

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT & NATUARAL ASSETS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ENA)
Wednesday, July 24, 2024
Conference Room, Admin. Bldg

Call to Order: Tim Peck called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM

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

Approval of Agenda: Tim Peck noted a change to move the Public Comment section to later in the meeting for more opportunity for comments to address past and current issues. Motion by *Brian Burgess*, seconded by *Anne O'Connell* and approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes (6/26/24): Motion by *Brian Burgess*, seconded by *Anne O'Connell* and approved unanimously.

Chairperson's comments: Tim Peck noted that the meeting is being recorded as part of normal Ocean Pines Association (OPA) business practice.

Tim gave a statement on committee frustrations due to recent events experienced by the committee in their efforts to execute their mission detailed in Resolution C-10. The issues are noted below.

ONGOING PROJECTS (see status table below)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Geese crossing signs status: Five signs removed by OPA since installation in 2023. Typical sign costs \$105 each and \$60 for two banners when purchased in multiples.

Due to the problem of signs being removed by OPA, Tim gave a statement reviewing the history of the geese sign project and later removal of signs by OPA. Various follow-up comments were given by committee members in their efforts to initiate or execute the sign project and efforts to maintain the project. Brian Burgess asked if permanent signs could be installed, which would deter sign removal. Anne noted that the signs were designed for a periodic need when geese gather during the warmer months, allow the signs to be placed in storage during the winter, and they were a lower impact on cost and installation effort. Permanent signs could not be installed on the County property. Pat Benner noted a new Worcester County directive on prohibiting "snipe" signs in any public right-of-way. Such signs include any that are "tacked, nailed, posted, pasted, glued, or otherwise attached to trees, poles, stakes, fences, or to other objects."

- Status on new project on water quality monitoring: There were no updates other than the purchase of the test kits were still in process.
- Communication of issues to info@oceanpines: mulch volcanoes around OP trees and observed sediment erosion into Manklin Creek. Don Wolski noted that he will send a new email to info@OP noting the detrimental effects of building up mulch.

Concerning observed sediment erosion and actions needed near Manklin Creek, Patty Gamby noted that she made a series of communications with OP beginning 12 June 2024. Patty reached out to Delegate Wayne Hartman and Senator Mary Beth Carozza in July. Delegate Harman's office contacted OP leadership to facilitate action. Patty noted she later will make another follow-up communication with Delegate Hartman's office if there is no response.

Patty noted another problem on a new home construction lot near her home where the lot was clear cut and erosion controls appear to be out of compliance. She emailed OP on 12 July. The OP response stated that the issue was forwarded to OP Compliance, Permits, and Inspections Department to address. To date, no site improvements have been made.

- Adopt-a-park program: The application to adopt the Swim & Racquet was accepted by OP. The committee agreed to plan a clean-up event once final approval from the Recreation and Parks Department is provided.
- Oyster cage: Tim noted his recent experience in maintaining the cage including weekly cleaning using a hose outlet near its location at Swim & Racquet park. The cage is tethered to the outer bulkhead facing the bay near the park gazebo.

NEW BUSINESS

- Proposal for a field trip to the Worcester County recycling center. Patricia Garcia had previously suggested such a field trip to gain details on recycling in the County, which could then be used to inform OP residents to help them understand this program. The County will be contacted to request a site visit.
- Green street article: the fall article is due by mid-September. A topic will be proposed at the next meeting.
- OP Forum discussion on tree cutting practices in OP and follow-up action proposed by the General Manager in July. Tim provided the following statement.

On the matter of the lack of control on tree cutting on new home lots and lots with existing homes, the ENA Committee submitted three separate statements of concern or inquiries to OPA through the BOD liaison in February, March, and May 2023. This issue was highlighted by the ENA chairperson in the annual Executive Board of Directors meeting in March 2024. In addition, the ENA Chairperson inquired with the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) chair on this situation in March 2024 considering that the ARC is involved with permit reviews. That chairperson contacted the OP Compliance, Permits, and Inspections (CPI) department on why clear cutting is allowed. In all cases, OPA responded with brief statements that the County tree cutting policies "superseded" the OP policy with no further explanation. On the independent OP Forum in July 2024, due to recent tree cutting observed, residents voiced a protest on why new home lots are allowed to be clear cut. Several residents commented that this clear cutting was not followed in the past and argued over the how OPA allows the clearing now.

As a result of the resident commentary on the OP Forum, the GM briefly noted during the OP BOD meeting on 20 July that he seen recent questions on the matter, noted the Forum discussion and found it "educational." Thus, OPA will now review for "reasonableness" the current D&R regulations concerning new construction permits and tree cutting policies. There were no other questions or commentary on this matter during the BOD meeting. The ENA

Committee is obviously highly concerned on this issue and requests to be informed on the final policy.

Don Wolski asked if there was is a landscaping plan included with building permits that would define the limits of tree cutting, based on his past experience on a planning commission. Tim noted based on his observations of onsite building permits and interaction with the ARC, there is a landscaping plan. Tim suggested that Don contact ARC directly to inquire on such a plan.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeff Heavner provided his comments. He noted that the current tree cutting practice is limited to new individual home lots and not tracks of land. He noted that it is a positive sign given the recent acknowledgement of the problem by OPA and its plan to engage the CPI department to adhere to guidelines. He noted that there is a point system to replace trees that are cut down. Tim noted that this system only applies to homes within 100 ft of waterways under the existing Critical Area regulations. Jeff noted that the construction lot sediment control issue is controlled by CPI not OP PW. Jeff noted that he will follow-up with OPA on the issues of concern presented by this committee.

DISCUSSION

Tim noted that in the committee efforts to obtain and plant new trees in OP parks, he will contact the OP Garden Club in an attempt for stronger collaboration on promoting tree planting in OP. Obtaining an endorsement from the Club may help to promote the tree project.

Don noted that he has a garden plot in the community garden and has noticed there is no effort to collect and mulch discarded plant and vegetable material. Tim stated he will make an inquiry (see below).

Date of next meeting – August 28, 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.

ACTION ITEMS

- Geese sign maintenance July-September: Brian Burgess.
- Oyster cage: July-September-Tim; October-December-Don.
- New ENA recommendation for native trees: Tim drafted a committee statement with a tree list and will submit it to the BOD liaison.
- Noting the detrimental effects of building up mulch info@OP. Don submitted a inquiry on 25 July 2024.
- Inquiry on garden mulching: Tim contacted a participant with the garden club and learned that past attempts to collect the material failed due to people discarding weeds, trash and infested plants into the collection bin as well as no other care of the mulch. This bin had to be removed as a result.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOD (via BOD Liaison)

- Inquire on committee issues of concern noted in this meeting.

ONGOING PROJECTS – OUTSTANDING ISSUES

| PROJECT - ISSUE | INITIATION | STATUS |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Installation of fish-line tubes | June 2023 | Charging document submitted |
| White Horse Park, new trees | Aug.2023 | OPA action postponed |
| Goose egg addling | Sept.2023 | OPA action postponed |
| Turtle sanctuary logs | Feb. 2024 | Charging document submitted |
| Oyster cage operation | May 2024 | Installed early June. New SOP. |
| HOA best practice packet | Apr.2024 | Future project |
| Litter cleanup event | May 2024 | In planning. |
| Invasive plant removal | May 2024 | Future project |
| Rt 90 Pond nature signs | Jan. 2024 | Postponed. |

Adjourn: Motion by *Patty Gamby*, seconded by *Don Wolski*.
Meeting adjourned at 1131.