

Minutes: OPA Environment & Natural Assets Advisory Committee Meeting March 26, 2025

Members Present: Pat Ryan Garcia (Chair), Brian Burgess (Vice Chair), Patty Gamby, John Maziuk, Anne O'Connell, Pat Benner, Jeff Heavner (OPA Board Liaison). Don Wolski was excused.

Call to Order: Pat Garcia called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

Patty Gamby made a motion to approve the agenda which was seconded by Anne O'Connell and approved unanimously.

Approval of January 2025 Minutes

Brian Burgess made a motion to approve the January 2025 minutes. Patty Gamby seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

Pat Garcia reported that she had informed Maryland Coastal Bays Program that the committee would not be exhibiting at Bay Day 2025 due to the scheduling of the OPA Kickoff on the previous day. She also noted that she would not further pursue the initiative to create a Facebook page for the committee and would instead cooperate with OPA communications on messaging about our activities through their social media channels.

The chair raised concerns about complaints regarding leaf violations and emphasized the importance of keeping drainage ditches free of debris. She added that the spring *Green Street* article on responsible lawn/yard care had been submitted.

The chair reviewed the status of committee member terms, specifically noting that the second terms of Pat Benner and John Maziuk were expiring. She explained the process for applying for additional terms and emphasized the importance of maintaining active committee membership.

OLD BUSINESS

Earth Day Cleanup

Pat Garcia provided details about the upcoming April 22 Earth Day cleanup event at White Horse Park, which is being coordinated with Beach Heroes–OC. She raised the possibility of organizing a separate cleanup initiative at South Gate Pond, potentially involving the Assateague Coastal Trust.

Kickoff Event and Exhibit Planning

The committee discussed the Ocean Pines Association kickoff event scheduled for May 17 at Veterans Memorial Park and the details for the exhibit. The central theme for the committee's exhibit is reducing, reusing, and recycling waste. Pat Garcia said that she would take care of getting copies of a Republic Services recycling guide printed for distribution at the event and that she would contact Republic about their current policy on glass recycling.

Patty Gamby offered examples of practical alternatives for reusing items such as shower caps, stainless steel straws, and crafts made from sea glass. The committee suggested promoting the use of reusable water bottles, detergent sheets, refrigerator filter pitchers and toiletry bars as environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic products. The chair requested volunteers to sign up for specific assignments for the kickoff event at the next committee meeting, including setup and cleanup duties. Pat Benner offered to provide a canopy for shade. Pat Garcia said she would provide two chairs and a tablecloth. Jeff Heavner said he would provide an oyster cage demonstration as he had done for the previous year's event.

Collaboration with Recreation & Parks (R&P) Committee

The committee discussed the improvements at the Swim & Racquet Club Park requested in R&P's charging documents. Pat Garcia said she would follow up with the R&P chair to find out if any of those requests were moving forward.

Horn Point Field Trip

Committee member Don Wolski was not available to provide any updates on this event. The committee thought it might be better to wait until late summer or fall to plan a trip as they hold summer camps in July and August.

NEW BUSINESS

The committee discussed the planting of additional non-native cherry trees around South Gate Pond as part of OPA's beautification efforts. The discussion emphasized the ecological importance of using native trees and plants whenever possible. It was noted that pollinator gardens are being planted in Ocean Parkway's medians in cooperation with the OP Garden Club. "Planting Natives" was suggested as a topic for a future committee meeting,

Board Liaison Heavner provided an update on the installation of additional electronic signs in the community and that the roadside "duck/goose" crossing signs would be removed to comply with a Worcester County mandate.

There was a suggestion to establish a "trail trash heroes" group to conduct regular cleanups of Ocean Pines' trails, perhaps in coordination with the Recreation & Parks committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Patty Gamby made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Brian Burgess and the meeting concluded at 11:59 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for April 23 at 11:00 a.m. in the OPA Administration Conference Room.