

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board
Meeting January 3rd, 2024 at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

Officers Present - Stephen Fiedler, Vice-Chairperson

Members Present - Dick Colby, Dan Crum, Belinda Chester, Emma Witt, Alex Perri, Lisa March

Members Absent - Mike Hogan, Chairperson, Emma Witt

Commissioner Representative - Andrew Parker -absent

County Staff - Greg Brookins, D.H.P.W. - present

Secretary - Eric Husta, D.D.P.R. – present

Guests: Nancy Jarrin, Master Gardener, Steve Jasiocki, Chairperson Sustainable Margate

Old Business: None

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 PM and a flag salute was conducted. Reorganization took place with Steve Fiedler and Alex Perri being nominated and approved as co-chairpersons.

General Discussion topics:

Discussion took place on possible topics for 2024. Talks focused on Hamilton Township's grant for Bikeway West and the possible reasons for the lack of recent movement on the grant.

Steve Fiedler suggested adding invasive and native plants to the list of topics to consider. Talk then turned to the idea of community solar. Steve provided an update on regional installations and Atlantic Electric's softening stance on accepting local solar inputs. Mention was also made of the recreation park being built in the old Hansen pit. As part of a revegetation plan, Stockton University planted the bottom of the pit with a uniform layout of pine trees, many of which are already showing signs of decline. He concluded with a summary of gas-powered leaf blower bans mentioning 3 towns had them with Maple Shade being an example.

Dick Colby inquired about the possibility of propagating street trees and native plants such as milkweed in Estell Manor Park. Eric Husta agreed that was a possibility and made mention of having similar discussions with Belinda Chester. For several years, parks has been exploring the possibility of utilizing greenhouse space to house classes/workshops focusing on various types of plant propagation. Dick also provided the group with a brief update on a \$1 million-dollar grant Egg Harbor City has been awarded for the care and maintenance of existing street trees.

Steve Jasiocki made a brief presentation on the issues of sawdust resulting from the cutting of plastic lumber. The problem is pervasive in Margate where ongoing construction has led to an

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accumulation of the plastic particles that are being washed into storm drains. Discussion followed regarding ordinances, fines, and enforcement, with focus on dust collection as the primary means of prevention.

Dan Crum discussed the current odor situation at the ACUA landfill site. He noted Absecon would be meeting with officials from the ACUA to discuss the situation. He also distributed a Rutgers flyer advertising an upcoming on-line event regarding climate change. The virtual event will take place on 1/23 at 1PM.

Alex Perri noted the County Commissioners should be soliciting our group's input on relevant topics such as wind power. He questioned how we should advance our agenda and how such a process works. Steve Fiedler mentioned resolutions have been sent in the past. Alex reiterated the desire to host a presentation to familiarize municipalities with the importance of having an environmental commission. He also revisited the idea of developing an invasive plant coordinator. He updated the group on his work on the creation of a field to forest test plot and noted Absecon is still pushing for community gardens. Funding is needed and suggested it could come from the County. Belinda noted volunteers are available to assist.

Belinda Chester mentioned upcoming programs including one on becoming an Environmental Steward on January 23, 2024, Master Gardener training beginning on February 6, 2024, and composting training on February 22, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for February 7th, 2024 at 7PM at the Canale Training Center in EHT.

cc: Dennis Levinson, County Executive
Jerry DelRosso, County Administrator
Diana Rutala, Deputy County Administrator
Maureen Kern, Chairperson - Board of County Commissioners
Andrew Parker, Board of County Commissioners – PEAB Representative
Greg Brookins, Department Head Public Works
All Advisory Board Members