



Town of Shallotte

ACTION AGENDA ITEM

2025

TO: Board of Alderman

ACTION ITEM #:

FROM: Mimi Gaither, Town Manager
EXT. #

MEETING DATE: 11.5.25

DATE SUBMITTED: 10.24.25

ISSUE/ACTION REQUESTED: Place a "Wind Phone" at Mulberry Park PUBLIC HEARING: ☐ YES ☒ NO

BACKGROUND/PURPOSE OF REQUEST – The Huffman family has requested to place a "Wind Phone" at the bench placed at Mulberry Park for the former Mayor Carson Durham in honor of their son Christian Huffman. The "Wind Phone" is a recent occurrence at several nearby towns. According to the article is South Brunswick Magazine, "The phone is not connected to any network, wire or cables, the purpose is to call a loved one who has passed on, leave a message or just talk, because the wind will carry the message to the departed". The Huffman family have given sample of the phone in the attached detail, and will be responsible for maintenance of the phone.

FISCAL IMPACT:

BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUIRED:	☐ YES	☒ NO
CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE REQUIRED:	☐ YES	☒ NO
PRE-AUDIT CERTIFICATION REQUIRED:	☐ YES	☒ NO
REVIEWED BY DIRECTOR OF FISCAL OPERATIONS	☐ YES	☒ NO

CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS:

REVIEWED BY TOWN ATTORNEY: ☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION: N/A

TOWN MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:. Approval of the Wind Phone - MOG

FINANCE RECOMMENDATION: N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Huffman email request with samples
2. Article from SBM and OKI Magazine
- 3.

ACTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN

APPROVED:

☐

DENIED:

☐

ATTEST:

CLERK TO THE BOARD

DEFERRED

UNTIL:

SIGNATURE

OTHER:

Maria O'Sullivan Gaither

From: Craig Huffman <chuffman@atmc.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 10:28 PM
To: Mgaither@townofshallotte.org
Subject: Wind Phone Request
Attachments: image.png; Untitled attachment 45174.txt

Mimi,

Thank you for supporting us as we remember our beautiful son. We would like to place the Wind Phone beside the bench dedicated to Christian's Grandfather (Carson Durham) and the magnolia tree dedicated to Christian by his God Mother (Laura Thompson) and special friends. We would like to mount a bird house type box on top of a 4x4 treated post similar to picture below. The overall height of the box will be under 72", with the box approximately 24"x24". We will work with the town on placement and installation. The Huffman family will be responsible for maintaining the Wind Phone box as long as it is in the park.

We can not thank you and the town enough for helping us with this. We not only see this a a great thing for our family and friends, but for anyone who has lost someone special in their lives. Please let us know if there are any questions or concerns that we can respond too.

Craig and Judith Allen Huffman

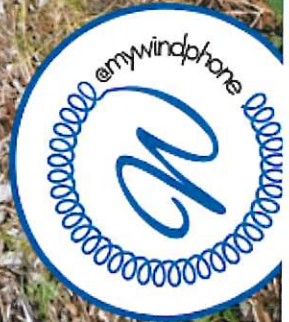
feedwater

WIND PHONE

Keswick,
Ontario

Wind Phone

@mywindphone



WIND PHONE

This phone will never ring.

It is a Wind Phone, connected to nowhere and everywhere at once.

It is for all who grieve someone they love.

It is to share memories, say I love you, I miss you, or to say the goodbye you never got to say.

Pick up the phone and dial their number; let the Wind take your words.

This Wind Phone is courtesy of Laudholm Trust

Thanks to Jimmy and Jeanine Blumenfeld and a host of other locals, a wind phone at Sunset Beach Pier offers a place of comfort and connection for those grieving loved ones.

Messages on the Wind

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JO ANN MATHEWS

The Kindred Spirit mailbox, erected on the west end of Sunset Beach in the late 1970s, provides a journal for people to pen thoughts, regrets and dreams.

