

Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting

April 17, 2022

Attending: Margaret Johnson, Chris Reigert, Maureen Burns, Carolina Candeliera, Lee Maxwell, Pam Johnson

Absent: Mike Pratt, Linda Seifert, Kerri McCullough, Skip Cox

Guests: David Merkle, Bill Craft, Sue Davidson, David Sonnenfeld

Meeting was called to order at 8:30am.

Margaret welcomed the guests.

Councilman Bill Craft encouraged EAC to give reports at the town council meetings. He reiterated issues that are important to the committee are important to the town.

Margaret thanked the councilman for attending. She commented that the committee in the past has not been well received particularly about curbside recycling and recycling education. She feels the program prevailed due to the cost aspect. The mayor has also voiced her support for the committee. Margaret thanked Bill for attending today's meeting. EAC looks forward to working together.

David Merkle introduced himself. He was recruited by Lee for the Smart Yard program. During hurricane Florence his street had 3 to 4 inches of water in his house and adjacent property. They had difficulty getting contractors. He hired a landscape architect and the project included berms and three storm bio-cell retention areas. He heard of the Smart Yard program and contacted Lee Butzin. His property earned certification. He has been trained and has done one evaluation thus far.

Guest David Sonnenfeld introduced himself. David is recently retired. He started his career in Louisiana doing geological surveying. He ran the first coastal monitoring program. He then worked for Pennzoil and BP back when oil was priced about \$12 a barrel. After that he worked in the CIA for 33 years. He started in high altitude imagery and then as a programming manager. He is interested in the EAC to apply his skills.

Margret thanked Sue for attending and introduced her as being active with recycling in The Preserve.

Margaret announced there will be two openings on the committee.

Carolina asked Scott about transporting the remaining trees to the EAC booth at the Earth Day festival. Scott agreed.

Pam announced that she received an invitation from Saint James Conservancy, to attend a presentation tonight at 7PM. Guest speakers include Roseanne Fortner, Roger Shew. Topics discussed include the history of Earth Day and rising sea levels.

Pam also announced that Saint James will be sponsoring an all day environmental education program perhaps in September.

Margaret would like to feature the area environmental groups to let the community know that the local environmental groups are active and collaborating.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the March minutes.

Staff Report: Scott, Rick

Margaret thanked Scott and Rick for facilitating the Arbor Day planting. The event was a success and would not have been possible without their efforts.

Scott informed the committee that Skip Cox, Edward Lovett and the 'Marsh-mallows' as well as public works staff collected over 3000lbs of trash under the Barbee Bridge after the Arbor Day planting. Notable items included a couch and remnants of a jet ski.

Rick approved a bio retention/rain garden on 21st street. The project performed well during the recent storm.

He has frisbees and tattoos available for the Earth Day festival.

Rick is investigating a living shoreline project. He will be in contact with the Carolina Coastal Federation. There is a chance there will be little or no cost. Information on living shorelines and bio retention gardens are available on the website.

90% of the dune infiltration project is complete. The town was able to triple the capacity with 4 to 5 truckloads of sand. There was little disruption to property owners, at times just having to cross driveways. The feedback has been positive. More grants will be available come fall/winter.

Steve commented what a great job Rick has done. He also announced budget meetings are ongoing.

Old Business:

Earth Day Festival: Pam, Maureen

Maureen let the committee know at the rec department was able to find a sponsor for the aquarium touch pool exhibit. Maureen thanked Pam for doing the organizing of equipment and volunteers for the EAC Earth Day activities.

Pam shared the master list. Committee members will provide 3 tables, 2 tents. Maureen will ask Eric for the third tent.

Carolina said although there will be electricity available, however, she is in need of a hotspot. Maureen offered to use her phone. They will meet after the meeting to discuss details.

Pam requested committee members to meet at 9 AM at the site to set up and 2 PM to help take down the exhibits. Tree Peace volunteers will be available to help EAC.

Carolina asked Scott if there was money available for copies of educational materials as she is running low on ink on her home computer. Scott said yes this was possible.

