

Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) Minutes

April 4, 2024

Present: Margaret Johnson (Chairperson), Lee Maxwell (Vice Chairperson), Elise Snively, Jeweleen Mustard, Vacant, Vacant, Vacant

Absent: Sue Davidson, David Sonnenfeld

Staff: Brady Golden, Rick Patterson

Guests: Maureen Burns, Lee Butzin, Jane Kulesza, Mayor Liz White, Representatives from Beach Ambassadors

Meeting called to order at 8:35 am ET.

➤ **Motion to Accept Meeting Agenda** 1. Lee Maxwell 2. Jeweleen Mustard
Approved Unanimously

➤ **Motion to Accept March 2024 Minutes** 1. N/A 2. N/A

After careful consideration and discussion, **it was decided to table the vote** until the committee receives follow-up from town staff and members have had the opportunity to review any revisions proposed. This decision was made to ensure that all pertinent information is thoroughly examined, and any potential revisions are duly considered before proceeding with the vote.

Introduction of Guests

➤ **Mayor Liz White:** Mayor Liz White attended the meeting to address concerns regarding the mission of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) and the historical context behind the narrowing of perspective. She highlighted the prevailing struggle with mission-related matters, noting a fragmentation in communication channels between the council and various committees, and emphasized the imperative to rectify this issue.

- ❖ The discussion encompassed an elucidation of the committee structure within the governmental framework of Oak Island. It was delineated into two facets: administrative and policy. The administrative aspect comprises town staff, such as the town manager, while the policy dimension involves the representation of the populace through the town council. Committees and boards, therefore, serve as conduits for formulating ideas and presenting them to the council. Currently, the overarching mission centers around stormwater management and the promotion of Oak Island as a 'Tree City.'
- ❖ Acknowledging the convoluted nature of the existing system, Mayor White underscored the challenges faced by new members in comprehending this intricate process. It was proposed that new members undergo an orientation followed by a comprehensive presentation of rules and educational materials delineating work priorities and methodologies to support various initiatives and tasks pertinent to their respective committees.
- ❖ Mayor White advocated for the utilization of available resources, citing individuals such as Rick Patterson and Brady Golden, in addition to resources offered by the state of North Carolina outlining the delineation of roles and responsibilities of boards and committees. Recognizing the current issues as stemming from miscommunication,

Mayor White enumerated the priorities for the EAC. Foremost among these priorities is meeting the needs of the council, followed by the overarching mission imperatives of Tree City and stormwater management. She emphasized the pivotal role of the EAC in ensuring the fulfillment of these objectives. Mayor White lauded the diligent efforts of the council while advocating for a holistic approach, entailing dialogues, explanations, and feedback from boards and committees.

- ❖ Mayor White appealed for patience from EAC members and proposed the organization of a dedicated meeting to facilitate discussions on ideas and commitments towards the betterment of Oak Island.

➤ **Lee Butzin:** Provided a comprehensive overview of the historical background pertaining to the formation and evolution of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). He elucidated that the EAC emerged from the amalgamation of four distinct boards, namely the Stormwater Board, Green Initiative Advisory Board, Tree City Board, and Estuary Shoreline Stabilization Board. This consolidation aimed to streamline efforts and enhance efficiency in addressing environmental concerns within our community.

- ❖ Historically, the EAC facilitated volunteer engagement through meetings, working groups, and educational sessions. However, tensions arose, particularly concerning educational initiatives and collaborations with town staff. Lee Butson highlighted various projects undertaken by the EAC, including the High Pickup Project, Adopt a Highway, Marsh Pickups, Smart Yards, and Recycling Initiatives. He underscored the importance of securing funding, which occasionally led to tensions during interactions with the council. Nonetheless, he acknowledged notable successes in securing funds through collaborations with entities such as the Public Works Department, Coastal Federation, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, and Oak Island Recreation Center.
- ❖ Lee Butson also referenced unsuccessful endeavors, such as efforts to obtain state testing data on water quality. He provided a chronological overview spanning from 2013 to 2021, delineating the trajectory of the EAC's initiatives and engagements during this period.

➤ **Jane Kulesza:** Assumed a pivotal role in spearheading the Tree City initiative in 2005. She played a significant part in drafting the town's inaugural tree ordinance, a milestone achievement facilitated by the successful installation of the sewer system. Jane emphasized the collaborative efforts of the Tree City group in advancing educational initiatives aimed at the community. Noting the previous Tree City Committees / EACs as working towards Tree City Growth Awards, which are above and beyond just staying certified as a Tree City. Notably, she highlighted the publication "Trees for Oak Island," which serves as a comprehensive guide outlining native flora species on the island.

- ❖ Jane underscored the symbiotic relationship between the Tree City group and Oak Island Beautification, citing their close collaboration on various activities, including cleanup drives. It was noted that the Tree City group functioned not merely as an advisory body but also as a proactive advocate for tree-centric initiatives on the island.

➤ **Beach Ambassadors:** Representatives from the Beach Ambassadors program attended the meeting to address concerns regarding the realignment of communication channels. It was

noted that there appears to be a perceived lack of leadership within the organization, leading to confusion among members regarding the appropriate points of contact. Additionally, there was a query regarding the status of collected T-shirts and name tags from the previous year.