As of April 14, 2025, the mailbox has a companion advocate on a sandy hill at the Sunset Beach Fishing Pier: a wind phone. A sign directs visitors to the box that contains the sky-blue, push button desk phone from a company named Tyler. On a dune in the distance is the familiar wooden cross as if it is protecting the memorial.

The phone is not connected to any network, wires or cables. The purpose is to call a loved one who has passed on, leave a message or just talk, because the wind will carry the message to the departed. A bench is available for those who wish to sit while they write in the journal that rests inside the phone box.

Jeanine and Jimmy Blumenfeld of Ocean Isle Beach installed the wind phone as a tribute to their son, Tyler, who passed away in 2021.

"Having this wind phone has been so meaningful because it's honoring our child," Jeanine says. "Sunset Beach is the last beach Tyler went to."

The last time the Blumenfelds saw Tyler, 29, was at a wedding in New York on September 12, 2021.

"I talked to Tyler on September 19," Jimmy says, adding that everything seemed normal.



Top, A quilted picture of Tyler Blumenfeld fishing in the ocean near Sunset Beach; below, Jeanine and Jimmy Blumenfeld at the wind phone they helped establish in honor of Tyler in Sunset Beach.

Creators and friends of the Sunset Beach wind phone, from left, Ron and Laura St. Denis, Sue Manfredi, Tom and Ronnie Jobes, Brian and Christine Gould, Jimmy and Jeanine Blumenfeld, Rob and Theresa Annesi, Fran Manfredi, Paul and Pam Parisian, Richie and Eileen Phelan, Gary Massey, Bill and Nancy Godbey, Dennis and Linda Kish.



Tyler passed away on September 20, a victim of fentanyl poisoning.

"We were in complete shock," Jeanine says. "It was devastating. The wedding was a wonderful event and now a wonderful memory of our last time together. Doing this phone for us is being able to honor Tyler and help other people. This is a gift to give people to acknowledge grief."

The Blumenfeld's son T, 25 at the time of Tyler's death, was grief-stricken, but says he feels like Tyler gave him his life. He decided to finish his undergraduate courses and is working to earn his master's degree in social work at Hunter College. He works in the mental health field in

New York City.

After Tyler graduated from Nanuet Senior High School in New York, he chose to work alongside Jimmy as a stagehand in the property department of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Jeanine emphasizes that Tyler loved life and enjoyed his job, fishing and skiing. He visited Sunset Beach often.

"He had friends from all walks of life and was well loved," she says.

The Blumenfelds' wind phone project verifies the proverb, "It takes a village." Pam Parisian saw a news article in February 2025 about the wind phone and told her friend Jeanine about it. The two collaborated

and agreed to find a place for one and have a beach theme. They approached Gary Massey, who leases the Sunset Beach Fishing Pier, about the idea.

"I liked the concept," Massey says. "People can come there and feel comfort. A lot of people can't make it to the mailbox. If you can't make it there, this is here."

"When Gary showed us that spot near the cross, it was somewhat spiritual," Jeanine says.

To get the project started, Parisian and her husband, Paul Howes, reached out to Amy Bronzena, former art teacher and graphic designer, and asked her to sketch the design.

"I thought it was an incredible idea,"

*The phone is for everybody.
It's a symbol of connecting with your loved ones.*

Bronzena says. "I realized what a great gift this would be to the community. You never know who or how or why someone is grieving. This is a way to honor our lost souls and honor the people who have lost them."

Experienced woodworker Tom Jobs built the cabinet from 125-year-old cedar he had left over from a project, and he contacted another woodworker, Bill Godbey, to craft the miniature surfboards that are attached to the phone box. Godbey also built the bench.

