

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board
Meeting November 1st , 2023 at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

Officers Present - Stephen Fiedler, Vice-Chairperson

Members Present - Dick Colby, Dan Crum, Belinda Chester, Emma Witt, Alex Perri, Lisa March

Members Absent - Mike Hogan, Chairperson, Ken Sooy

Commissioner Representative - Andrew Parker -present

County Staff - Greg Brookins, D.H.P.W. - present

Secretary - Eric Husta, D.D.P.R. – present

Guests: Nancy Jarrin, Master Gardener

Old Business: None

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM and a flag salute was conducted. The minutes from our October meeting were approved as well.

General Discussion topics:

Dick Colby inquired about park staff aiding in the trimming of a portion of the Statewide Long Trail at Camp Acagisca. Eric Husta agreed park staff could be made available to help in that process. Dick also updated the group on a \$1.14 million-dollar federal grant Egg Harbor City received for the care and maintenance of existing street trees. There were two previous grants awarded for the planting of new trees. Each grant covered the costs associated with 100 street trees.

More discussion was had on the current conditions at the Atlantic County animal shelter. Dan Crum noted there are still many cats and dogs in need of adoption. Mention was also made of the noise levels inside the pen area where barking dogs have been generating noisy conditions.

There was lengthy conversation regarding the grant Hamilton Township received to design and rebuild the bridge over the Great Egg Harbor River. Commissioner Parker mentioned a letter the County had received from Hamilton Township at our last meeting expressing the Township's desire to move forward with the design and reconstruction of the bridge. He agreed to inquire about getting a copy of the letter to distribute to the group, and ultimately have it attached to our meeting minutes.

Further discussion was had regarding what our group could do to help advance the project. Commissioner Parker agreed to reach out to Hamilton Township to see if a committee person could be made available to attend one of our future meetings and provide an update for the

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group. Lisa March mentioned she would reach out and try to gather information regarding the letter as well.

Focus then turned to seeking help from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension in dealing with invasive species. Alex Perri expressed a desire to demonstrate to the county commissioners the need for this type of position. Belinda Chester noted the decrease in the number of positions within the Extension and suggested creating a new “Extension Specialist” position to fill the need, not just throughout the county but statewide as well. She agreed with Alex on the critical nature of demonstrating the need and noted the lack of information regarding the issue currently available to the public. Emma Witt suggested utilizing students from Stockton University to aid in the mapping of invasive species locations across the county.

Steve Fiedler noted two gardens have been finished at Glenn By The Bay Park. He updated the group on plans to install interpretative signage explaining the benefits of native plants along with various aspects of the local cultural heritage and history of the area.

Dick Colby talked about the condition of the London Plane trees in Egg Harbor City and noted many are suffering from Anthracnose. Discussion took place regarding the actual ownership of and responsibility for street trees located on private property but within the right-of-way. Dick noted he asked the question of several authorities on the topic at this year’s Shade Tree Federation Conference. He reported there was no clear agreement on the issue even by those regarded as experts in the field.

Dick also noted Ocean Wind has withdrawn their application to build offshore wind turbines along the coast of New Jersey in our area. He went on to illustrate many of the issues with Atlantic City Electric’s current distribution system which is in need of repair and upgrading.

Belinda Chester mentioned active programming was returning and noted Master Gardener training beginning on February 6, 2024, and composting training on February 22, 2024. She also made mention of the possibility of starting a Rutgers Community Advisory Board to gauge the needs of local residents.

Alex Perri discussed Atlantic County’s Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) and the ACUA landfill. Discussion was had regarding the projected remaining life span of the landfill with estimates between seven and nine years before capacity is reached. Alex requested a copy of the SWAC meeting minutes from August 15th 2023, as they were not posted online. Eric Husta mentioned trying to obtain a copy for the group. Alex also suggested the group invite someone from the ACUA in to speak about the landfill’s capacity. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the future of the landfill and the constant odors. Commissioner Parker noted the site may possibly become a transfer station, sending waste to an alternate site such as Cape May or Ohio.

Alex Perri suggested the group invite ANJEC representatives and members of local environmental commissions to give a presentation to local municipal leaders of Atlantic County municipalities that don't have environmental commissions, to explain the benefits of having one, and share some of their success stories. He also suggested having the presentation prior to the onset of the ANJEC webinar series starting in March.

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Lisa March noted she recently received the endorsement of the League of Environmental Voters in her campaign for EHT town committee.

Dan Crum discussed the plastic bag ban currently in place and noted it has been quite effective.

Commissioner Parker updated the group on the Bay Breeze development and their need for new sewer lines.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for January 3rd, 2024 at 7PM at the Canale Training Center in EHT.

cc: Dennis Levinson, County Executive
Jerry DelRosso, County Administrator
Diana Rutala, Deputy County Administrator
John W. Risley Jr., Chairperson - Board of County Commissioners
Andrew Parker, Board of County Commissioners – PEAB Representative
Greg Brookins, Department Head Public Works
All Advisory Board Members