

Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) Minutes

March 14, 2024

Present: Margaret Johnson (Chairperson), Lee Maxwell (Vice Chairperson), Elise Snavelly, Allen Dearry, Sue Davidson, David Sonnenfeld, Jeweleen Mustard, Vacant, Vacant

Absent: None

Staff: Brady Golden, Rick Patterson

Guests Hon. Bill Craft, Maureen Burns, Amanda Burns

Meeting called to order at 0830hrs.

- **Motion to Accept Meeting Agenda-** 1. Sue Davidson 2. Elise Snavelly
Approved: 5 of 7 Approved
- **Motion to Accept September 2023 Minutes-** 1. Lee Maxwell 2. Sue Davidson
Approved Unanimously

Open Discussion

- **Discussion of February 13th Event- Cancellation of EAC Briefing to the Oak Island Town Council-** The EAC Chairperson, Margaret Johnson, facilitated a discussion between the Hon. Bill Craft, attending town staff and EAC members.

Mr. Craft started the discussion by describing the town manager's called meeting at approximately 1:30 pm on Feb 13, regarding his confusion of the EAC presentation (see Appendix 1) to Town Council planned for later that evening regarding the Sustainable Economic Development (SED). David Kelly (Town Manager), Lisa Stites (Town Clerk), Rick Patterson (Stormwater Chief), Brady Golden, and Councilman Bill Craft attended that meeting in person. Councilman Bob Ciullo attended the meeting by phone. EAC was not represented. The Town Manager had the view that EAC was not staying within the bounds of their mission statement and that the EAC mission is to support the stormwater initiatives and Tree City initiatives, and initiatives approved by TC. Two initiatives approved by TC, Plastic Straws and Living Shoreline, were not included. It was determined that neither the TC nor the Town Manager canceled the planned February 13th EAC briefing to Town Council, but it was an executive decision by the Chair in light of the confusion surrounding the matter and Mr. Craft's opinion that he thought some other Town Council members also viewed the EAC briefing - the SED portion of the briefing - as negative/hostile and "poisoning the air." She stated she was trying to keep EAC within TC, Town Manager, and as well as her perceived EAC mission statement bounds as expanded by TC with the other approved initiatives and to avoid further diminishment of the good will the EAC has gradually created with them.

A discussion ensued with each committee member responding to the situation as outlined by Mr. Craft. Some EAC members believe that the intent of the EAC briefing was misinterpreted and not fully or fairly represented to TC or town staff. The SED portion of the EAC briefing was meant to: (1) explain the genesis of SED, (2) to be forwarding thinking as a more responsible-environmentally friendly way

forward in land development, (3) to present SED educational ideas, and (4) to explain the possible beneficial financial and technical assistance opportunities regarding SED. It was never meant to be hostile or to imply TC or Town Staff were not being responsible stewards of Oak Island. No clarification of issues with the EAC briefing was requested from the EAC briefers even though Mr. Craft stated that he was informed of the Feb 13 1:30pm meeting on Feb 12. They also believe that the EAC has stayed within the posted EAC mission statement as represented on the Oak Island Town Website.

Bottomline is that: (1) the overall communication process, both within EAC and between EAC and town staff/council, is broken or ineffective; (2) The EAC mission statement (i.e., as posted on the Oak Island Website), as perceived by TC and Town Staff, and the EAC members, do not align. It should be noted that EAC has previously provided a draft revised charter to town staff; this was also included in the aborted Feb13 presentation to TC; and (3) EAC members are volunteers. As such they should be respected as volunteers for their contribution of their time and talent. Town Council should be afforded the same by the EAC members. And the town staff should be afforded the same by EAC members. In the February 13th briefing cancellation incident there was a lack of communication and respect to volunteers.

Staff Report

- **Mr. Brady Golden-** He reported that an EAC related Brochure needs updated at the Oak Island Recreation Center.
- **Mr. Rick Patterson (Stormwater Chief)-** Rick attended the EAC meeting and provided brief updates on his projects: contractor outreach program, Friends of Stormwater awards initiative, and the Tree City USA initiative. Rick stated that he wants EAC “to provide troops on the ground” for his stormwater work.

Old Business

- **Arbor Day- Planning-** Arbor Day is on April 26th and will be celebrated in conjunction with Tree City USA events. The team led by Elise Snavelly (EAC) has met twice to plan the Arbor Day celebration. The celebration will be held at the Oak Island Nature Center in late afternoon from 3:30 -6:30 pm. The Recreation Center will provide chair and tables. There will be about eight (8) organizations setting up informational tables (e.g., Tree Peace, Citizens for Responsible Growth, Brunswick County Master Gardeners, ...etc.). The EAC Arbor Day team is planning a scavenger hunt, tree related craft, and a tree planting. The event has been advertised using a number of advertising outlets (e.g., OKI Town Calendar, EAC website, The State Port Pilot, ...etc.). More to come. (Elise Snavelly, Jeweleen Mustard, David Sonnenfeld)
- **NCCF- Living Shoreline March 9th Event -** The March 9th Living Shoreline was well attended and successfully completed. There were 15 volunteers who picked up about 100lbs of trash and reset 200 linear feet of Oyster bags during a lull in the rain. A reporter from The State Port Pilot chronicled the event in their March 13th paper.

