

BHA Board Candidate for 2025

William Bourne



Profession and Education: Business Owner/Partner, Penelo, LLC, farming operations and solar developer, Tarboro, NC, Educator, NC Public Schools (20 years, retired) Rocky Mount, NC, Partner, B&K Chevrolet, Tarboro, NC

What is your history with Bald Head Island that has brought you to ownership and now a candidate for BHA? For eighty-two years my family owned a home on Cape Lookout, North Carolina, one of eight on over forty miles of beach until it became a National Park. I grew up as a “generator society” child and learned first-hand of the beauty of nature and what island life was all about. We first visited BHI in 1983 with friends and when it came time to leave Cape Lookout, we rediscovered BHI and purchased our first home in 2013. We love the ferry and the true separation we get by being “on island time.” We spend four to five months here every year (May to September) and at other various times. We enjoy riding bikes, walking and of course sitting on the beach, visiting friends and entertaining often.

What professional skills and life experiences do you feel would be most valued as a member of the BHA Board? Managing businesses and classrooms has given me first-hand experience in problem solving, planning, critical thinking and organization development. My service on multiple boards and committees (ARC-A for six years, BHIC House Committee, Tarboro Art Commission – past President, Hilma Country Club past board member, and many church committees) has provided me with numerous opportunities in conflict resolution, diplomatic communication skills and the ability to foster a unified voice for organization membership.

As a BHI property owner, what aspect of Island life is most important to you as a key to BHI’S future and, if elected, how would you help craft that future? Having been on ARC, the committee we all hate, I have grown to understand its purpose and have grown to see the vision that the developer had for BHI. That vision brought us all here and has kept us on the island. History and rules and regulations are important, but sometimes modernizing the processes by which we do things gets lost. I would be a voice for creating new processes, streamlining and modernizing the system YET bowing to the historic rules to keep our island a village community as it was intended. I also would be a strong advocate for non-resident homeowners, as one myself, there are times where I feel we have no voice nor anyone representing our wants and needs.

Platform/Philosophy/Positions

1. The trend toward a “resort-like” island poses issues for the property owners who favor a culture of stewardship and conservancy. What are some of the mechanisms BHA might use to address these issues? We purchased on BHI because of its stewardship and conservancy model. Spending summers at my family home on Cape Lookout taught me the value of living with nature and helped me develop a deep connection with its preservation. The development of the island is based entirely on the premise of retaining and protecting the island’s natural beauty. As for what BHA can do, we represent our constituents in ensuring that our rules, codes and guidelines are enforced strictly to preserve the BHI that we all bought into on our first visits. We must take measures to reinforce transparency with our membership as issues arise and clearly understand our membership’s position before taking action(s) that create distrust or heartache over not preserving our tranquil island. We are not Hilton Head or Kiawah, we are unique because we are Bald Head Island, known for our peace, nature and stewardship.

2. What are some ideas to help strengthen our “community” for all BHA members, without regard to how much time members spend on the Island? Even though we are a small island, it is not always easy to get to know island residents in the sense of a “community.” We need to understand fully the desires of our full membership and offer opportunities to develop that sense of community. One example would be to extend the Potluck Dinners to once per month year-round versus only in the off season. Give those who spend more time on the island in the summer an opportunity to participate. Some examples of things to consider (with membership input) would be ice cream socials in the summer, outdoor movie nights, membership parties, game tournaments that could be sponsored on an ongoing basis.

3. If you are elected to the Board, what initiatives would you propose and lead to help ensure participation among property owners, especially among members who are on the Island part-time? As a part-timer myself I am very interested in making changes that will increase participation with this segment of our island. In addition to frequent and direct communication with all members, initiate polling as an ongoing part of the association’s role to ensure that we are hearing from our members and in turn, implementing ideas originating through this methodology. In terms of part time residents specifically, we can implement a part time residents committee to focus solely on increasing participation for this group. We need to gather the ideas and try some new things to make meaningful change in this area.

4. How could the BHA Board, the Village Council, BHI Limited, Old Baldy Foundation, the Conservancy, and the BHI Clubs collaborate to ensure an alignment of respective organizational goals while also implementing collaborative plans for the Island? Establish a leadership team consisting of appointees from the BHA Board, the Village Council, BHI Limited, Old Baldy Foundation, the Conservancy, and the BHI Clubs. Establish a mission and objectives collectively within this team to help ensure achievement of goals. Work to develop a strong culture of working together to achieve common goals and sharing of our visions for making BHI stronger and better. Invest the time and resources to make this team a valuable island entity.

5. What can BHA do to help the Village with preparations for hurricane/storm protocols to reduce recovery times we have recently experienced with coastal properties? BHA should be a strong resource for homeowners during these unfortunate times. The Village does a great job in warning about storms, evacuations, etc. but in the aftermath, BHA needs to be working expeditiously to ensure that homeowners requests and needs for assistance are prioritized and receive quick approvals. This will require a board member designee/leader to oversee identifying and creating efficiencies in the process so that homeowners don't have to wait weeks or months for an answer.

Final Statement

As a member of ARC for the past six years, I have seen firsthand how some investors are wanting to make changes that will degrade the island. While some change is inevitable, it does not mean that we must compromise our constitution to preserving the island's natural beauty. BHI's charm, quality of life, quaintness and beauty are under attack by some wishing to make us into something we are not. For example, our neighborhood charm and uniqueness will vanish if we allow homes to be built that are too large for the lot. As a board member I will be committed to maintaining the natural beauty and coastal charm of our community. We are Bald Head Island, unique in qualities and pace of life, let's keep it that way for us and our new neighbors to come.