2027 Board Candidate: Steve Smalley



Biography

Please provide a brief biography of your background and experience that makes you an excellent candidate for the BHA board and how you would put those skills to work.

I've been a lawyer in private practice for more than 30 years and am a Shareholder (Partner) at Ogletree Deakins in Raleigh, where I have primarily lived and worked since 2000.

I have owned a home on BHI since 2010. It required extensive renovation from the start. Later, when Hurricane Florence heavily damaged my home, I made additional changes including an expansion. Through my interactions with BHA/ARC both times, I gained perspective on the role of the BHA and the challenges involved with construction on the island.

I was elected to the Bald Head Association Board in 2024, where I have served for nearly three years, currently as Secretary. I have been the board liaison to the Long-Range Planning Committee and Chair of the Nominating Committee, and I served on the search committee that hired our current Executive Director.

We have seen a lot of positive changes in the past three years. I'm proud of the work that the Board has done and what we've accomplished for BHI homeowners. My working style hasn't changed since I first volunteered for election to the Board. Simply put, the best way to solve a problem is to listen without judgment and communicate clearly and without delay.

On the Board I have put that into practice. One example: As BHA's representative in a coalition with the BHI Clubs and the Village of BHI, I helped negotiate ferry schedule changes collaboratively with BHI Transportation that were approved by the NC Utilities Commission. We met regularly over several months to negotiate a compromise to a complicated issue.

If re-elected, I will keep bringing that same practical, collaborative approach to the issues in front of us. Those include the proposed sale of the ferry system and parking facilities, and restoring the mulch site for use by property owners.

Statement of Interest

Why are you interested in becoming a board member of the Bald Head Association? Please include your island history and past/relevant experience.)

When I first ran for the Board in 2023, I wrote that BHA's activities affect all property owners, and all owners have a voice and a vote. As someone whose primary residence is off-island, I wanted to help BHA serve every owner, wherever they live. That is still why I serve.

Over this term, the Board and staff have accomplished a lot together:

- **Staff:** We've enhanced the professionalism of BHA's staff and management, including hiring a new Executive Director, ARC Coordinator and Communications Director.
- **Communications:** We improved the quality, frequency, and transparency of communications to members, including the new Salt & Oaks publication and the improved look and content of the Compass email newsletter.
- **Committees:** We strengthened committees and injected fresh ideas, perspectives, and community engagement by enforcing the bylaw requirement for annual turnover of committee members.
- **ARC:** We carefully analyzed and streamlined the ARC review process. We shortened ARC review times while improving the fairness and consistency of architectural review. By enhancing communication by BHA ARC staff to homeowners, we eliminated unnecessary delay and bureaucracy, while ensuring that we adhere to island conservation and preservation requirements that we all appreciate and expect.

There is more to do. I am currently leading BHA's work with the BHI Transportation Authority to improve what members hear about the proposed sale of the ferry system and parking facilities. I am also working with my colleagues to negotiate with the Village and the site's operating contractor to restore the mulch site for property owners. I would like to see that work through.

Platform/Philosophy/Position

1. What are your key priorities as a Board candidate, and how do you plan to utilize BHA's existing systems and processes to achieve these goals if elected?

My priorities are simple. BHA should stay focused on its core mission of serving residential property owners, and it should provide the most attentive service it can. I see four specific priorities:

- **A fair, efficient ARC.** We have reduced review times. We continue working to improve the ARC review process and to ensure that covenants and regulations are enforced consistently, neutrally and objectively, and above all protecting the island's natural character and preserving our forests and trees.
- **Clear, timely communication.** This matters most on issues members care about right now, especially the proposed sale of the ferry system and parking facilities. As a Board Liaison to the Long-Range Planning Committee, we are tasked with working with the BHI Transportation Authority. I will keep pushing for timely, accurate updates to members.
- **Responsible stewardship of BHA resources.** I will keep reviewing contracts, procedures and BHA property to protect members and make sure our assets work for owners. Restoring the mulch site for owners' use is a concrete example.
- **Long-range planning.** As Board Liaison to the Long-Range Planning Committee for the past three years, I want BHA to be ready for the changes ahead rather than reacting to them.