- ❖ Discussion ensued regarding the need for a dedicated point of contact for the Beach Ambassadors within the town staff. Clarification on this matter was sought to streamline communication and ensure effective coordination between the Beach Ambassadors program and relevant administrative entities.

Motion: There was a Motion made that the EAC approve Margaret Johnson researching the organization of the Beach Ambassadors program and follow-up on behalf of the EAC.

1. Lee Maxwell
2. Jeweleen Mustard

Approved Unanimously

Announcements

➤ **Upcoming Living Shoreline Event:** Scheduled for 10:30 AM - noon on Saturday, May 4th at Veterans Park. *Announced by Elise Snavelly.*

➤ **Conservation Conversations** will take place at the Nature Center during the summer months from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM on the first Friday of each month. The Recreation Center has extended an invitation for the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) to participate in these sessions during June, July, and August. *Announced by Elise Snavelly.*

Motion: There was a Motion made that the EAC participate in the conservation conversations during the specified months.

1. Elise Snavelly
2. Jeweleen Mustard

Approved Unanimously

Reports from Staff

➤ **Brady Golden:** Provided an update on the upcoming Oak Island LandUse Revision plan which will be an open meeting, indicating that further details will be shared with the committee once available.

➤ **Rick Patterson (Stormwater Chief):** Rick presented a grant support letter to Margaret for her signature. This letter pertains to grant funding for the procurement of live oak trees. The deadline for submission was noted to be the fourth of the month.

- ❖ Rick informed the committee of a budget allocation of \$4000 designated for activities supporting stormwater education by the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC).
- ❖ It was mentioned that a tree watering group convenes on Sundays to water newly planted trees situated on the west end of the island.
- ❖ Rick announced that the groundbreaking ceremony for the dune infiltration project is scheduled to take place within the next week. He urged EAC members to prepare educational activities and brochures for the event. Further details will be provided in due course.
- ❖ There was no update provided regarding the distribution of Friends of Storm placards to participating local businesses.

➤ **Bill Craft (Town Council Liaison):** *Absent.*

Old Business

➤ **Earth Day/Arbor Day, 4/26/2024:** Arbor Day celebrations are scheduled for April 26th from 3:30 PM to 6:30 PM at the Nature Center. Invitations have been distributed, and various groups have been invited to participate. Activities have been meticulously planned, with set-up beginning at 3:00 PM and take-down until 7:00 PM. *Details provided by Elise Snavelly, Jeweleen Mustard.*

➤ **Spring Fling, 4/13/2024:** The Spring Fling event has been rescheduled to the 13th of the month. Margaret Johnson will investigate further to obtain additional details regarding this event in lieu of Sue Davidson.

➤ **EAC Mission/Activities/Initiatives:** Discussion regarding mission activities and initiatives was postponed for a future meeting.

➤ **Green Growth Toolbox (GGT):** The "Greene Growth Toolbox" initiative from the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Center, spearheaded by Alicia Davis, is pending a finalization of the date. Once details are confirmed, they will be promptly shared with the committee. *Details provided by Lee Maxwell.*

Action Items

➤ **Committee Member Contact Information Update:** Lee Maxwell has a new email address, LeeMaxwell165@gmail.com

New Business

➤ **BHI Conservancy Coastal Sustainability Symposium, 4/9/2024:** Lee Maxwell discussed the upcoming Bald Head Island Conservancy Coastal Sustainability Symposium scheduled for April 9th. This symposium, which is a recurring event conducted over several years, is dedicated to the themes of development and preservation. It aligns closely with the objectives of the Environmental Advisory Committee's (EAC) Sustainable Economic Development Subcommittee. The symposium aims to provide valuable insights to the public, highlighting the efforts of various communities engaged in similar endeavors.

Adjournment at 10:40 am ET.

➤ **Motion to Adjourn**
Approved Unanimously

1. Elise Snavelly

2. Lee Maxwell

Minutes compiled and submitted by: Jeweleen Mustard

Appendix

Appendix 1:

NCCF, Living Shoreline Events

- ❖ Spring: May 4, 10:30-12:00 *Alt. Date/Time: May 25, 15:00-16:30*
- ❖ Summer: September 21, 16:30-18:00 *Alt. Date/Time: September 28, 11:00-12:30*
- ❖ Fall: November 16, 13:30-15:30 *Alt. Date/Time: November 30, 12:30-14:30*

Appendix 2:

Third Annual Johnston Coastal Sustainability Symposium – April 9, 2024.

<https://bhic.org/conservation/coastal-sustainability/>

Appendix 3:

THE TOWN OF OAK ISLAND

Arbor Day Celebration

Mark your calendars and join us for an afternoon of fun!

Activities include a scavenger hunt, where participants will get to learn about the OKI Tree Preservation Project along with face painting and an arts & crafts activity.

Local groups will be on hand, offering valuable information and resources on a variety of topics.

It's a chance for the community to come together, learn, and celebrate Arbor Day.

We hope to see you there!

*Friday, April 26th 3:30-6:30 PM
Oak Island Nature Center
5202 E Yacht Dr, Oak Island, NC 28465*