Arbor Day: Carolina

Carolina explained the logs for the students to report on their tree care. She commented that, hopefully, these students will be potential interns, working with the GPS, mapping and registering trees.

Carolina hopes to pre-order Live Oaks next year. Margaret inquired about the student trash pick up after the Arbor Day Program. Carolina reported the students collected over 50 pounds of trash that day.

Pam noted the community support at the event. Margaret complimented Carolina and everyone involved on a superbly planned and executed event. The committee agreed.

The Last Plastic Straw Project:

Lee

Lee would like to table the project until the full committee is in attendance to achieve a consensus. He commented that since most restaurants have already ordered their materials for the summer it would not be productive or cost efficient for them to change now, so he suggests targeting the initiative for the fall.

He requested the committee read the initiatives, handouts and attachments and give feedback. He feels this is a rough draft.

Tree City: Pam

Pam informed the committee there is one resident waiting to have their yard evaluated for the Smart Yard certification. She would like to have more members trained so yards could be evaluated in a timely manner. David Merkle said he would be able to train. There was a question as to where do inquiries about having residential yard evaluate go. Calls go to Kennette in Public Works. It was suggested, in addition to a phone call, an email or in person visit to public works would expedite the process.

Rick re-iterated there is Smart Yard information as well as bio retention areas under the stormwater. There are also additional links of interest.

Sue inquired about the intercoastal waterway. The Preserve has been losing marsh grass. She asked if the community would be able to use these tools to help mitigate. Rick suggested make an appointment for the department to evaluate.

Recycle: Maureen

Maureen gave a brief background of the committee's recycling efforts for the councilman and potential new members. The town has been the recipient of two recent grants. One for mailing local recycling guideline magnets. She inquired if councilman Craft had received his, which he had. The most recent grant is a cash award. Per the last meeting, Maureen requested quotes for additional magnets as well as 'Please Do Not Bag Recyclables' cart labels. She has not received the quotes as of the meeting time.

Margaret inquired about the Sunoco tour. Maureen and Nancy Cray from Saint James attended the tour. They met with new plant manager, Gus Wiley, who has family in Oak Island. The biggest change Maureen noted from the previous visit almost 4 years ago was how quickly the material is sorted and either sent to the larger facility for further sorting or sold. They have also added an additional paper baling building in the back.

Sue informed the committee that Rose Braam has agreed to post a message on the electronic signs requesting residents and visitors to not bag recyclables.

There was a suggestion for making labels available for businesses that recycle. Lee said that is a feature of the Plastic Ocean proposals.

There was general consensus that GFL lacks the manpower to assist with public outreach and education initiatives.

There was also discussion about recycling styrofoam. EAC has looked into partnering with UNCW and offering townwide styrofoam drop off. Town staff at the time were open to the possibility. However, the drop off would have to be manned and the material would have to be moved off the island in a timely manner.

It was decided to table the topic of styrofoam collection until a later date.

Beach Preservation Society/Adopt A Highway: Skip

Skip presented his report by email and read by Margaret:

1. *BPSI- The live auction is now over. They raised \$10,700 against their goal of \$7,500. Next is the raffle for a Shibumi Shade, which is now underway until Memorial Day. Check the BPSI website (www.beachoki.org) for tickets.*
2. *AAH- The next litter event is Friday, May 13. All volunteer slots are filled!*

New Business:

There was a discussion on how EAC might help educate developers and homeowners on smart yards, bio retention and other storm water alternatives, and tree preservation.

Pam suggested reception/information sessions. Chris suggested a one page flyer with pertinent facts and resources.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to form a subcommittee to discuss presenting information to contractors and homeowners. Members to be determined.

A second motion was made, seconded and approved to form a separate subcommittee to review select ordinances. Rick volunteered to sit on that subcommittee. He states that now that the storm water rules have changed, there is more room for homeowners and contractors to save trees.

Councilman Craft complimented the committee on a productive meeting. He was impressed at the level of participation of all members.

Margaret thanked the councilman and other guests for attending.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:54am