

Environmental Advisory Committee Minutes
February 24, 2022

Attending: Margaret Johnson, Maureen Burns, Kerri McCullough, Lee Maxwell, Mike Pratt, Carolina Candelaria, Pam Johnson

Absent: Linda Seifert, Chris Reigert, Skip Cox

Staff: Mark Bloomer, Scott Thornall, Rick Patterson

Guests: : Sue Davidson

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM

Margaret asked Sue to introduce herself again to the committee. Sue informed the committee she has received, from GFL, 80 recycle stickers for the beach bins in Oak Island and Caswell Beach. Volunteers from The Preserve will label the carts.

The Marketplace paper will print a recycle tip sheet and continue with a column called Trash Talk. She is also planning to post a thank you online to the volunteers who will assist with labeling the public carts.

She again noted that the majority of contamination involves plastic bags.

The agenda was approved.

The January minutes were approved.

Announcements:

Kerri announced the Beach Preservation Society online auction will begin on Monday.

Margaret announced that, in the future, meeting agenda items are due Tuesday the week of the meeting. She also asked if members can not attend the meeting, please let her know ahead of time. The committee only meets one time per month and with so much energy and enthusiasm for environmental health, the meeting time should be a priority.

Staff Report: Mark, Scott

Mark commented that in the current Current, the Smart Yards program is featured.

He also informed the committee that the town will be switching email addresses to the oakislandnc.gov. The old address is still active for now but in the future it may not.

Scott announced and shared an award commemorating the 25 year anniversary of Oak Island being a designated Tree City. Mark suggested an article in the Current. Pam inquired about a sign or a banner to perhaps present to the town. She will investigate.

Mike voiced support for replacing the Bradford Pear trees and asked more about the process. Scott would prefer to go through the EAC. Mike finds this initiative to be inspirational and recommended using Facebook, the Current and other avenues to reach prospective property owners.

Mark shared that Wilmington is giving away trees this coming weekend. (Feb 26th) Mike expressed concern over the caliber of free trees. Rick recommends at least one and a half inch caliber for successful planting.

Rick gave an update on the first phase of the oceanfront dune filtration project near the 801 Event Center, which is part of the overall storm water mitigation project. He met with project managers. The dunes will be wider and taller than originally spec'd. The timeline is dependent on FEMA, most likely summer. He also is working on grant funding options. There is a possibility of working with oceanfront property owners who may give easements. He also gave details on the tree planting at the Veterans Park event. The town will dig and prep the holes. The care and maintenance to be provided by 'adopters.'

Old Business: Carolina

Carolina has a map for tree planting for the students from South Brunswick Middle School NHS Chapter to plant in Veterans Park. The day has not been determined. She will take possession of the plants the weekend of February 25th. The trees are five year old native trees. Carolina will have more information when the trees are delivered. Mike recommends, depending on the size, transplanting into large pots to grow for trees being considered in the right of way.

Carolina reiterated the students will be responsible for their trees.

Trees leftover will be brought to the Earth Day Festival for the adopt-a-tree booth. Carolina would like to utilize the ITree program if she can get Internet access at the site to provide adopters with information on where to plant, how to care, as well as the benefits of planting trees i.e. energy costs.

Carolina had several dates approved by the school for the field trip to Oak Island to plant the trees. It was decided April 13th would be declared Oak Island Arbor Day.

Scott is struggling to find a location to store the trees since the greenhouse is filled with Beautification plants. Rick asked how the trees will come, i.e. bare rooted or containers. Carolina will have all that information in the next day or two. Sue suggested working with the Beautification Club.

Margaret inquired of Mark, what would be the process for asking the mayor to declare April 13th Oak Island Arbor Day. Mark suggested email.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to participate in Oak Island Arbor Day, as well as commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Tree City designation. Scott and Rick will coordinate where the trees will be held, including care. Margaret will write to the mayor on behalf of the committee to have Arbor Day declared.

Lee inquired about the care of the trees. Rick suggested that trees in a 5 gallon bucket be watered two times per week.

Kerri mentioned that residents have asked her about ordinances requiring permits to remove trees and requirements to replace after CO. Margaret mentioned that this topic was discussed in the UDO but was not adopted. But perhaps it is worth reviewing again. Kerri has sample permit requests from other towns and will research.

