

Avalon Environmental Commission
April 19, 2022

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, Joe Dvorak, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds, Donna Rothman, and Beth Tipping
 Absent: Claire Driscoll

A motion to approve the minutes from the March 15, 2022 meetings was made by Dave Coskey and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

Review of a new DVMP project and landscape plan: Aaron Baker introduced a new project near Community Hall, adjacent to the boardwalk, which is an effort to restore the area, which has a high volume of vines and Japanese honeysuckle. The plan includes the removal of the vines, non-native, and invasive plants; replacing them with native, and/or flowering plants and shrubbery. Leyland cypress trees will be planted along the fence line of the property to provide a natural barrier. The shrubs and trees will be irrigated. It is intended to move this project forward quickly.

A motion to approve the project was made by Brian Reynolds and seconded by Steve Malyszka. Approved by all.

Landscape Ordinance considerations: Donna Rothman reported the towns of Montclair and Eatontown have recently made Ordinance changes to only allow native plants and tree species in development applications. Such a change in Avalon would benefit the overall environment, as well as bring more birds, insects, and butterflies typically native to Avalon. She asked the Environmental Commission members to discuss and consider recommending the landscaping Ordinance be changed to require a 10 percent planting of native vegetation for all new construction. This recommendation has the support of Pat Sutton, and must go before the Planning/Zoning Board for approval.

Discussion took place regarding implementation methods, possible hurdles, supply chain issues, asking landscapers to join and promote the cause, the types of vegetation that grows naturally within Avalon, enforcement procedures, educational initiatives to promote planting native vegetation via mailing or in-person meetings, landscaping plan procedures, and encouraging the Planning/Zoning Board to take a more active role regarding landscaping plans. Beth Tipping and Dr. Brian Reynolds will present the issue to the planning board and report at the next AEC meeting.

Donna Rothman noted Ann Arbor, Michigan has been a topic of news sources for adopting “No Mow May” to promote pollinator activity and increase pollinator populations in their area. Avalon is in a different zone than Michigan, which would mean Avalon would need to observe a “No Mow April” to provide the same benefit. She asked if the Environmental Commission would like to suggest that the Borough stop mowing the islands on Dune Drive in April for this purpose.

Kevin Coyle suggested starting the program with a small number of islands on a trial basis. All agreed.

Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI): Donna Rothman noted the Environmental Commission has the power to conduct research, and should maintain an ERI, which has not been done. An ERI would serve as a historical tool that accounts for the human element, and would prove useful in many scenarios. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for an ERI has been written. The RFP stresses that the winning contractor would need to focus solely on Avalon and its unique ecosystem, as well as resiliency. The ERI should also look at the impact development has had on the island, and should be made available in an electronic and simple format for public education. She asked the members to provide feedback on the proposed RFP.

Steve Malyszka inquired about the budget for this contract, with Donna Rothman explaining there is \$5,000 allotted so far for this purpose. At a course recently attended regarding ERI's, it was estimated the total cost would be between \$15,000-35,000.

A discussion took place regarding the processes necessary to complete an ERI, with all agreeing to move forward with the RFP.

Armacost Park: Donna Rothman reported a recent meeting with the Mayor regarding the history and importance of restoring Armacost Park, specifically the tidal flow. There has been a consultation with professionals to confirm the proposed pipe to restore the tidal flow and to assure it will be adequate. It has been confirmed the pipe will be installed; however, pumps are necessary, and the Mayor expressed his interest in having the salt water pond reformed.

Steve Malyszka commented on the hydrology issues at Armacost Park and stressed the importance of having a study done to determine the root cause of such an issue, with potential solutions identified. Donna Rothman agreed that Armacost Park is a gem of Avalon, and should be preserved as part of the maritime forest. Further discussion took place regarding the history of Armacost Park, as well as the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the park.

Potential Vice Chair: Donna Rothman announced her inability to attend the June and July Environmental Commission meetings, and asked the members to consider appointing a Vice Chair to conduct those meetings. This topic will be revisited and further discussed at the May 17, 2022 meeting.

Activities during April 2022: Donna Rothman expressed excitement for a very busy month of environmentally-related activities, and encouraged all to volunteer for each program, namely the rain barrel workshop, during which 25 rain barrels will be distributed to willing property owners. She further noted the dune grass planting will be held April 23, 2022 and the tree seedling recovery program will be held on April 30, 2022.

Updates: Donna Rothman announced a Salem Oak Tree seedling has been planted at Armacost Park on 74th Street and encouraged all to visit the seedling to experience a piece of history being planted in Avalon.

Adjournment at 5:27 pm.