

Avalon Environmental Commission
October 20, 2020

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

Pledge of allegiance.

Roll call: **Present:** Kevin Coyle, Joe Dvorak, Steve Malyszka, Donna Rothman, Claire Driscoll
 Absent: Brian Reynolds and Beth Tipping

Chairwoman Rothman read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2020 meeting was made by Kevin Coyle and seconded by Steve Malyszka. Approved by all.

DVMP – New Projects – Lomax Consulting Group: Aaron Baker reported there are currently two projects underway, the first to be reviewed being the larger of the two, which is the planting and removal project next to the boardwalk sponsored by a group of neighbors. This project was presented to the board last December. At that point, it covered areas A, B, and C with two neighbors sponsoring the project. Following the Environmental Commission’s approval, landscaping quotes were received, with the amounts being higher than anticipated, therefore the project was put on hold. Recently, a third sponsor has come forth, being the owner of 3081 Avalon Avenue. All three sponsors have worked together and agreed to expand the project area more to the north. Since December, area D has been added to the project scope, and some plantings have been changed to maintain the design of trees being on the exterior of the project area, with other plantings in the middle. Area D added four additional Japanese Black Pines to be removed, with additional plantings of 3 Beach Plums and 8 Eastern Red Cedar trees . The Japanese Black Pines on the Borough owned land closer to the boardwalk will be remaining in place for now, as their growth has been stunted, and the sponsors have agreed to allow them to remain. The sponsors have been advised that if their inclinations change, they cannot take it upon themselves to remove those trees. The area will be monitored closely for the next three years, with any changes being reported to the Environmental Commission. The properties located at 3103 and 3105 Avalon Avenue will be irrigating the area. The Environmental Commission was asked to approve the project with its revised and expanded scope. There are hopes to move forward on this project in the month of November 2020.

A motion to approve the amended DVMP project was made by Claire Driscoll and seconded by Steve Malyszka. Approved by all.

DVMP – New Projects – Lomax Consulting Group: Aaron Baker brought forth the second ongoing DVMP project area located on the north side of 74th Street, which is the pilot DVMP project area. This area has been worked on a number of times, with this being approximately the fourth time maintenance pruning will be completed. This pruning would be a continuation of that maintenance. The sponsor has been notified that the Borough has implemented a new policy for this type of pruning, which requires Environmental Commission approval, the MOA process and funding done through an established escrow. Topping of trees in that area is not permitted; however, moderate pruning of the tops of trees is permitted to a certain percentage of the tree to avoid inhibiting the growth of the tree. The Environmental Commission was asked to approve this maintenance pruning.

A motion to approve the maintenance was made by Steve Malyszka and seconded by Donna Rothman. Approved by all.

Mr. Baker suggested when the DVMP Document is updated that language be added to require that sponsors should be present or grant access to their properties and viewpoints when pruning is taking place to ensure proper and efficient pruning. The Environmental Commission was in favor of making that change. Mr. Baker announced inspections are being done of all trees planted as a result of the grant received for said work, and will conclude in the near future. The grant requires three years of monitoring, with this round of inspections marking the second year of monitoring. Since the original plantings, Public Works has completed maintenance and replacement plantings. Overall, the plantings are doing well.

Lomax Consulting Group Bamboo report: Aaron Baker noted his recent review of the Acceptable Plant List, which prohibits the bamboo grass family from being planted within the Borough within nuisance and invasive plant species section