A motion was made and approved to investigate this issue for later consideration.

Recycling: Maureen

The Sunoco New Hanover County MRF tour has been scheduled for March 22 at 10 AM.

Maureen informed the committee that, via Mark, Lisa Stites reminded the committee that the three member public meeting rule includes the tour, so three members will be attending: Maureen, Pam, and Lee.

Maureen extended an invitation to town staff and leadership to attend through Lisa, but has not heard back. Maureen confirmed with Scott that the new GFL contract is for three years. She suggested that when the previous leadership expressed interest, at the time, the council was considering going to a voluntary curbside recycling program. Now that there are other pressing issues, there is not the same sense of urgency. The committee agreed that the tour is still educational and relevant and would be beneficial. Maureen will follow up with Lisa.

Maureen inquired of town staff if there are any plans on how to spend the \$2000 Carton and Council Recycling and Education grant award. She said the original intention of applying for the award was to provide magnets for those residents who did not receive them. She reminded the committee that the address list the town provided included primary residence addresses of homeowners so many of the magnets, particularly those for rental homes, were not mailed to Oak Island. The committee reiterated how beneficial it is to have magnets in the vacation homes. Sue pointed out how recycling is very local, that for example, in Maryland recyclables are put in plastic bags.

Maureen inquired, with town permission and committee approval, she would like to follow up with CRA to acquire the mailing list used to determine who has not received the mailings, and also to inquire about obtaining the template used and availability and cost for additional materials.

A motion was made and approved for Maureen to investigate and report back.

Sue reviewed that she hopes to have the beach carts labeled with recycle information by the end of the week. She has plans to publish a tip sheet in the Marketplace upcoming issue (as long as this is not replaced by advertisers] In addition, she will post a thank you for volunteers to bring attention to the topic.

She asked for guidance to further public education and outreach. Carolina suggested focusing on banning plastic bags. Sue asked about getting announcements on the signage entering Oak Island. She noticed the Caswell Beach sign in front of the fire station posted a message "no plastic in recycle bins." Scott suggested contacting Rose.

Sue asked about contacting the condo communities. She also commented that with the current political climate, recycling is more important than ever, so perhaps these communities might revisit their decision to discontinue recycling programs.

She also mentioned cleaning crews for the rental homes and that perhaps, if they are distributing recycling material into the homes, they will also be reminded of recycling guidelines

Earth Day: Pam

Pam let the committee know that Eric is still out recouping from his surgery. The EAC plans to staff three booths:

- 1) Adopt a Tree
- 2) Information on Smart Yard
- 3) Enviroscope

Tree Peace members will be available to volunteer.

There was discussion on equipment needed i.e. tables, tents. Maureen has possession of the enviroscope and those materials. Pam would like to have an additional 50 Smart yard booklets. Carolina asked Scott if stormwater money would provide that.

Maureen reminded the committee, in the past, a prominent theme on Earth Day was shopping local. She asked committee members to think about the local businesses who may want to advertise or provide door prizes. (No sales at the festival)

Carolina reminded the committee of the art contest.

Margaret asked Pam for a definitive list of what the committee needs to do. Scott suggested inviting Heather O'Brien to the next EAC committee meeting.

Lee mentioned his special interest in reducing/eliminating the use of plastic straws. He has been doing research with a group called the Last Plastic Straw which provides alternatives to plastic for businesses. Carolina gave him the name of the Plastic Ocean Project organization.

Rick suggested the Environment Advisory Committee also offer recognition to businesses that reduce the use of plastic.

Lee will do research and report back to the committee

New Business:

Kerri mentioned the Offshore Wind Energy project and perhaps the committee should become educated and involved, perhaps provide a statement of awareness. Kerri attended the presentation provided by the company.

Local mayors have been meeting on the topic and will pass on information to the public as it is provided.

Mike announced he is emphatically against wind energy and gave his reasons. Pam shared some research out of Europe that she has read.

Margaret asked Mike if he would be willing to research the topic, as it does affect the environment. She said this is not an urgent issue but prevailing, so it bears monitoring.

Kerri has made arrangements for members of the EAC to participate in the town Marci Gras parade Saturday, February 26th.

Meeting was adjourned approximately 9:40 AM.