

Minutes: OPA Environment & Natural Assets Advisory Committee Meeting August 28, 2024

Present: Pat Garcia (Temporary chair), Brian Burgess, Patty Gamby, Anne O'Connell, John Maziuk, Don Wolski, Karen Detter, Pat Benner

Present online: Jeff Heavner (Board Liaison), Cindy Hoffman (*Ocean Pines Progress*), John Latham (Board Secretary)

Call to Order: Pat Garcia called the meeting to order at 10:05am

Pat Garcia asked for a volunteer to run nominations and voting for a new Chairperson. Patty Gamby volunteered to do so. Patty Gamby nominated Pat Garcia for Chair. Brian Burgess seconded the nomination. Pat Garcia noted that she is not a full-time OP resident and, as such, nominated Brian Burgess as Vice Chair. Patty Gamby seconded the nomination. Patty Gamby asked if there were further nominations for Chair or Vice Chair. There were none. Patty Gamby conducted voting. Voting was unanimous for Pat Garcia as Chair and Brian Burgess for Vice Chair.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Status on Maintenance of Goose/Duck Crossing Signs

Pat Garcia asked Jeff Heavner for clarification of the Committee's responsibility with respect to the goose/duck crossing signs. Jeff said that he had sent Tim Peck an email clarifying the sign issue. Specifically, Worcester County has initiated an initiative to remove and destroy "snipe" signs on County roadways. Jeff stated that the Goose/Duck signs are subject to this initiative and will eventually all be removed. He indicated that a message alerting drivers to waterfowl crossing is being displayed on the North Gate electronic sign board. Anne O'Connell asked Jeff if he knows for sure that these signs fall under the scope of the initiative. Jeff said he assumes so but that he will follow up on 1) specifically what is meant by "snipe" signs, 2) which of the signs are on County roads and 3) possibilities for additional permanent signage. Until further information or direction is received, Mr. Heavner confirmed that the Environment and Natural Assets Advisory Committee (ENAC) has no responsibility for the Goose/Duck signs.

Status on Water Quality Monitoring with Marine Activities Committee

Don Wolski stated that Assateague Coastal Trust purchased sampling kits and has conducted sampling at some Ocean Pines locations including Manklin Creek, White Horse Park canal, and Bainbridge Park. He clarified that they are primarily looking for fertilizer in the water. Don has asked ACT to share testing results with us.

Pat Benner mentioned that Vernier probes would be ideal to have and use for [dissolved oxygen] testing. ENAC will follow this effort but leave the action with the Marine Activities Committee.

Communication to info@oceanpines: Mulch volcanoes

Don Wolski received an email regarding mulch volcanoes; he will forward it to the committee. It basically says OPA is aware of the issue and that they will correct them as staffing allows.

Adopt-A-Park Program

Pat Garcia asked if there is an immediate need to schedule a clean-up of the Swim & Racquet Club Park adopted by the ENAC noting that she had not seen such a need on a recent visit there. Consensus was that there is not a current need. Pat Benner noted that clean-ups will most definitely be needed after swim meets (not held between Labor Day and Memorial Day). Don Wolski noted that the oyster cage is currently in the alternate location. He recommended moving it back to its original location, in the gazebo, for educational purposes. All were in agreement. Don will forward *SOP #3, Oyster Cage Maintenance at Swim & Racquet Club* to members by email. Don will cover maintenance of the oyster cage through December.

NEW BUSINESS:

Field Trip to Recycling Center (Newark, MD)

Pat Garcia asked if it would be worthwhile for the ENAC to visit the facility. A committee member noted that it is an impressive facility and a field trip would be beneficial. Speaking of recycling, Pat Garcia mentioned that she has not seen any recycling bins in White Horse Park. Pat Benner said that there is *one* near the restrooms. Jeff will follow up with Republic Services about adding additional recycling bins in White Horse Park.

During the discussion, Don Wolski mentioned that he had been thinking about what it takes to become a “Green Community” as is described in the “Sustainable Maryland” program. Don also suggested an ENAC field trip to the University of Maryland’s Horn Point Laboratory in Cambridge.