Photographs from the event will be posted on the EAC webpage. The next cleanup event will be on May 4th (May the Force be with you). Reference the schedule on the EAC website for the future cleanup events.

Elise Snavelly is working with Scott Thornall, Public Works Director, to get the current oyster bags upgraded to a more wake resilient option. The current oyster bags are deteriorating due to a high wake action on the Intercoastal Waterway (IW). More to come.

The approved 2024 Living Shoreline maintenance schedule **was** added to the EAC webpage. (Elise Snavelly)

- **EAC Sustainable Economic Development (SED) Team** (Lee Maxwell, Jeweleen Mustard, Allen Dearry) – **Green Growth Toolbox (GGT)**- GGT is a guide/framework to provide North Carolina counties, towns, and cities with tools for growth that conserves wildlife and natural resources. Lee contacted Alisa Davis from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to inquire about the next offering of the GGT training. Once Lee finds out when the next offering will be presented, near the end of April 2024, he will inform EAC. For more information on GGT reference the NCWRC website (ncwildlife.com >> Conserving >Programs >Green Growth Toolbox) (Lee Maxwell)
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- **EAC Vacancies**- As of the March EAC meeting there are two (2) open EAC vacancies.

New Business

None.

Meeting was Adjourned at 10:30 am

Motion: *There was a Motion made to adjourn the March 2024 EAC meeting.* The motion was made by Sue Davidson and seconded by Jeweleen Mustard. Approved- Unanimously.

Minutes compiled and submitted by: David Sonnenfeld

Appendix 1: *EAC_3 Meeting Minutes Appendix _132024 TC Brief_031424*

Appendix 2: *The State Port Pilot article regarding March 9th Living shoreline cleanup at Veteran's Park.*

Oak Island Environmental Advisory Committee

Little rain doesn't stop living shoreline project

By Eliot Duke
Staff Writer

Heavy rains washed out the Oak Island Environmental Advisory Committee's (EAC) last living shoreline cleanup of 2023, putting a damper on the end a very productive year.

The EAC's March 9 cleanup kickoff for 2024 at Veterans Park also looked very much in doubt, as downpours moved across the area throughout much of the morning. Facing a decision of whether or not to hold the event, EAC member Elise Snaveley rolled the dice, trusted a favorable forecast and was rewarded with a larger than expected crowd of volunteers who were eager to help make up for lost time.

Helping the shoreline

"It's a great turnout," Snaveley said. "I'm really pleased with how many people we've got out here today. I was being a little overly optimistic, but I'm glad we didn't cancel."

"Oak Island really cares and I love it." In 2023, EAC volunteers collected and removed more than 1,000 pounds of trash from the living oyster shoreline and surrounding marsh area along the Intracoastal Waterway at Veterans Park. More than a dozen volunteers of all ages again showed up with their boots and gloves on, ready to wade through the muddy marsh picking up trash and shoving around bags of oyster shells.

"I'm trying to do my part to help keep the environment healthy and free of trash," said Oak Islander Sue Dudley. "It's good exercise, it's fun and you get to meet people. I think people are getting more involved and getting more interested in wanting to understand what we're about," Dudley added. "We're bigger than just some place to come sit at the beach, and we want to take care of it."

Volunteers focused much of their efforts on re-stacking the oyster bags that make up the 200-foot long living shoreline. High tides and boat traffic displace the bags over time, and participants were tasked with rebuilding what is intended to be a natural wave barrier.

"We're getting up the bags from the marsh and moving them back on to the oyster reef sill," said Snaveley. "That way, the bags can do their best job of breaking those wave energies that destroy the marsh area. We've almost certainly lost some bags to the Intracoastal Waterway since the shoreline was installed in 2013."

Cleanups in 2024

Last year's washout left plenty to do, making the large turnout even more important.

Eric Dosharm, who retired to Oak Island after spending a career with North Carolina State Parks, participated in a living shoreline cleanup last year.

"I'm just coming out here to lend a hand and help with this restoration project," Dosharm stated. "I have an appreciation for nature, and I look for opportunities to come out and help."

Chris Riegert, an Oak Islander who also is involved with Citizens for Progressive Development, supports the living shoreline initiative and would like to see it grow.

"I think it's great," Riegert said. "I think it works in this area, but the problem is it's not expansive enough."

Four cleanups have been scheduled for 2024 and Snaveley is hoping Oak Island Town Council decides to update the shore-



Photos by Eliot Duke

Volunteers with the Oak Island Environmental Advisory Committee dodge the raindrops March 9 at Veterans Park for the year's first living shoreline cleanup.



line with a heavier material that would limit how much the bags are able to move around. Snaveley also is a coastal ambassador with the N.C. Coastal Federation, a nonprofit organization that works with coastal residents and visitors to protect and restore the state's coast. Last year the organization helped install some new bags of heavier marine limestone, but Snaveley

said it's reluctant to add more oyster shells if they're getting displaced to this extent.

"(N.C. Coastal Federation) decided that since this shoreline really needs updating anyway, they don't want to just dump more stuff and more plastic, which unfortunately these bags are," said Snaveley. "They're not going to degrade, but the oyster shells are very sharp and can cut them open

and move around. The Coastal Federation doesn't intend to put more oyster bags out just because they're not staying put."

EAC's next living shoreline cleanup is scheduled at Veterans Park, 1408 E Yacht Drive, for May 4 at 10:30 a.m.