

Environmental Advisory Committee Minutes
January 19, 2023

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

Staff: Brady Golden, Rick Patterson

Visitors: Elise Snavelly, Mert Wray, Derek Williams, Phil Dudley, Sue Dudley, Bill Craft

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM

Pam made a motion to accept the agenda, Chris seconded and the agenda was approved.

David Merkle made a motion to accept the December minutes, Chris seconded and the December minutes were approved.

Announcements

Margaret announced that Brady Golden will now be the EAC staff liaison.

Sue Davidson, volunteer, will be taking a sabbatical from the EAC and focusing on Citizens Academy.

David Sonnenfeld and Allen requested that agenda items be submitted by Wednesday, one week prior to the meeting for posting on the website.

David Merkle requested making exceptions for urgent items. Margaret said items may be added to the agenda by making a motion at the meeting.

Margaret suggested, in general, letters to residents be less wordy, perhaps bullet points with an attachment with additional information following.

Carolina announced the results of her informal poll on displaying the tree city banner/flag that showed support for asking council to display the tree city banner/flag.

Staff Report: Brady, Rick

Brady will look into the process for getting letters to residents approved.

He announced that the rumor that wetlands will be used for paid parking is incorrect.

Up-to-date information on the paid parking program is available on the website.

Rick distributed a packet with the current draft of the tree ordinance revisions.

He said the current ordinance is not working and is difficult to enforce. He met with an EAC tree subcommittee last fall. The initial purpose was to make basic changes to the ordinance that do not represent industry standards. Challenges include small lots with big houses being

constructed, NC PL 496 pending which favors property owners rights over tree ordinances. (He mentioned Council has expressed an interest in seeking an exemption but the current ordinance is not effective.) Additional challenges include some fees were more than the state allows and lean staff to process over 1000 permits per year.

Changes include condensing to one page the list of native trees and plants for credit. This also allows nurseries to be stocked. Giving more credits for established shade trees. The land permit is doubled to a \$300 fee. If trees are left standing the fee is \$150. If no trees, the extra \$150 would go to a tree fund for planting trees on town property. If a lot is clear cut the fee is \$300 and the extra \$150 would go to a tree fund for planting trees on town property.

There have been changes to the initial draft. These include removing no planting July/August and one year check of trees on properties.

Lee Maxwell asked if the CO is withheld if the applicant is not compliant with the tree ordinance. Brady confirmed but he is not certain of how many or if COs have been withheld.

Derek Williams shared his email with suggestions for higher fees to fund administration/enforcement. However, fees may be limited by the state.

Rick does not intend to reconvene the subcommittee to seek input. He intends to work with town management and report back to the committee.

The town continues to replace Bradford Pears with native trees. Rick will get a list of tree locations to contact neighbors regarding watering. Brady will check on use of the town letterhead as well as getting approval of letter content from town.

Old Business

Smart Yards: David Merkle

David Merkle suggested the committee re-examine strategies for attracting property owners to apply for the designation.

Lecture Series: Pam, Maureen

The rental contract for the 801 Event Center was signed by town staff but not until early January. The lecture has been advertised in the Current and the State Port Pilot and is featured on the POP website upcoming events calendar. She expressed that having a registration would be helpful. She looked up old minutes and it appears attendance averaged around 50. When held at the REC center, the front desk would keep track of registration. She has discussed the possibility of registration on the new website with David and Allen.

Maureen met with Lisa from the 801 Event Center and discussed set-up. There will be seating for 40, more can be added quickly if necessary. There will be 4 tables to display EAC materials. The Event Center staff have the tree city banner and will display.

Carolina asked about future topics. The subcommittee has discussed speakers on native plants and trees, hopefully in conjunction with approval of a revised ordinance. The subcommittee has leads on speakers from NC Cooperative Extension and UNCW.

Pam made a motion to use funds from the stormwater outreach and education budget to pay speaker fees. Lee seconded and the motion was passed.

Website: David Sonnefeld, Allen Dearry

David announced EAC members will get a link to the website. He reiterated **Do Not Share this link with anyone outside EAC**. He reviewed how items have initially been grouped. Some members have submitted content. Content approval will go through Margaret. They hope to get the site available to the public in February. They also hope to do some field testing. Margaret thanked David Sonnenfeld and Allen for their time and efforts. She reminded committee members that submissions take time and to submit ASAP.

