

**Avalon Environmental Commission**  
**June 15, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Chairwoman Rothman.

Pledge of allegiance.

Chairwoman Rothman read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

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

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 20, 2021 meeting was made by Claire Driscoll and seconded by Brian Reynolds. Approved by all.

**Discussion of Zoning Ordinance, Section 27-7.3.T.3 Green Space to possibly include 25% native plant species or cultivars:** Donna Rothman indicated her recent review of Chapter 27 of the Borough Code, and the definition of “Green Space”, which she distributed to the members, as amended by Ordinance 819-2021. She proposed that the definition of green space should address how green space is utilized with the focus to center around native plants by requiring 25% of green space on private property be planted with native plants. This new definition could apply to new construction only. The acceptable plant list is comprised of plants native to the region and could be used as guidance for homeowners. She quoted the statistic that 85% of all land is privately owned, and stressed that habitat restoration should start in the backyards of Avalon property owners.

Brian Reynolds noted most properties in Avalon are second homes. For the most part, those homeowners wish to plant low-maintenance plants in their required green space. They also wish to plant flowering plants for aesthetic purposes, and are not looking to draw more bugs to their property. If this definition is amended, there would be no way to police or enforce these regulations. Donna Rothman responded that native plants are the easiest plants to grow and expressed hope that the public could be educated to ask for native plants from their landscapers. Brian Reynolds mentioned landscapers tend to recommend plants that are best-sellers.

Donna Rothman stated native plants draw native species back to the area and stressed the importance of restoring harmony within Avalon by increasing the number of native plants within the green spaces of the municipality. Brian Reynolds mentioned the biggest barrier to this initiative would be the part-time residents.

Joe Dvorak added people love butterflies, but tend to have the opposite feelings toward caterpillars. He suggested promoting the importance of native vegetation through education, rather than an Ordinance. Donna Rothman agreed with the education campaign and suggested creating an additional plant list solely dedicated to pollinators. Claire Driscoll favored this idea and recommended using the education opportunity offered by the lecture series being held at the pollinator garden. Donna Rothman further suggested a partnership with the Garden Club to showcase native plants on the islands of Dune Drive to show a mix of ornamental and native plants. Brian Reynolds noted most people favor ornamental plantings.

Donna Rothman continued the discussion about Chapter 27, noting the consistent building of three-story homes is increasing the Avalon's visitor population by approximately a third, which impacts a lot of other aspects of the Borough, including parking. She inquired if the Planning/Zoning Board would consider revising Chapter 27 to changing the maximum height of new construction to two stories, rather than three. Brian Reynolds indicated this topic is not discussed by the Planning/Zoning Board and surmised a large demonstration of long-term residents seeking this change would trigger that discussion. Donna Rothman noted the Environmental Commission has an obligation to review portions of the Borough Code and their environmental impact, with those findings to be reported back to the Borough. Joe Dvorak inquired about what is reviewed during the Master Plan review with Brian Reynolds responding a general overview is done of the Master Plan; however, heights of structures is not discussed. Donna Rothman asked the members of the Environmental Commission to review the first 32 pages of the Master Plan before the next meeting so that it can be discussed at that time.

Donna Rothman stated she will explore the possibility of compiling a pollinator list. Brian Reynolds suggested holding an informational session either in partnership with the Garden Club or at Community Connections to educate the general public, after the pollinator list is developed.

**Pollinator Garden Lectures by Pat Sutton:** Donna Rothman announced Pat Sutton's lecture series at the pollinator garden and distributed the schedule for same, while encouraging all to attend. She noted the final sign for the pollinator garden has been received and will be put in place soon.

**Update on potential DVMP for 5609 Dune Drive and update on 9<sup>th</sup> Street DVMP:** Donna Rothman reported the property owners of 5609 Dune Drive have been given two options pertaining to the vegetation near their property, which would be to sponsor a DVMP project or to take care of the vegetation themselves with permission from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It is unknown what the final decision concerning this property is at this time. Brian Reynolds recommended keeping an eye out for a CAFRA permit application for this property. If one is filed, he suggested the Environmental Commission file comments with the DEP during the short public comment period.

Donna Rothman reported the Benz DVMP project has been completed to everyone's satisfaction.

**Science at Surfside Park:** Donna Rothman announced Science at Surfside Park will be taking place tomorrow, June 16, 2021 to address the topic of diamondback terrapins. Next month's session will discuss birds and their migration patterns, which will be held inside Community Hall for a PowerPoint presentation. All present members spoke highly of this program and the speakers.

**"Plant a Tree Program" for Avalon Homeowners:** Donna Rothman proposed developing a fundraiser for members of the public to sponsor the planting of a tree throughout the town as a commemorative option. Claire Driscoll inquired if the trees planted through this program would have a plaque near the tree honoring the sponsor. Donna Rothman responded yes, and noted this program could help replenish the trees throughout the Borough. Joe Dvorak noted donors would want a visible plaque, which may be difficult to place. Previously, on Veteran's Day, flags were flown along Dune Drive honoring local veterans. He suggested flying similar flags on Arbor Day honoring donors to this program. Claire Driscoll questioned what the charged fee would be for the planted trees, with Donna Rothman replying the cost would range between 300 and 500 dollars. Donna requested Commission members to think about this proposal and how it would be administered.

**Dune Grass Program for the Avalon School:** Claire Driscoll reported Stacey Tracy, the school Superintendent, has retired; therefore, this program will need to be explored further with Ms. Tracy's replacement. This program would partner with the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes for educational and rehabilitation purposes. She expressed hope that the program will move forward in the future. Donna Rothman encouraged exploring this program further for implementation in January or February of 2022.

**Tree Committee:** Donna Rothman stated the CSIP grant is moving towards a close, with the final reports being generated. Upon review of those final reports, the Borough will be eligible to apply for a new CSIP grant. An update and amendment to the Community Forestry Management Plan is in progress. The deadline for that update has been extended by the State of New Jersey to 2025.

**Other Updates:** Donna Rothman announced the Orstead Wind Farm project has been tabled and delayed due to the inability to obtain permits, and other various factors. Brian Reynolds noted he has witnessed first-hand windmill farms, in Copenhagen, when he took a cruise in the area. He noted smog reduction has incredibly positive impacts to areas, which was realized more concretely during the COVID-19 pandemic, by making a specific reference to pictures of the Taj Mahal, where it is noted that the tower could not be seen from a distance prior to the pandemic, and could be viewed clearly from a distance during the pandemic as a direct result of reduced smog in the area. He noted fossil fuels are also a negative contributor to environmental problems, and they also have negative impacts on animals as well. Donna Rothman mentioned the delays to the wind farm project will allow for more research and investigation into the potential impacts of this proposed development. Brian Reynolds further stated affects of wind farms on marine life and the fishing industry are being explored and researched near existing wind farms around the globe.

Donna Rothman announced a recent published report named New Jersey as the 5<sup>th</sup> happiest state in the United States.

Adjournment at 5:15.