

Avalon Environmental Commission
January 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm by Chairwoman Rothman.

Pledge of allegiance.

Chairwoman Rothman read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

Roll call: **Present:** Kevin Coyle, Joe Dvorak, Joyce Johnson, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds,
Donna Rothman and Jamie McDermott

Absent: Dave Coskey, Claire Driscoll and Victoria Deever

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 17, 2023 meeting was made by Brian Reynolds and seconded by Kevin Coyle. Approved by all.

Introduction of new Environmental Commission Member: Donna Rothman introduced the newest Environmental Commission member, Joyce Johnson, and expressed excitement in connection with this appointment.

Joyce Johnson gave an overview of her community history, as well as insight into her environmental interests and passions. She further outlined past environmental projects and volunteerism.

Review of DVMP Project and Landscape Plans: Aaron Baker reported on the following DVMP Projects:

5309 Dune Drive: This new project is located in the high dunes near other recent projects, and requires the removal of 26 Japanese Black Pine to be replaced with a robust planting of native vegetation to offset damage done by a substantial southern pine beetle infestation. The proposed project includes an allocation for maintenance pruning in the area closer to the dwelling. It is recommended for the property owner to irrigate the property area. Considering the project location, there are no concerns of erosion.

A motion to approve this DVMP project was made by Donna Rothman and seconded by Brian Reynolds. Approved by all.

Scullin – 36th Street: This maintenance project removed 4 Japanese Black Pines, which were replaced with a small planting. There has been successful growth with no negative impacts to the area.

Mea – 37th Street: This project removed 6 Japanese Black Pines. So far, the replacement plantings have been successful without the need for irrigation.

Norris – 13th Street: The rabbit population in this project area negatively affected the growth success of the replacement plantings; therefore, it is recommended to undertake a supplemental planting of bayberry to offset the negative impacts of the rabbits. This project has one more year of monitoring, and the irrigation will be checked during that time.

Thompson – 34th Street: A previous irrigation issue has been resolved, which was determined to have been caused by a wildlife issue; however, even with those issues, the replacement planting was very successful.

Benz – 9th Street: This project was undertaken in a coordinated effort with a neighbor where Japanese Black Pines were removed and replaced with shrub plantings on the crest of the dune. Unfortunately, the shrub plantings were not successful; however, all other plantings and ground cover attempts were successful. It is recommended to decommission this project, as the third year of monitoring has been successfully completed.

A motion to decommission this DVMP project was made by Joyce Johnson and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

Avalon Avenue: This project has seen an overall growth success rate of 81 percent, and now has 95 percent coverage in the project area. Because of the project's proximity to the boardwalk, a robust planting was done. It is recommended to decommission this project, as the third year of monitoring has been successfully completed.

A motion to decommission this DVMP project was made by Kevin Coyle and seconded by Steve Malyszka. Approved by all.

Aaron Baker reported two letters of interest were recently received, and may become DVMP projects in the near future.

Accomplishments for 2023: Donna Rothman distributed the 2023 annual report, and announced this report will be presented to Borough Council at the February 14, 2024 Council Meeting. She gave an overview of the report, including DVMP projects, maintenance projects, the tree dedication program, educational sessions and programs, dune grass plantings, the seedlings program, CAFRA Permit reviews, Tree Committee accomplishments and reports, conferences attended, Pollinator Garden milestones, Community Connections, Armacost Park, sustainable landscaping plant booklet, the newly redrafted acceptable plant list, the development of an environmental survey, and community outreach.

Projects for 2024: Donna Rothman reviewed the 2024 Environmental Commission Work Plan and invited feedback. The review included an overview of new and returning educational sessions and annual events. She encouraged all to volunteer for upcoming events.

Native Plant Garden on Dune Drive: Donna Rothman announced a collaboration with the Cape May Technical High School to develop a Native Plant Island on Dune Drive between 70th and 71st Streets. The plan for the Native Plant Island was provided gratis by Christine Black owner of Grow Native Gardens. There are hopes that this island over-time will be a no-mow and no-water islands, and will aid in education regarding the importance of native plantings.

Discussion of micro-plastics and construction: Donna Rothman reported on a recent experience with microplastics and spoke about the harm to the environment, waterways, and wildlife. Steve Malyszka agreed to write a white paper to initiate a discussion for the February meeting.

AHLOA survey results: Donna Rothman noted 60 responses have been submitted, with back bay dredging being a primary point of interest. Further discussion took place regarding the survey results, with some consideration being made to reach out again to encourage more response.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak explained the Community Forestry Management Plan requires the submittal of information to the State of New Jersey, as well as future plans concerning this initiative. A meeting was recently held to compile the plan. The submittal deadline is February 15, 2024.

Public Comments: None.

Adjournment at 5:49 pm.