

**Avalon Environmental Commission**  
**March 21, 2023**

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 and Donna Rothman

**Absent:** Claire Driscoll, Beth Tipping, Chris Amacher and Jamie McDermott

A motion to approve the minutes from the February 21, 2023 meeting was made by Steve Malyszka and seconded by Kevin Coyle. Approved by all.

**DVMP:** Aaron Baker presented proposed DVMP plans for three new projects, as follows:

78<sup>th</sup> to 80<sup>th</sup> Streets: This project encompasses the Icona properties, and is an update to a previous project completed in this area, which was done to fix previous disturbances between 78<sup>th</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> Streets. The new and updated project expands the project area to encompass 80<sup>th</sup> Street, as well. The plan for this project includes the removal of 17 Japanese Black Pine trees to be replaced with natural vegetation. There are no trees intended to be planted at this time.

Donna Rothman inquired if a dune grass planting will be needed in this project area, with Aaron Baker responding a dune grass planting will not be necessary, due to a large amount of established vegetation in that dune system. Brian Reynolds asked if this project area is susceptible to storm erosion, to which Aaron Baker replied storm erosion in the south end is uncommon. Alternatively, it is more common to see sand accumulation in this area. Steve Malyszka questioned the method of irrigation for this project, and Aaron Baker explained the newly planted shrubs will be irrigated by the plan sponsor. A discussion regarding the possibility of planting trees in the project area took place, with Aaron Baker advocating that the environment in this area may not be viable for tree plantings.

A motion to approve this DVMP project was made by Steve Malyszka and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

36<sup>th</sup> Street: This project would consist mostly of pruning, with some removal of invasive plant species. This project is similar to neighboring projects completed in the past. In total, 4 Japanese Black Pines will be removed and replaced with 12 beach plums. The focus of this project will be to establish undergrowth, which is necessary due to the conditions in this project area. The project will be irrigated, and pruning is expected to be necessary, but will only be done selectively within the project area. Neighboring projects have seen success with cedars, cherry, beach plum, and bayberry. This is a densely vegetated area, so the focus will be to maintain that level of vegetation.

A motion to approve this DVMP project was made by Brian Reynolds and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

33<sup>rd</sup> to 34<sup>th</sup> Streets: A high density of 29 Japanese Black Pines will be removed from this project, with those trees being replaced with herbaceous plants in some areas, and shrubs, cedars, and inkberry holly in other areas. Areas of the project with more concentrated plantings will be irrigated to promote growth.

Steve Malyszka asked what the start date of this project will be, and if the project will impact nesting birds. Aaron Baker reported this project is expected to begin in late April, if possible, with the project completion date falling on or around May 15, 2023 to avoid bird nesting times, which is typically during late May.

A motion to approve this DVMP project was made by Kevin Coyle and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

**Review of Sustainable Landscaping and Native Plants pamphlet:** Donna Rothman distributed the pamphlet and requested a final review and comments before printing of the pamphlet commences on or about March 24, 2023. The intention is to distribute these pamphlets at Community Connections in April. Many professionals were consulted during the drafting of this pamphlet.

A comprehensive overview of the pamphlet was undertaken by all present members of the Environmental Commission, with some edits being suggested and made to include language to promote clear and concise wording to educate the general public concerning this initiative. A professional proofreader will also be engaged for a final review prior to printing.

**April Programs:** Donna Rothman reviewed upcoming events in April, including Community Connections on April 8, the public dune grass planting and the tree seedling program which distributes 250 tree seedlings native to Cape May County. Both events will be on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The school dune grass planting, otherwise known as Grasses in Classes, will be taking place at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street beach at 9:00 am. The Arbor Day celebration will take place at 70<sup>th</sup> Street at 10:00 am. She encouraged volunteerism and attendance at all events.

**Piping Plover Season:** Donna Rothman announced the piping plover season, which falls between March 15 and August 31, though the nesting period can be extended through November 30. She expressed hope that piping plovers will return to Avalon's beaches after scarce years in the recent past.

**Flood Mitigation and Trees:** Donna Rothman mentioned the concept of the impact flood mitigation can have on trees, and the usefulness of the Environmental Commission when engaging in this concept. She polled the present members as to the viability of pursuing such a concept, and suggested promoting the benefits of fastidious trees. If interested, she suggested collecting data from i-Tree and using the Tree Inventory as a tool to identify where to replace trees.

Joe Dvorak suggested first identifying the worst flooding areas in Avalon, and developing a strategic plan to attempt to offset these flooding effects with tree plantings. Brian Reynolds agreed, and advocated the importance of gathering more background information when considering such an initiative. Joe Dvorak volunteered the Tree Committee to spearhead this initiative.

**Armocost Park:** Steve Malyszka indicated Lomax Consulting Group and the Borough Engineer are working to develop a Statement of Work and Production Plan for this project, which will be submitted to Council for review and approval upon completion.

Kevin Coyle asked about the history of the pond at Armacost Park, with Steve Malyszka replying the history of the pond remains unclear at this time, with topography not clarifying much in that aspect. Due to this obstacle, manual mapping of the park will be required.

An extensive and very detailed discussion of the known history of Armacost Park took place among the present members, with the general consensus being that the Park needs to be addressed and restored.

**Pollinator Garden:** Donna Rothman announced an individual with Rutgers has offered to help the Borough with the maintenance of the Pollinator Garden for a nominal fee.

**Tree Committee:** Joe Dvorak reported a meeting recently took place to present the proposed memorial tree program to Borough Administration, which was well received, and will be presented to Borough Council in the future for review and potential approval. Donna Rothman added one tree at Grace O'Brien Park was removed from the program. All trees involved with the program have been marked with red tape. There are 10 trees included in the pilot program.

**Public Comments:** Mrs. Johnson expressed concerns about mulch and runoff into the stormwater system, and advocated for educating the public as to the harm this runoff imposes. Donna Rothman suggested private property owners speak with their landscapers about the quantity of mulch used on their properties, which could help offset such runoff. A note to that effect will be placed on the Environmental Commission website. Additionally, a conversation has taken place with Public Works concerning mulching on Borough property.

Adjournment at 5:01 pm.