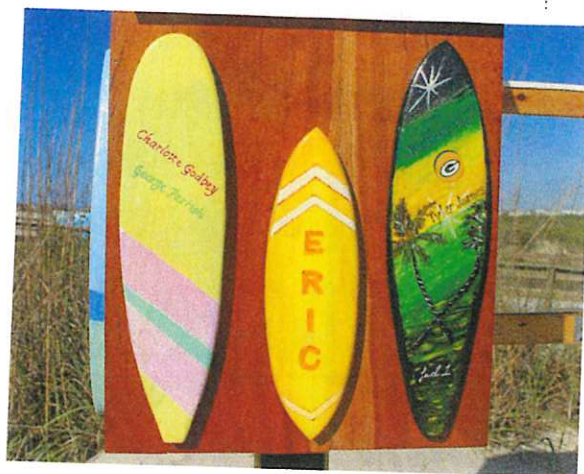
"I cut the boards out of red oak and fashioned them to reflect the different shapes of boards over the years," Godbey, a dedicated surfer, says.

The Blumenfelds asked 10 people who had lost a loved one to decorate the surfboards.

"Beyond sharing design ideas, we also shared personal stories of loss," Jobs says. "My wife, Ronni, and I lost our nephew to suicide. In his memory, Ronni painted one of the surfboards."

"I always say it was Tyler who was the one working on it, getting it going," Parisian says.

The wind phone idea is the brainchild of Itaru Sasaki of Japan. He created the original wind phone in 2010 to connect with his cousin, who died of cancer. Amy Dawson, who



Ten surfboards painted in memory of loved ones decorate the Sunset Beach wind phone.

grieved the loss of her daughter, created mywindphone.com, when she heard of the phenomenon. She documents the number of wind phones around the world and updates the numbers. As of August 19, 2025, the United States had 315, and the rest of the world, 136, but the numbers are

always growing.

As of this writing, Jimmy had not used the wind phone yet. "I sit on my bench and [meditate] here in my yard," he says. "This is my space."

Jeanine talked with a woman who had left a message on the wind phone. The woman lost her son 12 years ago and was grateful for the phone because she had surgery and could not walk to the mailbox.

"To be able to do that for people means a lot to us," Jeanine says. "The phone is for everybody. It's a symbol of connecting with your loved ones. You send your loved ones your love."

"I think the wind phone will bring comfort to a lot of people," Godbey says.

"I'm not taking away from the mailbox," Jeanine says. "I see this as another spiritual place. Grief needs to be embraced. Grief is part of life."

It should be noted that Wendy Morris of Oak Island installed the first wind phone in Brunswick County at May Moore Park, 820 Elizabeth Drive, on Oak Island. ■



WAITING IN THE WIND

Sunset Beach Wind Phone



Sunset Beach Pier
101 W. Main Street,
Sunset Beach

For more information:
● mywindphone.com

If you're grieving a loved one, these two websites can help
compassionatefriends.org
and grief.com.

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Thanks to Oak Island resident Wendy Morris, a wind phone at May Moore Park offers a place for griever to send messages to loved ones who have passed away.

Words on the Wind

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JO ANN MATHEWS

Wendy Morris of Oak Island had a vision after her husband, Michael Morris, passed away January 4, 2023, at age 62. She saw Michael's hand reach down to his best friend, Lon E. "Bert" Maggart, and pull him to heaven. Morris consulted artist Joanna Frye of Wilmington, who drew a rendition of the image.

"I was hesitant at first but honored to be part of such a meaningful piece of work," Frye says. "Anything that can help us stay connected to our loved ones and process our grief is wonderful."

The picture Frye drew touched Morris's heart, so she made copies and distributed them to friends as a symbol of friendship and love.

"Michael was my life," Morris says. "My mission is to talk about grief. Nobody talks about grief."

The door opened in September 2024 for her to fulfill her mission when a friend from Massachusetts told her about the concept of a wind phone and sent her a picture of one.

A wind phone is not connected to any network, wires or cables. Its purpose is for people to call a loved one who has passed on, leave a message or just talk,



Wendy Morris at the Oak Island wind phone holding the picture of her vision painted by artist Joanna Frye.

because the wind will carry the message to the departed. Itaru Sasaki of Japan created the original wind phone in 2010 to have contact to his cousin, who died of cancer.

