

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board  
Meeting October 4th , 2023 at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

**Officers Present** - Mike Hogan, Chairperson, Stephen Fiedler, Vice-Chairperson

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

**Members Absent** - none

**Commissioner Representative** - Andrew Parker -present

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

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

**Old Business:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM and a flag salute was conducted. The minutes from our September meeting were approved with a minor amendment.

**Guest Speaker:** Dave Mattek, Trails Issues Coordinator, Sierra Club, New Jersey Chapter

Dave Mattek provided an overview of the New Jersey State Long Trail, a 383-mile hiking trail extending from High Point to Cape May Point. Approximately 250 miles of the trail is in the southern portion of the state, of which, 177 miles is complete. Just over 300 miles of the entire route has been completed statewide.

Dave also provided a status update on portions of the trail in various counties. Atlantic County has completed 7.5 miles of trail with 2 miles remaining. Approximately half of what is remaining is located in the area of Camp Acagisca. Discussion took place regarding the various remaining parcels the County would need to purchase outright, or an access easement across, to complete the trail. A small bridge would need to be built over Mares Run as well.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Mattek agreed to provide a summary of the remaining parcels the county would need to purchase for consideration.

**Roundtable Discussion topics:**

Dick Colby updated the group on a substantial grant received to provide for the care of street trees in Egg Harbor City.

Dan Crum inspected the Atlantic County animal shelter which is currently overrun with cats and dogs in need of adoption.

Commissioner Parker updated the group on a letter Hamilton Township sent to the County expressing the desire to move forward with the design and reconstruction of a bridge over the Great Egg Harbor River.

Belinda Chester reported her agency is currently planning its 2024 schedule. The gardening series is being scheduled while the composting class will consist of 7 classes beginning in February of 2024.

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Steve Fiedler continues to work on the Glen By The Bay Park removing invasive species. He noted a second pollinator garden was recently completed and has been under considerable deer pressure. The Xerces Society provided funding through a pollinator plant grant and many of the seedlings were propagated by Pinelands Nursery.

Alex Perri mentioned the Absecon Green Team has been active and recently received permission to build a community garden. He reiterated his suggestion the County hire a Terrestrial Invasive Species Coordinator. The new employee would spend approximately 50% of their time on the management of county land with the remaining time being divided between municipalities and private property projects, coordinating and consulting with groups to manage or eradicate invasive species. As part of a shared service, municipalities would each contribute a few thousand dollars to aid in funding the position with the County completing the remaining match. Dick Colby suggested a resolution as a starting point for action.

Discussion also took place regarding a ban on the sale of invasive plants in New Jersey. Alex noted invasive populations can be found on an interactive map on the NJ Invasive Species Strike Team website.

Mike Hogan noted Maggie McCann, Director of Camden County Parks will be leaving her current position and be assuming the role of Assistant Director of Urban Parks for the state of New Jersey. Mike also mentioned receiving an email from the Mullica River Watershed Ambassador.

Commissioner Parker updated the group on a letter from the Township of Hamilton to the County Executive voicing support for the development of Bikeway West.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.

**Our next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup> , 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