

**Avalon Environmental Commission
December 15, 2020**

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, Claire Driscoll, Joe Dvorak, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds, Donna Rothman, Beth Tipping
 Absent: None

A motion to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2020 meeting was made by Brian Reynolds and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

DVMP – Review of 4 Monitoring Reports: Joe Lomax reported three Memorandum of Agreements have been executed for the Franzoni, Soni, and Longstreth DVMP projects which, as the Commission may recall, is a large project being sponsored by all three listed property owners along Avalon Avenue. Work associated with the project will begin next week.

As the Commission is aware, four Monitoring Reports have been released by Lomax Consulting, the first of which being the Boyce property located on South 63rd Street. This project has reached the end of its second season with an overall 90 percent success rate with plantings, and a substantial infill with native vegetation.

Donna Rothman inquired about the 57 percent survivorship of Northern Bayberry on the property and if locally grown vegetation is used for these projects, with Joe Lomax responding this is a very common survivorship. There are plans to study the contributing environmental factors when it comes to the survival of Northern Bayberry, which are unknown at this time. Furthermore, plants used in connection with these projects are purchased by the landscapers, and are typically locally sourced.

Joe Lomax continued the review of the monitoring reports, with the next project reviewed being located at the Hill property at 4099 Bayberry Drive. This project has reached the end of its first year, and has been quite successful, which shows a Northern Bayberry survivorship of 100 percent. The third monitoring report reviewed addressed the Kim property located on the south side of 70th Street. This project is also doing well, with an overall 85 percent success rate with plantings. Northern Bayberry has done very well; unfortunately, the Eastern Red Cedar did not thrive on this property, which negatively impacted the overall success rate of the project. A replanting has been requested for the Eastern Red Cedar. Finally, the monitoring report concerning the Giuffre property located at 4369 Dune Drive was reviewed, noting good performance at the end of its first year.

Brian Reynolds expressed concerns regarding the survivorship of Beach Plum and Persimmon on the property, with Joe Lomax explaining Persimmon was chosen due to nearby wetlands and the high water table.

Joe Lomax summarized the four monitoring reports, noting all projects are generally well-performing, with native vegetation filling the area, even after the removal of Japanese Black Pines.

Joe Lomax reviewed the latest update of the Dune Vegetation Management Plan, and noted the entire document has been reviewed, with the pruning standards completely re-done. Minor changes and updates were made to the document as a result of the November Environmental Commission meeting. He asked the Commission to review the document in its entirety. If the document is acceptable, the next step would be to present the document to Borough Council for approval and posting to the Borough website.

The Commission reviewed the document and recommended minor grammatical changes. Joe Lomax indicated the changes will be made, and advised all recommended changes be provided to Lomax Consulting by the end of the week to finalize the document accordingly.

A motion to submit the document to Borough Council upon final revisions by Lomax Consulting was made by Steve Malyszka and seconded by Claire Driscoll. Approved by all.

Steve Malyszka inquired if there have been any additional studies at Armacost Park.

Joe Lomax briefly reviewed studies done, and noted an updated report will be presented to the Environmental Commission. During the studies, it was noticed that there is substantial stormwater runoff near 72nd Street from Dune Drive. In the park, a trail was cut to observe the flow and prevent flooding. Once that trail was made, a meeting was held with the Department of Public Works, the result of which concluded Public Works will maintain the trail to avoid flooding as a surge of flooding would exacerbate the condition of phragmites in the park. All Environmental Commission members were invited to a guided walk-through of the property.

Pollinator Garden: Donna Rothman reported a meeting recently took place with Scott Wahl regarding the sign for the Pollinator Garden, but no updates have been received since the meeting.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak announced seven trees have been planted, which are showing promise and expressed hope that they will do well in the long-run. At today's Tree Committee meeting, Joe Clark gave some information, insight, and experiences concerning similar projects, which was very enlightening and helpful.

Brian Reynolds questioned the new trees planted on the 55th Street island on Dune Drive.

Donna Rothman indicated two trees were needed on that island; therefore, two oaks have been planted. It was noted the Environmental Commission had requested the removal of a dying pine tree, and that commitment has been made.

Steve Malyszka asked for an update on the tree planting grant.

Joe Lomax made note that the Borough received a CSIP (Community Stewardship Incentive Program) grant funding in 2018 for 100 tree plantings from The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Urban and Community Forestry Program. To date, there has been one monitoring report completed on the trees planted. Because of delays due to COVID, the DEP has asked for a second monitoring of the program by virtual inspection, which required every tree be visited. An extensive document has since been sent to the DEP for review of the report.

Armacost Park: Steve Malyszka gave an update on Armacost Park with a focus on phragmites, which is invasive and a potential fire hazard to the park. It was noted that the only way to control phragmites is via hydrology. Use of herbicides and mowing have limited success and are not an option. Road construction on Ocean Drive and a new Pump House are planned during 2021. Any hope of a phragmite control initiative with hydrology must be agreed to before these projects commence since there is a moratorium that does not allow any disturbance of the roadway for 5 years once the road work is completed.

Dune Grass Planting with Students: Claire Driscoll reported a meeting was held with Chris Miller, per Joe Lomax's recommendation, who showed the materials needed to implement an educational dune grass planting project and gave instructions on how best to implement the program and instruct the students. The program would consist of 80 plants total with a group of 50 to 70 students for an in-classroom instruction program that would span six to eight weeks before being planted in the dunes. The program would require the students to journal the plant growth and maturity over the length of the program. While no in-person meetings are permitted in the school at this time, phone conversations have been had with school personnel, who seem to be in favor of this program, conceptually, at this point in time.

Pollinator Garden: Steve Malyszka asked if the pollinator garden will be mowed this winter, with Claire Driscoll responding that no mowing will be done.

Bay Park Marina: Kevin Coyle stated the Borough of Avalon has not yet heard back from the County Open Space Program concerning the application made for funding for the Bay Park Marina project. It is expected to receive a response before the end of the year.

Planning Zoning Board: Brian Reynolds announced the Planning/Zoning Board Engineer Joe Maffei is reviewing the Landscaping Ordinance at this time, and is also reviewing recommendations from the Environmental Commission concerning artificial turf.

Other Business: Donna Rothman announced a Christmas card was received from Mayor Pagliughi, and further mentioned a recently published article stating the City of Cape May had withdrawn its Invasive Plant Ordinance. After conversations with their Environmental Commission, it was determined that the Invasive Plant List is still under review.

Donna Rothman polled the Environmental Commission membership concerning the possibility of disseminating information electronically in advance of meetings. Some members were amenable to this method, while others preferred hard copies. The possibility of utilizing the TVs in the meeting room to present materials at the meeting was also discussed.

Joe Lomax noted the Annual Report for the Community Forestry Management Plan is underway, and that the call for seedling orders has been made. He suggested the seedlings program could also be an education opportunity.

Donna Rothman agreed that the seedling program could be a future education project, and announced no additional seedlings will be bought this year, other than what is typically ordered through the free annual program. She further announced comments were sent on behalf of the Borough of Avalon in connection with the New Jersey Forestry Management Plan.

With no additional business being brought forward, Donna Rothman wished all a safe and happy holiday season.

Adjournment at 5:12.