Egg Addling

Jeff reported that the Board may support egg addling in spring 2025. He said to submit a new Charging Document, to include cost information. Egg addling would include areas around two north gate ponds and south gate pond, but not Rte. 90 pond.

Fall Greenstreet Article

Pat Garcia asked for topic suggestions for the *Greenstreet* article in the upcoming fall issue of the Ocean Pines Report. Receiving none, she suggested an article focusing on fall tree planting and Maryland programs that offer free saplings for waterfront property owners and discounts for native trees purchased at participating retail outlets. Pat Garcia agreed to write the Greenstreet article.

Marine Debris Plunder at White Horse Park

This is a Maryland Coastal Bays sponsored clean-up event to be held at the White Horse Park boat launch on September 22. There will be free food and participants will get a tee shirt.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Fishing Gear Disposal Tubes

The Committee observed that two fish line tubes have been installed at the South gate pond and one has been installed at the White Horse Park boat ramp. Pat Garcia stated that she observed (and photographed) the two tubes at South gate pond stuffed with cans and other trash. She noted that signage on the tubes is needed noting that they are for disposal of hooks and line only. Jeff Heavner said he would follow up on that.

Turtle Sanctuary

A charging document requesting that turtle sanctuaries be provided was previously submitted in February 2024. Pat Garcia asked about the status. Jeff Heavner will follow up.

HOA Best Practices Packet

Pat Garcia said tabling this item for future action due to the number of items currently ongoing. Patty Gamby suggested that, in addition to best practices, attention be given to improper or illegal practices such as placing grass clippings in the canals and using fertilizers near water.

Route 90 Pond Nature Signs

This is a future project that would need to be coordinated with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee. Pat Benner suggested that a “Leave Nothing But Footprints” signs be installed to discourage littering there. Patty Gamby noted that such a message was included in the plan for nature signs and suggested that a “Leave Nothing But Footprints Sign” should be broken out of the original item and separately pursued.

Open Discussion

Pat Garcia asked Jeff Heavner if we can get E&NA-related events included on the electronic sign boards. He said he would investigate that possibility.

Brian Burgess asked if ENAC can create a Facebook page. The group discussed the need to control posts and comments and prohibit sharing if such a project is pursued. Jeff Heavner will take that request to the OPA Board. Brian also noted that the ENAC produced a good video and requested that it be put on the OPA Facebook and YouTube sites and linked to the OPA web page. Jeff Heavner said he would look into that request.

Pat Garcia noted that committee members had recently received emails from journalists asking for comment. Pat asked Jeff Heavner to confirm the policy that only the OPA President speaks to the media and that inquiries should be directed to OPA Marketing and Public Relations Director Josh Davis. Jeff confirmed this. Pat also noted that members had recently received a phishing email that appeared to come from John Viola. She asked if ENAC members’ personal email addresses could be removed from the Association website and be replaced by one new committee email address. Jeff said he would follow up on that request.

Pat Garcia asked if it is a requirement that Committee meetings be recorded and posted and, if so, why is the ENAC one of only a few committees whose meetings are posted. Jeff will follow up.

Pat Garcia noted that the end of two members' second term is approaching. Some members believe that there is a two term limit and that former members were terminated after two terms. Advisory Committee term limits. Committee members agreed term limits result in losing good talent and adversely affects productivity. Pat asked Jeff to clarify term limits, specifically, is there a term limit and, if so, when can a member reapply. Jeff will investigate.

The Committee agrees that having a term limit results in losing good talent and adversely affects productivity. Pat asked Jeff to clarify term limits, specifically, is there a term limit and, if so, when can a member reapply. Jeff will investigate.

Jeff Heavner referenced a charging document to plant trees in White Horse Park, submitted August 2023. He said that OPA Public Works is planting, has planted and will continue to plant trees. Jeff also said there is a certified arborist on Public Works staff and that we might speak to the arborist at a future meeting.

Pat Garcia suggested that an "Orientation Document" be developed for new committee members.

NEXT MEETINGS: September 25, October 23

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Patty Gamby, seconded by Brian Burgess