

Environmental Advisory Minutes
October 20, 2022

Attending: Margaret Johnson, Pam Johnson, David Merkle, Lee Maxwell, Allen Dearry, Maureen Burns, Carolina Candelaria, Chris Riegert, David Sonnenfeld, Skip Cox

Staff: Matt Kirkland, Scott Thornhall

Guests: Elise Snavely, Sue Davidson, Lisa Bowers

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM

Agenda was approved.

Margaret welcomed Lisa Bowers. Lisa contacted Margaret via an email which Margaret forwarded to the committee. Margaret invited Lisa to introduce herself. Lisa is a resident of Washington DC. Her family has been coming to Oak Island for generations. She is doing research on barrier islands and resiliency. Her interests include eco-tourism. She would like to see Oak Island become an eco-friendly destination. Her focus is on tourists, a group that the committee currently may not be reaching. Some ideas include limiting single use bags and styrofoam, as well as bringing awareness to tourists.

Lisa has invited a group for a zoom meeting today at 12PM.

Margaret thanked Lisa for attending today's meeting and the committee looks forward to seeing the group and their mission evolve. The committee welcomes community involvement.

A motion was made, seconded and the September minutes were approved.

Margaret mentioned several members needed to leave on time today and since the Sea Grant presentation is scheduled for today, she asked members to be succinct and keep comments and presentations to three minutes.

Margaret commended Lee Maxwell on his presentation on the Last Plastic Straw initiative to the town Council. She encouraged committee members to attend Council meetings.

Margaret commented she has several requests from new members for EAC protocol and the committee's mission. Members may bring up any topic to discuss as a group by submitting to Margaret for the agenda. Margaret will then take initiatives to Matt and the appropriate staff, and then on to council for approval.

David Merkle asked about questions to staff on behalf of EAC. Margaret used the example of Pam, who, with the approval of the committee, contacted the 801 Event Center staff to ask questions regarding lectures.

Matt says he takes ideas from the EAC to the appropriate staff. He also said of course members are free to ask questions as citizens at any time.

David Merkle asked Matt if the Council ever asked the committee questions/feedback. Matt said yes, an example being the tree ordinance. Council asked the planning board to look at the tree ordinance who then sent to EAC for consideration.

Allen had two comments. He feels EAC needs rules of procedure in writing similar to the planning board and board of adjustments. He said the tree committee working group exhibited lack of, or miscommunication.

He disagreed that The St. James environmental fair was not part of the EAC charge and jurisdiction.

Matt will check on rules and procedures for this committee. He commented that the planning board and adjustment board are required and have statutory rules. David Sonnenfeld added that he did ask Lisa Stites for information regarding the EAC and she is currently working on updates.

Matt added that he ran the request by SJP by staff. The answer was that other towns are not part of the committee's jurisdiction as an Oak Island board. Members are free to attend and report back.

Allen felt that the committee should be able to interact with their counterparts.

Chris said he has felt limited by the town. Matt said that the charter or mission could be amended.

Lee Maxwell commented he did not view the charter or mission as a barrier.

Maureen again reminded newer members that the committee has welcomed and collaborated with many other groups within those guidelines, including Sunset Beach and representatives from SJP. Many groups have attended EAC meetings to present, observe and/or collaborate.

Staff Report: Matt Kirkland

Matt reported that work continues with the UDO audit. He talked with Wes about possibly meeting with the EAC in December. He suggested the committee give him a few dates other than our usual meeting time because of the Thursday morning conflict with Wes.

Matt talked with Mike Emory about an EAC presence on the town website. Mike suggested a possible news feed for EAC.

David Sonnenfeld and Allen said they had something different in mind. They mentioned Southport Forestry as a model. Matt suggested talking more as a committee and coming up with a consensus.

Margaret asked Matt about the contract to use 801 Event Center for EAC lecture series. She asked whose signature would be on the contract. Matt will find out.

Old Business

Educational Lecture Series: Pam

Pam shared that she and Maureen met with Lisa of the 801 Event Center. Lisa recommended, based on her experience, the timeframe of 7-9pm for the lecture series to reach the most residents, as well as students. The first lecture is scheduled for January 26, 2023, 7-9PM. The topic will be ocean plastic with speakers to include our own Lee Maxwell and hopefully a rep from Plastic Ocean Project.

Last Plastic Straw: Lee Maxwell

Margaret again commended Lee on a great presentation for town council. Lee shared he received positive feedback from councilman Bach. Lee commented he would like assistance with area printing companies to print certificates for the restaurants who meet the criteria.

Pam made a motion to proceed with working with John Bach on a resolution for the Last Plastic Straw initiative. Chris seconded and the motion was passed.

The Living Shoreline at Veterans Park: Elise Snavely

Elise shared that Ted Wilgis from NCCF is fairly certain the organization would fund the sign and the bags for the living shoreline at Veterans Park.

Margaret asked Elise if she would present a short three minute Living Shoreline proposal to the town council. Elise agreed.

Recycling: Sue Davidson

Sue attended the Nefarious Plants lecture at Harper library. BHI conservancy is also updating native planting lists.

She emailed Rose Braam about DOT signage directed at residents.

She has kept Barbee library supplied with 5 or so RR placards weekly.

There is now signage in Food Lion OKI encouraging reusable bags.

Her current focus is on residents during off season, just chatting folks up and distribution of RR placards.

BPSI/AAH: Skip

To save time, Skip will submit report via email.

Web Presence: Allen Dearry, David Sonnenfeld

Allen and David Sonnenfeld recommend using the Southport Forestry website as a model. Committee items that would be posted include minutes, projects, other resources etc. They are open to everyone's input before meeting with Mike.

Margaret asked their thoughts about expanding on what is already there.

David Sonnenfeld commented that having a website would bring visibility and offer input for the community.

Lee commented this would be a great platform to acknowledge businesses that meet Ocean Friendly Establishment criteria.

Margaret asked if David Sonnenfeld and Allen are equipped technically for this project. Allen said they are for design and content but neither of them are website creators.

David Sonnenfeld commented that after talking to Mike, they will have more details for the committee.

Chris made a motion for David Sonnenfeld and Allen to work with Mike and report back to the committee. The motion was seconded and passed.

New Business

David Merkle suggested town staff provide the committee information on the permitting process. Margaret will approach Steve about a presentation for the committee.

Presentation by Gloria Putnam of the NC Sea Grant on the Coastal Landscape Initiative, via Zoom. (See Carolina for PowerPoint)

Margaret thanked Gloria for her presentation. The committee looks forward to incorporating these principles and collaborating with the organization.

Gloria noted when looking at Oak Island tree ordinance online, the town is using one of their older documents. Carolina informed her the ordinance is currently being reviewed and updated documents have been incorporated.

Maureen asked about funding to have brochures available, perhaps as part of Oak Island permitting process. Gloria said that would probably involve a re-print.

Gloria also suggested the potential business opportunities for landscapers and designers as more property owners are researching and requesting native landscaping.

Meeting was adjourned at 10AM