Amy Dawson, who grieved the loss of her daughter, created mywindphone.com when she heard of the phenomenon. She documents the number of wind phones around the world and updates the numbers. As of August 19, 2025, the United States had 315, and the rest of the world, 136.

"I was fascinated by it," Morris says.

A co-founder and member of Tree Peace OKI, Morris shared with other members her wish to install a wind phone. She hoped it would be in her front yard, but people convinced her to consider a different location. She contacted the Oak Island Recreation Department and presented her idea to its members. They recommended May Moore Park and asked for specific information, such as how she was going to display the phone.

When dog groomer and woodworker enthusiast Albert Hardison came to groom Addie, Morris's 7-year-old dachshund, she shared her wind phone idea and asked him if he would



The wind phone at May Moore Park on Oak Island was built in honor of Michael Morris, pictured below, May 1, 1960 - January 4, 2024.

the Recreation Department voted unanimously to accept the wind phone, but she had to present her idea to the Oak Island Town Council.

Hardison brought the structure he built to Morris's home, and the pair attached the old phone that Morris had retrieved from her mother's house in Greensboro. She printed a welcome message and a picture of the hands. She then prepared a PowerPoint presentation and asked Hardison to go with her to the town council meeting. Not all council members favored her

idea, and a vote was set for the next meeting.

Morris recalls Councilman Bob Ciullo coming to her defense at that meeting.

"He said he lost his son to suicide, and people need a quiet reflection spot," she recalls. "That park is the perfect spot."

Ciullo confirms those words. "Reflection is so important in life," he says. "It's just to slow down and reflect on all the blessings we do have and how to turn a terrible, terrible loss into

build a structure for the phone. She knew his talent from other items he had made for her.

"I thought [the wind phone] is a really good idea, plus I enjoy working with wood," Hardison says. He went home, inspected the supply of wood he had handy and constructed a model for the phone from treated lumber and cedar. He sent a picture of it to Morris with the note saying she didn't have to accept it. "Use it if you want," he wrote.

"I approved of it," Morris says. In the meantime, she received a call saying

The wind phone is there to give peace. I want it to lift people's hearts and be a relief.

something positive.”

Ciullo has used the phone and says, “It’s the perfect place for it because it’s off the beaten trail.”

The town council required conditions for the wind phone, and Morris signed an agreement to maintain the display and fix any repairs.

Michael Morris was a beloved English as a Second Language teacher in Brunswick County Schools from

represents the type of teacher who is caring and gives everything to his students. He really, truly loved to teach and see the students be successful. His passion for teaching English as a Second Language was truly an asset to our schools.”

Morris contacted her friend Katie Brobst to illustrate the eulogy and had it published. She plans to have all proceeds go to scholarships for students whose first language is not English.

Ciullo says rather than a village to get a project completed, “In this case, it took one person. It’s an amazing success story. Wendy persevered. I was able to help her out in the votes and make it happen. I was able to share my story.”

Morris and Hardison installed the wind phone on December 14, 2024.

“The wind phone is there to give peace,” Morris says. “I want it to lift people’s hearts and be a relief. People



2016 to 2023, and fellow teacher Elsa Armijos wrote a 10-page eulogy titled “The King of Kabut.” It tells of Morris’ pleasant disposition, his dedication to reading stories to his students and the game of “Kabut” that he developed so children could learn to use the computer.

“I wrote it because I wanted to honor Mr. Morris’ legacy,” Armijos says. “It

Lincoln Elementary School in Leland instituted a Michael Morris Day every January 4, the anniversary of his death, in the teacher’s honor.

“People with different backgrounds can come together and make anything happen,” Hardison says. “I’m a dog groomer, and Wendy is a client of mine. She had an idea, and we put it together.”

are finding their way there. I don’t want Michael to be forgotten.”

It was the first wind phone installed in Brunswick County. Jeanine and Jimmy Blumenfeld of Ocean Isle Beach installed the second one in February 2025 at the Sunset Beach Fishing Pier in honor of their son Tyler, who passed away on September 20, 2021. ■



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