

Avalon Environmental Commission
June 20, 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:** Kevin Coyle, Claire Driscoll, Joe Dvorak, Donna Rothman, Chris Amacher and Jamie McDermott

Absent: Dave Coskey, Steve Malyszka, Brian Reynolds and Beth Tipping

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 18, 2023 meeting was made by Jamie McDermott and seconded by Joe Dvorak. Approved by all.

Accomplishments and Review of Work Plan: Donna Rothman showed photos and videos from a recent weeding event at the Pollinator Garden, and thanked all participants. She then led a discussion concerning the 2023 work plan, and asked all present members to think ahead and provide input for the direction of the Environmental Commission as 2024 approaches while discussing the 2023 work plan. The detailed overview included topics such as educational programs, school programs, the Armacost Park Restoration Plan, the tree seedling program, a landscaping pamphlet, an Environmental Resource Inventory/Natural Resource Inventory, attendance at educational meetings, and active advisement to Borough Council. It was suggested to potentially redraft the acceptable plant list into a more user-friendly format, with Victoria Deever volunteering to assist with the redrafting. Joe Dvorak and Donna Rothman offered to identify another volunteer to assist with the pictorials to be added to the new list. plants

Dave Coskey entered the meeting at 4:25 pm.

Donna Rothman mentioned citizen science initiatives, surveys, and a potential program similar to the “Paddle for the Edge” program to help engage citizens in environmentally-centered education. She asked all members to draft and submit a few questions for a potential survey which will be discussed at the July Environmental Commission Meeting.

Discussion among the present members also took place in regards to website initiatives and how to improve the Environmental Commission’s social media presence in an effort to engage the general public. Chris Amacher suggested the possibility of an Instagram account. Donna pointed out that since the AEC is an extension of Avalon Council it is doubtful that Instagram or a similar program would be allowable.

Educational initiatives for the Environmental Commission Members: Donna Rothman pointed out that ANJEC offers a variety of webinars and speakers to discuss programs Environmental Commissions have underway throughout the state. Since the Commission mission is advisory in nature we should be educated to make decisions. On a local level, the AEC should be current on landscaping and building ordinances to understand the process of building applications and how to read development plans. Jamie McDermott volunteered to ask Joe Maffei to come to speak to the AEC at the July or August meeting.

Review of Sustainable Landscaping and Native Plants pamphlet: Donna Rothman announced the pamphlet has been placed in various locations, businesses, and nurseries in the area in an effort to educate not only property owners, but visitors and landscapers alike. She asked for volunteers to deliver small supplies of the pamphlets to real estate offices throughout the Borough and Chris Amacher volunteered. Donna Rothman also noted a suggestion has been received to place a pamphlet box at the Pollinator Garden. An informal poll of the present members showed resounding support of this suggestion, and it was decided to contact Public Works to inquire about having such a box built and placed in the near future.

Dave Coskey noted the popularity of home tours, and suggested hosting a home garden tour to promote native plants in Avalon. He provided information from a Native Plant Garden tour in Haddonfield. Promotional ideas were discussed as to how to best get the word out concerning said home garden tours. Donna Rothman pointed out that the Avalon Garden Club had conducted Garden Tours in the past and they were not successful with attendance.

Trip to Delaware Botanical Garden: Donna Rothman noted Joseph Lomax of Lomax Consulting Group has made a recommendation to visit the Delaware Botanical Garden located in Dagsboro, Delaware and evaluated the interest in the present members of scheduling a trip to the Botanical Garden in the future. There was some interest, and a date for the trip will be chosen to evaluate interest further.

Reminders: Donna Rothman reminded all of the upcoming programs and educational initiatives being offered, and distributed the newsletter printed by the Avalon Free Public Library, which includes many of the programs. She encouraged attendance at all events, and expressed excitement for the topics to be discussed.

Armocost Park: Donna Rothman reported scans of the park have been submitted to the Commission of Mosquito Control and other agencies for evaluation of the park.

Bay Park Marina: Kevin Coyle indicated the next round of permit applications have been submitted to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and there are hopes the permits will soon be issued.

Pollinator Garden: Donna Rothman happily announced the Environmental Commission is being helped with the control of phragmites and mugwort at the Pollinator Garden; however, she noted this maintenance is ongoing and may require more volunteerism in the future.

Tree Committee: Joe Dvorak noted Borough Council passed an Ordinance adopting the Tree Dedication Program. A committee is working to finalize the details and specifics of the program with hopes the program will be implemented in the near future. Additionally, the future use of the Tree Inventory Report has proven to be a very useful tool in replacing dead and dying trees throughout the Borough.

Other Business: Donna Rothman stated an email has been received from a concerned citizen relating to bird deterrents. Said concerned citizen has requested the Environmental Commission review the use of these deterrents and potentially recommend not allowing such deterrents within the Borough of Avalon on public or private property.

Discussion took place concerning findings and recommendations of multiple agencies and societies, including the Audubon Society, which recommends the use of monofilament netting. After said discussion, the present members agreed that a letter authored by Environmental Commission Chair Donna Rothman will be sent to the concerned citizen explaining such recommendations by other agencies.

Adjournment at 5:16 pm.