We already have the tools to do this. We now have a professional staff led by our new Executive Director, Doug Jones; committees that are fully staffed and refreshed every year as the bylaws require; improved communication channels; and a Board that works well together.

My first year on the Board was a year of much change and transition for the Association. For the past two years, it's been my privilege to work alongside such a talented and cohesive group of staff and volunteers, including Betty Robinson, who joined the Board at the same time, and who is not seeking re-election. Betty and I bring different perspectives and strengths, but we share a goal of making the island a better place. I will miss working with Betty and the skills she added to the Board.

2. How could the BHA Board, the Village Council and leadership at the BHI Clubs, the Conservancy, the Chapel and Old Baldy better work in tandem to ensure an alignment of respective organizational goals while also implementing collaborative plans for the Island, as BHI Limited sells their remaining assets in the community?

The best answer is regular, open communication. I have seen it work. As BHA's representative in a coalition with the BHI Club and the Village of BHI, I helped negotiate ferry schedule changes that the NC Utilities Commission accepted. No single organization could have done that alone nearly as well, and I'm proud of the respectful collaboration by multiple island organizations as we worked together civilly and respectfully with BHI Transportation.

Island organizations will not always agree. But each has a shared interest in the island's success, and disagreement on one issue should not stop communication on others.

As BHI Limited sells its remaining assets, the roles and responsibilities of island organizations will shift. I support three steps:

- Regular meetings among organization leaders, as BHA President Christine Osborne and our Executive Director do regularly with their counterparts. We re-established regular leadership meetings between island entities and that has proven successful.
- Early consultation between organizations where authority overlaps, such as BHA property next to Club or commercial land, neither of which is regulated by BHA.
- A respectful, helpful voice for homeowners where BHA lacks authority and BHA covenants do not control. For example, BHA can offer design and land conservation suggestions to developers of commercial property and to the many residential parcels that are not subject to BHA covenants – a little-known fact that has surprised many BHI residents.

3. Ensuring the consistent application of established guidelines and covenants is an important role of BHA. What approaches do you feel would help how BHA conducts business, and how would you support staff in carrying out these responsibilities while balancing the needs of residents?

Consistency and service go hand in hand. BHA should work in partnership with homeowners who want to improve their properties, not in opposition to them. That partnership must also keep residential development and maintenance standards high.

We have already streamlined ARC review and shortened review times without lowering standards or compromising conservation. Many members have noticed the progress. To build on it, I support:

- **Clear, published guidelines,** so owners and builders know what to expect before they apply.
- **Strong staff support.** Our new ARC Coordinator and Executive Director give staff the professional base to apply the covenants fairly, neutrally and objectively. The Board's role is to set clear policy and to back staff when they apply it.

- **Healthy committees.** Enforcing annual committee turnover brings in fresh perspectives while keeping experienced members in place.
- **Ongoing review.** Regularly reviewing processes and contracts keeps the system efficient and fair to members. The Board and ARC committees are currently undertaking a comprehensive review and revision of BHA design guidelines.

4. What do you feel BHA's priorities should be today and in the near future?

Today:

- **Ferry sale communications.** Keep members informed about the proposed sale of the ferry system and parking facilities, which affects every owner, full-time or part-time.
- **Mulch site.** Restore the mulch site for property owners.
- **ARC.** Keep the ARC process fair, consistent and efficient. Enforce covenants and design guidelines in a fair and neutral way.

In the near future:

- **Long-range planning.** Prepare BHA for the transition as BHI Limited leaves the island.
- **Partnerships.** Build stronger working relationships with other island organizations.
- **Member Service.** Keep Member Service as our guiding principle, with communications that reach owners wherever they live.

Above all, I will keep listening to members, staff and my fellow Board members. That is how good decisions get made.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.