

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT & NATUARAL ASSETS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ENA)
Wednesday, November 29, 2023
Conference Room, Admin. Bldg. – 1000

Present: Tim Peck (Chair), Brian Burgess, Anne O'Connell, John Maziuk, Pat Benner (online), Patty Gamby, Patricia Garcia, Don Wolski, Jeff Heavner (Board Liaison). Karen Detter excused.

Call to Order: Tim Peck called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

Chairman's comments: Tim reminded the committee that the meeting is being recorded as part of normal Ocean Pines Association (OPA) business practice. Member applications have been approved by the Board. Karen Detter and Anne O'Connell have been approved for third terms. Brian Burgess and Don Wolski are new members of the committee. The new members introduced themselves and briefly noted their background related to environmental issues.

Public Comments: None

Approval of Agenda: Motion by *Patty Gamby*, seconded by *Anne O'Connell* and approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by *Patricia Garcia*, seconded by *Patty Gamby* and approved unanimously.

ONGOING PROJECTS

- South Pond Buffer/Erosion Plan – Grant approval is with the U.S. EPA for final federal approval of funding.
- Habitat modification for South Gate pond – we await response from OPA on acceptance of Tributaries company proposal for shoreline vegetation planting.
- Outstanding issues with OPA: planning for pond shoreline remediation; approval for installation of fishing-line tubes at South Pond; planting new trees in White Horse Park; annual goose egg addling.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Management of duck/goose warning signs at South Gate pond – The committee edited a standard operating procedure (SOP) for members to follow including quarterly assignments for members to maintain the signs. Patty Gamby will provide a map attachment that shows where the signs are located. This is SOP#1 by the ENA Committee. The committee discussed the possible support by Ocean Pines public works to store the signs during the winter, even though some geese congregate in the area year-round. There is some benefit of the seasonal placement to maintain the high profile of the signs to the public during the warmer seasons.
In a follow-up action, Anne O'Connell emailed on 2 December that two signs are now missing. Tim Peck sent an inquiry to info@oceanpines.org asking about the missing signs. The OPA response on 4 December indicated that the signs were re-positioned by OPA due to a potential safety issue.
- Route 90 Pond trail improvements: the committee discussed the status of nature information signs project that is now referred to the Recreation and Parks (R&P) committee.

In a follow-up to this meeting, Tim Peck contacted R&P on their interest including providing previously drafted concepts for the signs. R&P replied on 29 November with the question if the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) could provide some support on the signs. Tim then contacted MCBP on the issue. With the available draft concepts, MCBP will research how they can support the project. It is likely that R&P will lead this effort for OPA, perhaps working with ENA.

- Nuts about acorns: Patricia Garcia updated the Maryland DNR tree nursery program for “five million trees please” initiative. This program will be a new project for ENA to inform residents about obtaining and planting tree saplings across Ocean Pines. Brian Burgess noted that waterfront property owners can obtain free tree saplings from a county facility in Berlin.
- Turtle sanctuaries: Patty Gamby is drafting an ENA statement to recommend actions be taken to install large, cut logs or other natural methods in the larger ponds.

NEW BUSINESS

- OPA website information on ENA: Tim Peck noted that the OPA website information on ENA purpose and meeting documentation could be updated and enhanced. This updating will be a future project.
- ENA statement of yard waste disposal: Patricia Garcia completed an ENA statement about leaf refuse accumulation in OP, concerns on the refuse company servicing OPA and the disposition of yard waste, and the disposal of leaves by residents. This statement was submitted to OPA in early November 2023 while the new refuse company contract is being considered.

In a follow-up to this meeting, John Maziuk visited the Public Works yard where leaves are stockpiled. Residents must empty their bags at this yard if they use plastic bags. John learned that the bulk leaves are trucked to Frankford, DE for mulching and disposal.

- Greenstreet article: a topic for the next article was suggested to be about pond algae. Since John Maziuk previously composed an article on this subject for the Sierra Club, we can use a version of it for the Greenstreet article. John will submit a new draft. Future topics could include further guidance on leaf disposal in the fall such as not using plastic bags.
- OPA Resolution C-10: the committee reviewed the C-10 statement concerning the functions of the ENA committee. Edits made previously by Pat Benner were accepted. This edited version was provided to Jeff Heavner to be submitted to OPA for updating records.
- Strategic plan: the committee reviewed and edited a current draft of the ENA committee strategic plan. This one-page plan provides a synopsis on the significant issues that ENA is working on during the year, which can be used as an efficient communication statement to Ocean Pines. The plan will be finalized for distribution.
- Ocean Pines Day Kickoff and Expo Event 2024: representing ENA, on 27 November Tim Peck attended an OPA workgroup meeting on the Kickoff event. This event is expected to include many non-profit groups, businesses, and community groups from the region in April 2024 at White Horse Park. The OPA advisory committees are invited to participate. The ENA committee discussed how we could participate and the kinds of exhibits we would show to educate residents and visitors about local environmental issues. Exhibit ideas were diverse: handouts showing the ENA purpose and accomplishments, the fish-gear tube prototype, information on plogging and recycling, and a water tank holding oysters obtained from the cages set up in the Ocean Pines canals. The committee will work on these exhibits in early 2024 in preparation for the event.
- December meeting: the committee discussed the need for a December meeting considering that the last two weeks are occupied with holiday activities and travel by most members. Given the late November meeting date, there was a motion to skip the meeting: Motion by *Patricia Garcia*, seconded by *Patty Gamby* and approved by a 7 to 1 vote.

DICUSSION

- Don Wolski noted that an invasive species removal volunteer event organized by MCBP was scheduled for 2 December and opportunity to participate. In a follow-up call with MCBP, Tim learned that this event was canceled due to low sign-up numbers.
- Brian Burgess noted the free tree sapling offering located in Berlin (as detailed above).
- In a follow-up call to MCBP on 1 December, Tim Peck talked to Carly Toulan of MCBP about how ENA could work with MCBP on some of the issues outlined above. Issues include future volunteers for invasive species removal events and water quality testing, possible support on nature signs in the parks, support on enforcement of the Maryland Critical Area regulations, and an invitation for MCBP to attend the 28 February ENA meeting to discuss these and other issues. Carly noted that another organization called Lower Shore Land Trust could be contacted to consult on environmental issues in Ocean Pines. Ultimately, such environmental agency networking could result in a future townhall held in Ocean Pines that focused on local environmental issues.
- In a follow-up call to Assateague Coastal Trust (ACT) on 1 December, Tim Peck talked to Brenda Davis of ACT about interaction with ENA including volunteers to support water quality monitoring in Ocean Pines. Brenda is working on funding grants to expand the monitoring program. Concerning the Critical Area regulations and tree removal on waterfront lots, she noted that the local Critical Area Commission has been reviewing this issue with the County. There was an invitation to attend the 27 March ENA meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOD (vis BOD Liaison)

- Request possible PW assistance with seasonal storage of geese/duck signs.
- Possibly start monitoring of the number of trees removed in Ocean Pines as documented in permits to track the numbers of trees removed over time.

ACTION ITEMS

- Draft ENA statement on turtle sanctuaries: Patty Gamby.
- Contact ACT and MCBP: Tim Peck. (completed 1 December)
- Map for SOP#1: Patty Gamby.

Date of next meeting – January 24, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the Administration Bldg. Conference Room. Meetings will continue to follow a 4th Wednesday schedule each month for the year.

Adjourn: Motion by *Don Wolski* and seconded by *Brian Burgess*.

Meeting adjourned at 1210.