as of June 30, 2025.** The audit was performed by DMJPS, CPAs and advisors and is an unqualified audit opinion, with no audit findings, no grant audit findings and no questioned costs.

Both the NC State Treasurer and the Local Government Commission cited the same Financial Performance Indicators of Concern, which is found in the Water Fund. Specifically, the Capital Asset Condition Ratio is below 0.50. The county's ratio is 0.48 in Fiscal Year 2025. Dare County notes a flaw in the indicator that is derived from straight line depreciation, which does not match the county's use of equipment due to fluctuations in population. The board of commissioners will sign a letter for the state treasurer and the government commission citing a letter from Rafelis questioning the measure's appropriateness.

**Amendments to Capital Improvements.** Commissioners adopted capital project ordinances amendments for the Dare County and Dare County Schools Capital Improvements Plans on the recommendation of the Capital Improvements Planning Committee.

Dare County and the county's Tourism Board have a joint project to build 10 pickleball courts at the Event Site in Nags Head. This budget was increased by \$145,000, to cover increased costs.

The schools' amendments increase the budget for the Manteo Field House by \$130,170, again to cover increased costs. A playground equipment project was scheduled for Fiscal Year 2027. The project was moved up to Fiscal Year 2026 at a cost of \$270,000, recovered from unexpended funds in previous capital budgets for the schools.

## **Moving along, Congratulations to the Homecoming Court for 2026 at Cape Hatteras Secondary School**

King and Queen: Jonathan Vernesoni and Gabby Baker

Prince and Princess: Owen O'Neal and Eryn Ratliff

Duke and Duchess: Owen Austin and Kaya Lyerly

Participating in the Homecoming celebration following the basketball games Friday night, February 13 are  
Class of 2026

Owen Austin, Owen O'Neal, Jonathan Vernesoni, Zeke Willis

Eryn Ratliff, Gabby Baker, Karina de Lao Caldera, Estrella Olan-Campos

Class of 2027

Eli Harper, Landen Sonnier, Liam Van Druten

Alexa Booher, Addyson Johnson, Paizley Schultz

Class of 2028

Wyatt Cannon, Ozzy Harris, Misha Nuzzo, Issy Ross

Class of 2029

Seaton Hawpe, Kaya Lyerly

### **Events happening this week.**

Outer Banks residents and visitors are invited to take part in a regionwide beach cleanup effort later this month aimed at removing litter and storm debris from local shorelines. The **“Big Beach Cleanup and Keep Our Island Clean Day,”** hosted by Thrive OBX, the Surfrider Foundation, and the NC Coastal Federation, is scheduled for Saturday, Feb 21, from 10-1. Cleanup sites will stretch from Duck to Buxton and from Roanoke Island to Wanchese.

Organizers are asking volunteers to register in advance through the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau volunteer portal to help ensure all beach accesses are covered.

On Hatteras Island, volunteers are advised to use extra caution due to debris from recent oceanfront home collapses, particularly in the Buxton area. Organizers recommend wearing gloves and hard-soled shoes and watching for hazards such as nail-filled boards and septic system materials. Debris collected along the Cape Hatteras National Seashore may be piled in National Park Service parking areas near beach accesses.

To get involved, go to [Volunteerobx.com](http://Volunteerobx.com). Look to the right, hit the button for Needs. Search for Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

### **Starry Nights set for Hatteras February 21**

Clean the beach and then head to Hatteras village for Starry Nights.

Starry Nights happens Saturday, February 21, 2026, and brings a full day of free astronomy programs, hands-on activities, and beach stargazing to Hatteras Island.

The event, hosted by the Hatteras Village Civic Association, takes place at multiple locations throughout the village, including the Hatteras Community Center, Hatteras Volunteer Fire Department, Hatteras Civic Center, and the Sandy Bay parking area.

The 2026 event features expanded programming, with two different planetarium programs and four total shows, doubling the number of presentations from previous years. Planetarium shows by the Morehead Planetarium are scheduled for 1:30, 2:15, 3:00, and 3:45 p.m.

Children's programming and activities run from 1:30 to 4:30 at the Hatteras Community Center. Enjoy hands-on experiments, crafts, and other interactive opportunities inside the community building before and after the planetarium shows at the adjacent fire station.

From 5 to 6:30, attendees are invited to stop by the Hatteras Civic Center for soup before heading out for evening stargazing. The event will conclude with beach skywatching from 6:30 to 8:30. Participants meet at Sandy Bay.

All activities and events are free and open to the public.

A “**Meet the Candidates**” event, organized by island resident Marcie Shoemaker, is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Feb. 20 at the Avon fire station and will feature a moderated question-and-answer session with candidates seeking the Republican nomination for sheriff.

Shoemaker said the event is non-partisan, and the goal is to give island residents easier access to the candidates and an opportunity to ask questions about issues that matter most locally.

Three of the four candidates have confirmed their participation. Those planning to attend as of early February include Jimmy Pierce, a senior police officer with the Nags Head Police Department; Rodney Rawls, a master patrol sergeant with the Kill Devil Hills Police Department; and Jeff Deringer, chief deputy with the Dare County Sheriff’s Office.

**Cape Hatteras Secondary School will host a dedication ceremony** on Saturday, March 14, 2026, honoring longtime educator Braxton B. Hall with a Celebration of the Arts.

On Dec. 8, 2025, the Dare County Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to name the school’s auditorium after Hall in recognition of his 36 years of service and lasting impact on generations of students

The dedication ceremony will begin at 4 p.m. in the newly named Braxton B. Hall Auditorium, formerly the Cape Hatteras Secondary School Auditorium, located at 48576 N.C. Highway 12 in Buxton. The program is expected to last about one hour, and light refreshments will be served.

Hall was widely known for founding the school’s theater program and serving as the first faculty sponsor of the Student Government Association during his tenure at Cape Hatteras.

School officials say the ceremony will celebrate both his legacy and the performing arts programs he helped establish.

The event will feature performances by the CHSS Band, Hatteras Harmonies (the school’s a cappella group), and the CHSS Drama Club. An art exhibition highlighting student artwork will also be on display

The ceremony is free and open to the public.

**Now, be safe out there. Thanks for listening. This is Radio Hatteras.**