

Avalon Environmental Commission
November 15, 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:** Joe Dvorak, Donna Rothman, Chris Amacher and Jamie McDermott

Absent: Kevin Coyle, Dave Coskey, Claire Driscoll, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds and Beth Tipping

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 18, 2022 meeting was made by Chris Amacher and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

Littoral Society Presentation: Donna Rothman introduced Captain Alek Modjeski, the Restoration Director of the Littoral Society. She indicated Captain Modjeski was invited to present on options of protecting shorelines as a result of recent water level rise due to global warming and the fact that the Bay Park Marina Project includes the construction of a living shoreline.

Captain Alek Modjeski, Restoration Director of the Littoral Society, gave a detailed and beneficial presentation titled “10 Years After Superstorm Sandy: Restoring Habitat and Improving Community Connectivity and Resilience.” The presentation detailed the Littoral Society’s role in promoting resiliency statewide; options for natural solutions to rising water levels, such as living shorelines; successful projects completed through partnerships along the Delaware Bay shoreline; permitting allowances and guidelines; the use of oyster reefs and shell in building these natural solutions; the shapes of these formations to promote wave breaking to maximize efficiency; the advantageous use of recycled Christmas trees; and how these natural vegetation-filled shorelines promote wildlife population growth and habitat restoration.

Donna Rothman inquired how the height of these living shorelines is calculated to compensate for rising water levels, with Captain Modjeski responding certain calculations and projections are used and natural building will occur; however, these items can be built upon, as needed.

Donna Rothman inquired if there is an intrusive smell in connection with oyster reefs. Captain Modjeski indicated the oyster shells are cured for a period of time to rid the shells of the smell prior to being used to eliminate any potential nuisance smells.

Donna Rothman asked if a certain threshold of volunteerism is required from a community in order to have a successful project. Captain Modjeski noted volunteerism is encouraged, as it helps with the grants received; however, volunteers can come from all areas.

Scott Wahl thanked Captain Modjeski for his detailed and informative presentation and identified many uses for such natural structures throughout town.

Tom Heron, Watershed Ambassador for Cape May: Donna Rothman introduced Tom Heron, who is present today to discuss potential collaborative opportunities.

Tom Herson introduced himself to the Environmental Commission and explained his job responsibilities, which includes providing education at local schools as it relates to waterways, collaborating with the DEP, and getting the community involved in community service events.

Donna Rothman expressed hope that Tom will help increase volunteerism within Avalon and further expressed excitement at the possibility of establishing a living shoreline program.

Armacost Park: Donna Rothman noted the capital budget is being compiled for this project.

Pollinator Garden: Donna Rothman reported a plan is being developed for restoration of the Pollinator Garden, and a partnership with the Technical School for maintaining the garden is also being explored at this time.

Bay Issues: Donna Rothman explained a presentation was recently made to the public concerning the Bay Park Marina project and its status.

Jamie McDermott distributed a rendering of how the park will look once completed, and gave a brief overview of the features that will be incorporated into the project. Donna Rothman questioned why the handicapped kayak ramp is not planned to be built near the current kayak launch, with Jamie McDermott explaining the handicapped ramp is planned for the less busy launch area to avoid potential safety concerns.

Other Updates: Donna Rothman noted speakers have been lined up for 2023, and expressed excitement at new educational opportunities for the community. The ERI was postponed from Council's consideration until more information can be provided to the Council President. There are hopes that item will be included on the December 14, 2022 agenda. The fall dune grass planting took place on October 26, 2022 with 40 volunteers planting approximately 11,500 culms. The Grasses in Classes Program will be held on December 2, 2022, and all are invited to attend.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak reported the planning is still underway for the memorial tree program, and noted there are currently dedicated trees and who sponsored them without Borough approval is unknown. A full presentation of the plan will be given to the membership of the Environmental Commission once completed, hopefully at the January 2023 meeting.

Adjournment at 5:05 pm.