Arbor Day/Earth Day: Carolina

Carolina shared several handouts:

Arbor Day April 13 & Earth Day April 14 2023

• Thursday April 13, 2023 Official TOKI Arbor Day TOKIAD

Tree City USA 25th Anniversary Year end Celebration @ Veterans Park

To fulfill Tree City USA requirement #4

Action Items for EAC Meeting Jan 19th 2023 : 1) Decide on TOKIAD Program agenda:

• Publicize Town Support for municipal Native tree planting, and inform the public about our new ongoing Town of Oak Island Live Oak Reforestation /Bartlett Pear Bounty Program (TOKILOR/BPB)?

• Publicize how Town is providing annual Hands –on Outdoor Environmental Educational Opportunities for Students and Volunteers SBMSJHSMiddle School and BCC Early College High school Plant Club participation (Make Short film for website?)

• Celebrate the accomplishments Town has made toward a sustainable Tree Canopy during this past 25th anniversary year of our Tree City 2022

2) Assign teams/individual committee members who volunteer to be responsible for

• Decide on and invite Administrative Support: Mayor and select Council Reps etc

• Reserve Mike Emory and PA, invite Press and do press release, Currents other outlets, TV?

• Coordinate with Forester/Planner Schools, Public Works and Stormwater Staff for deciding on species native plant landscape design and timing for Veterans Park Native demonstration plantings Living Shoreline and Main Street Live Oak plantings with volunteer s

• Check funding/donations for flagpole or alternative method of display for Tree City USA Flags?

• Write and have EAC Approve a Letter about the TOKI Bartlett Pear Bounty/LiveOak Reforestation Program to Recruit businesses and local citizens near selected tree planting sites to water them or provide water source for other volunteers to use.

• Friday April 14th

Parks and Recreation Dept sponsored: Earth Day Celebration

Middleton Park Maureen to invite Erik to speak to us

EAC members must register in advance for each booth we want to have

IN Past have had several booths, Please sign up to take responsibility to register the booth you want to have with your volunteer team to staff it.

1. focused on SMARTYARD recruitment and education in things DIY homeowners can do,

2. for kids and adults in What is water pollution and why is storm water runoff bad?

3. This year perhaps a3rd booth For new straw initiative, plastic and recycling education?

4. Booth Focused on recruiting for Adopt a Tree Program, education on OKI Native Tree preservation and suggested landscaping for new homes, TOKI Bartlett Pear Bounty Program handouts

5. Other?.

- April 22 National Earth Day
- April 28th National Arbor Day

Additional Dates will be scheduled for Town Sponsored Live Oak Reforestation /Bounty plantings on the main road. We will need to educate and recruit community members, Students and TreePeace folks to step in and care/water each one over next months as Rick gradually obtains larger Live Oaks to plant on Town properties, and educate them about doing it on private properties as well.

Carolina also shared an initial draft letter and tree adoption papers to be approved by staff.

Skip the Straw: Lee Maxwell

Lee shared the initiative material from the printer. He also shared sample packets. Materials are ready to print pending town approval. Although the preferred method of communicating with restaurants is by email, the committee has been unable to gather a comprehensive list of email addresses.

Margaret suggested reworking the letter with perhaps bullet points.

Talking points for restaurant visits will be available.

Living Shoreline: Elise Snavelly

Councilman Craft has agreed to present this EAC initiative. Margaret and Elise will prepare a presentation for the Town Council meeting on February 13

Elise shared that Bonnie Mitchell from NCCF would like to schedule a date for the training on a Friday in late February or early March. She also suggested a town wide celebration.

Adopt a Highway

Margaret reminded the committee that Skip Cox is relocating to Greensboro. He has contacted several volunteers about taking over his role. Maureen shared that he does plan to organize and participate in the March AAH pick up.

New Business

Margaret shared that she has suggested recognition for Skip Cox. He may not be eligible for the Tree to Sea award because he is on staff. Bill Craft said if he is not eligible, the town will find something else. Carolina suggested perhaps planting a tree.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM