

Avalon Environmental Commission
August 16, 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:** Kevin Coyle, Claire Driscoll, Joe Dvorak, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds, Donna Rothman, Chris Amacher and Jamie McDermott
 Absent: Dave Coskey and Beth Tipping

A motion to approve the minutes from the May 17, 2022 meeting was made by Claire Driscoll and seconded by Steve Malyszka. Approved by all.

Introduction of Chris Amacher: Donna Rothman welcomed Chris Amacher to his first formal Environmental Commission Meeting as an Alternate Member of the Commission. All present members introduced themselves and welcomed Chris to the Commission.

Chris Amacher formally introduced himself to the Environmental Commission and gave a brief outline of his background, noting he is from Tennessee with a military background. He stated the environment is one of his priorities, and he teaches wilderness skills to children in his spare time. He expressed his happiness at the privilege to be a member of the Environmental Commission.

Review of 2022 DVMP Tony Mea: Aaron Baker explained this would be a new project near previous projects sponsored by Anthony Mea, who is the spokesperson for the neighborhood. This proposed project includes a maintenance pruning component. Brian Reynolds inquired if access is an issue in this part of the dunes, with Aaron Baker responding the area is very overgrown; however, access is possible. The existing Japanese Black Pines to be removed are currently healthy, with no evidence of a pine beetle infestation.

Steve Malyszka asked about irrigating the project. Aaron Baker explained irrigating this project would prove very difficult, and due to the minimal replanting plan, irrigation is not necessary. The planting area is sheltered, with a high probability of plant survival without irrigation. While the area to be addressed is large, the project scope is minimal. It is planned to begin this project in late-October.

A motion to approve the proposed DVMP project sponsored by Anthony Mea was made by Steve Malyszka and seconded by Claire Driscoll. Approved by all.

Donna Rothman asked for an update concerning the Boova DVMP project discussed at the May 17, 2022 Environmental Commission Meeting, with Aaron Baker noting the project has been placed on hold for the time being. It is expected to hear more regarding the project in the spring.

Victoria Deever, Master Student: Donna Rothman introduced Victoria Deever, who is pursuing a Master's Degree at Harvard University. She will be presenting her graduate thesis in the meeting room in Borough Hall on Thursday, August 18, 2022 at 9:00 am on the subject of resilience and the impacts of climate change.

Victoria Deever explained the premise of her thesis includes a proposed plan to improve Avalon's resiliency, which includes engaging part-time residents in the concept of island sustainability. The 40-minute presentation will detail six presented initiatives, as well as a road map for making each happen. She invited all to attend this presentation.

Donna Rothman mentioned this proposed plan could integrate well into the Environmental Commission plan and expressed hope to see many members of the Environmental Commission at the presentation.

Potential Native Plant Ordinance: Donna Rothman reported her attendance at a course in February which addressed the proper selection of vegetation promoting sustainability in municipalities. In order to present such an initiative to the Borough, a plan must be provided to Borough Administration for review. A requested plan has been drafted on behalf of the Environmental Commission. Donna asked all members to review and offer their comments.

Steve Malyszka expressed the opinion that the resiliency burden should not be placed on the homeowners, and stressed the importance of the Borough leading by example by planting native plants in parks and on the islands of Dune Drive before asking homeowners to do the same with their private properties.

Donna Rothman noted some communities have placed the burden on the municipality; however, that burden may not apply to Avalon, as there are not many places on public property to plant trees. She introduced the idea of providing a list to homeowners of native plants to this area with the notation that many plants are found naturally in the dunes. She further noted this plan only advocates for this proposed Ordinance to be enforced in connection with new development. Aaron Baker added the plan could be enforced by the Planning/Zoning Board as part of the landscaping plan.

Donna Rothman further added this proposed Ordinance would require 10 percent of landscaping to be native vegetation for new development projects. She stressed the importance of maintaining the North Atlantic Flyway by planting such vegetation.

Discussion took place concerning the importance of native vegetation, assessing interest in planting such plants, the feasibility of requiring these plantings, potential enforcement, existing requirements, the importance of education, and changing the mindsets of property owners to emphasize the environment.

Joe Dvorak proposed holding a possible contest for the most attractive native vegetation to build interest in this initiative. Aaron Baker voiced his support of this idea and noted neighborhood mindsets could change if attractive native vegetation displays start becoming part of neighborhoods. Chris Amacher added the education of children in the community is also impactful, and spoke about uses for native plants, such as goldenrod.

The Environmental Commission membership supports the plan being presented to Borough Administration.

Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) – ANJEC Grant: Donna Rothman reported a grant application was submitted to ANJEC for funding to aid the development of an ERI; however, the grant was not approved. ANJEC has issued an opinion that the Borough of Avalon is not ready to move forward, and encourages the Borough of Avalon to reapply for the grant in 2023.

Pollinator Garden: Clair Driscoll indicated the Pollinator Garden is coming along nicely. She stated the pathway has been created with much success and encouraged additional volunteers to help weeding the area. Donna Rothman explained the lecture series recently concluded and commended the program for being well done and engaging the community. A maintenance landscaping plan for Armacost Park and the Pollinator Garden will be bid in the future.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak reported a memorial tree program is in development by the Committee, and the fall tree planting will soon begin. He mentioned an issue with landscapers improperly mulching trees, which is leading to the necessity of having trees replaced at a more frequent rate.

Armacost Park: Steve Malyszka announced a recent walk through Armacost Park, which has helped in the developing of a plan for the future of the park. He briefly reviewed the history of Armacost Park, which is included in a report that is being used in the development of the new plan. He expressed interest in hiring the previous contractor to begin the phases associated with this project, while highlighting the priorities of the project, such as removing the phragmites, restoring water flow, and restoring the forest. Some issues that attributed to the current condition of Armacost Park include the flooding on Dune and Ocean Drives, which must be resolved. There are hopes to move forward soon.

Bay Issues: Jamie McDermott commented the improvements to Bay Park Marina are included in the 2023 budget.

Other Updates: Donna Rothman announced The Wetlands Institute will be hosting a lecture on August 17, 2022 at 6:00 pm and encouraged all to attend.

Adjournment at 5:05 pm.