NRI – Natural Resource Inventory: Donna Rothman recommended the Environmental Commission consider compiling an Environmental Resource Inventory or Natural Resource Inventory. Ms. Rothman noted research recently done via the statutes and the ANJEC Environmental Commissioners Manual, both of which endorse such an inventory. As the Commission is aware, the Borough is highly developed, with a small percentage being natural resources, including the beaches, wetlands, maritime forest, marsh, Armacost Park and Grace O'Brien Park. There are hopes to use such an inventory to recognize the need to protect the Borough's natural resources and ecosystem, and also to educate the public. In addition to the statutes and the ANJEC manual, Borough Ordinance No. 375 also recommends that the Environmental Commission "keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, in order to obtain information on the proper use of the areas, and may recommend to the Planning Board plans and programs". The question of why the Borough specifies an index versus an inventory needs to be explored. An NRI would feed into the Master Plan and contribute to the Borough being more cognizant of the natural resources and decisions affecting natural resources. While it will be an arduous task to compile through the efforts of many volunteers, she expressed the opinion that the efforts would have a high payoff. Aaron Baker noted an inventory is a great tool, and provides a baseline. Lomax Consulting had completed a Vegetation Management Report, which is an inventory of the forest areas and can be used when compiling the Natural Resource Inventory. Inventories for municipalities are easier to compile than regional or county inventories. The Inventory can also be used to discourage or encourage development in certain areas. For example, the dune lines were established many years ago, with property lines drawn abutting that dune line. Since then, the dunes have grown onto existing properties. The inventory would show the existing, living dune line. Donna Rothman noted the purpose of this conversation is to evaluate the interest of the Environmental Commission members in compiling this inventory. She asked for a motion and a vote of the membership to move forward and present this idea to the Borough.

A motion to present the concept to the Borough was made by Kevin Coyle and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Affirmative votes were cast by Kevin Coyle, Claire Driscoll, Joe Dvorak and Donna Rothman. Negative vote cast by Steve Malyszka.

2021 Meeting Dates: Donna Rothman distributed a list of proposed meeting dates for the 2021 calendar year, noting all meetings are listed as taking place on the third Tuesday of each month at 4:00 pm. There were no objections to the proposed schedule.

Pollinator Garden: Claire Driscoll reported her recent visits to the Pollinator Garden to evaluate and identify the plants proposed to be listed on the signage to be placed for public inspection at the Pollinator Garden. Ms. Driscoll announces she was able to locate and identify all plants except for two trees, therefore recommended those trees be removed from the list. She also recommended that the scientific names of the plants not be included on the signage, as those identities are not typically desired for use by the public. Ms. Driscoll further advocated the importance of proper maintenance of the area in the future. Donna Rothman reported an updated sign draft is expected soon. The Environmental Commission members further discussed the sign sizes, format, placement, readability and positioning.

Ordinances: Donna Rothman announced Borough Council recently adopted Ordinance No. 810-2020, establishing an Environmental Trust Fund for use by the Environmental Commission. Sources of funding include philanthropy and construction fees, which are to be used only for environmental projects. The Environmental Commission members discussed potential uses for that funding.

Armacost Park: Steve Malyszka referenced discussions held at a recent meeting concerning the dilapidated condition of the bulkhead at 72nd Street. A question of ownership has arisen concerning the property that houses the bulkhead, therefore it is unsure when that bulkhead could be replaced, and by whom. Concerns also arose regarding the pipe that travels from the bay on 72nd Street into the sewer complex at 72nd Street and Ocean Drive, along with the lateral that travels to Armacost Park. He noted the pipe going into the park is relatively small in size, therefore it does not control the phragmites as it should. Mr. Wahl has been notified about this, and the Environmental Commission is awaiting further word from him concerning the situation. He expressed hope this would be addressed in advance of the repaving of Ocean Drive, which the County is planning to complete in the near future.

Bay Issues: Kevin Coyle stated, to his knowledge, Bay Park Marina is out to bid.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak announced the Tree Committee is making progress. There are hopes to plant trees on the Dune Drive islands during the fall planting season. Many meetings of the Tree Committee have been held recently to discuss the list of potential trees and the costs associated with the plantings.

Dune Grass: Donna Rothman announced the Dune Grass Planting will be held at Community Hall on Saturday, October 24, 2020 at 8:30 am and encouraged everyone to attend.

Adjournment at 5:03.