

Avalon Environmental Commission
July 20, 2021

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:** Dave Coskey, Kevin Coyle, Claire Driscoll, Joe Dvorak, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds, Donna Rothman
 Absent: Beth Tipping

A motion to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2021 meeting was made by Brian Reynolds and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

Before beginning with the regular order of business as outlined by the agenda, Donna Rothman took the time to introduce Dave Coskey, the newest member of the Environmental Commission. Dave told of his marketing background, his love of boating, his past on the History Center Board for the Borough of Avalon, and his long history which is intertwined with the Borough of Avalon. All members welcomed Dave and congratulated him on his appointment.

Discussion of home owner letter regarding Off Shore Windfarm: Donna Rothman indicated the letter from homeowner David Smith inquiring about the Environmental Commission's stance on the Off Shore Windfarm was emailed to all members of the Commission for their review. A response has been drafted to Mr. Smith and has also been distributed to all members. Donna requested feedback and comments from the members before the response is sent to Mr. Smith.

Brian Reynolds suggested no edits and mentioned a large portion of the population fails to understand that something must be done about energy production. The methods by which energy is currently produced have an adverse effect on climate change and the environment. He emphasized the importance of combatting sea level rise by making the change to clean energy.

Steve Malyszka expressed the opinion that the response letter does not clearly answer the questions being posed by Mr. Smith. He indicated his understanding that Mr. Smith is inquiring about what Avalon's actions will be concerning this proposed development. Donna Rothman replied the Environmental Commission's role is to advise the Borough of Avalon and not to comment on editorial about other barrier island communities. Additionally, in April the Commission had decided to wait for the Environmental Impact Studies before offering any commentary.

Brian Reynolds spoke in support of making a recommendation to Council regarding the Environmental Commission support for a clean energy project.

Joe Dvorak voiced his opinion that Avalon should oppose being dictated to by another entity, which will happen if the bill pending in the legislature is approved. He advocated that Avalon and other municipalities should have a seat at the table when deciding certain logistics of the project. Dave Coskey agreed and noted Ocean City has publicly declared the stance that they are not opposed to wind farms,

but rather they are opposed to not having a voice concerning the proposed development and the placement of wires, which were planned to land in Ocean City.

Donna Rothman noted Mr. Smith's letter was asking why the Avalon Environmental Commission has no position on this project, and the reason for that is because all Commission members had agreed in April 2021 to not publicly declare a stance until all research was conducted and all data could be reviewed.

Donna Rothman asked how the Environmental Commission should respond to Mr. Smith's letter and expressed the opinion that the pending bill should not be mentioned, nor should the attachment to Mr. Smith's letter. Claire Driscoll and Dave Coskey agreed.

Steve Malyszka suggested responding to Mr. Smith with a very concise response, explaining the Environmental Commission has decided to wait to issue a formal opinion on the proposed wind farm project until all data can be reviewed to make a fully educated decision. He further suggested acknowledging the attachment to Mr. Smith's email, with the explanation that the Environmental Commission cannot respond to the information contained in the attachment at this time.

After further discussion, the Environmental Commission agreed to respond to Mr. Smith that a formal advisory will be forthcoming to the Borough upon receipt of the completed EIS studies on the project.

Donna Rothman polled the membership as to what the recommendation to Borough Council should be at this time. Brian Reynolds recommended the Environmental Commission support the concept of wind farms as a clean energy option to offset the harmful impacts of energy production as it is currently done.

Environmental Commission Website: Donna Rothman referenced the proposed new webpage for the Avalon Environmental Commission, and asked for the feedback of the members concerning the information contained therein. Steve Malyszka recommended the addition of information regarding the Pollinator Garden, Armacost Park, the Plastic Pollution Act, plantings, and water consumption. Claire Driscoll advocated the inclusion of all partnerships and programs, including The Wetlands Institute, which has done great things this year and should be advertised. Dave Coskey volunteered to assist in the development of the Environmental Commission Website which is currently under development.

Pollinator Garden list under development: Donna Rothman reported since the last Environmental Commission meeting, there have been efforts to compile a pollinator plant list for the benefit of the public by Pat Sutton and Jesse Connor from Stockton University.

Master Plan Discussion – pages 1-32: Donna Rothman explained the Master Plan is a living document, which is updated every ten years and is a great tool that can be used by many departments of the Borough, as it details all goals and objectives of the Borough. The members of the Environmental Commission had been asked to review the first 32 pages of the Master Plan for discussion regarding how the Environmental Commission can help the Borough obtain its goals.

Discussion regarding the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, looking ahead to 2022, and potentially developing new programs, such as a living shoreline initiative, took place among the members of the Environmental Commission.

Dave Coskey noted living shorelines are not always helpful to protect areas in excessive high tides. Brian Reynolds mentioned Stone Harbor's recent Ordinance changes implementing a mandated bulkhead

height of seven to eight feet. Dave Coskey indicated Avalon has also increased the required bulkhead height. Steve Malyszka stressed the importance of the Master Plan including a mandate on bulkheads for all properties and street ends throughout the Borough of Avalon.

Further discussion regarding goals on page nine of the Master Plan and how the Environmental Commission is and can be involved took place, with the membership agreeing the Master Plan can be used as a tool when trying to move Avalon forward, such as using rain-sensored sprinklers and rain barrels. All members agreed the goals and objectives of the Environmental Commission should be to do meaningful projects and encourage positive change. Further discussion took place regarding clean energy initiatives, such as solar energy on public buildings.

Pollinator Garden Update: Claire Driscoll happily reported the Pollinator Garden is doing very well, as is the lecture series with Pat Sutton, who has had an average of 30 attendees at each session. Claire announced wildlife seen in the garden, as well as the presence of phragmites. She announced the temporary sign is in place, and recommended concrete walkways for safer navigation through the garden. She encouraged all to attend the next installment in the lecture series hosted by Pat Sutton at the Pollinator Garden to take place August 24, 2021 at 9:00 am.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak reported the final inspection of trees in connection with the CSIP Grant has been conducted, and the Borough passed the inspection with flying colors. Donna Rothman noted of the trees planted, eight trees were dead and promptly removed, with others being monitored. Joe Dvorak stated the dead trees were successfully replaced.

Joe Dvorak announced an inventory of street trees is finally underway after a difficult time securing volunteers. Currently, there are three volunteers working on collecting the location, species, condition, and diameter at breast height of all trees along the streets of Avalon. The species is being determined through use of the Picture This app. He voiced the opinion that the inventory will be a useful tool when completed, as it promotes healthy vegetation and can show the benefits of carbon dioxide production. Further, the existence of an inventory will make the Borough eligible for more grants. There are hopes the inventory will be complete by mid to late fall.

Bay Issues: Kevin Coyle reported the emergency dredging of Pennsylvania Harbor will soon be underway to make the channel safe for navigation. He announced the monitoring system used to monitor bird migration has been reinstalled on the Fishing Pier. Further, the Bay Park Marina project is in the bidding process, with the first phase of construction expected to begin in the fall.

Other Updates: Donna Rothman mentioned she has drafted a letter to Borough Council seeking their endorsement of the Bag Up NJ initiative that Cape May and Stone Harbor have endorsed.

Science at Surfside Park: Donna Rothman announced the next session in the Science at Surfside Park lecture series will be held July 21, 2021 at Community Hall concerning birds that rely on the Jersey Shore to Nest and encouraged everyone to attend.

Adjournment at 5:28.