

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board
Meeting September 4th , 2024 at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

Officers Present - Stephen Fiedler, Co-Chairperson Alex Perri, Co-Chairperson

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

Members Absent - none

Commissioner Representative - Andrew Parker -absent

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

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

Guests: Michael Ryan, member of public, Dan and Barbara Bachalis, Hammonton Environmental Commission, Susan Lazarchick, Hamilton Township SustainabiliTEAM, Lee Campbell, Galloway Green Team, Steve Jasiocki, Sustainable Margate, Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Old Business: None

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM and a flag salute was conducted.

Presentations:

Michael Ryan presented a slide show depicting historical and modern boundaries of the properties in and around the Weymouth Furnace park area. He presented the group with several concepts the County could use to expand, improve, and develop the property to accommodate the large crowds experienced during the summer months. Mention was also made of the historic bridge reconstruction over the Great Egg Harbor River on Weymouth Road just outside the park.

Steve Jasiocki made a brief presentation to update the group on his efforts to curtail the spread of micro plastics from contractor activities in shore towns where the sawdust from cutting plastic composite decking materials is ending up in local waterways. He mentioned teaming with the Surfrider Foundation to develop and distribute an informational flyer for contractors and concerned citizens outlining the hazards of micro plastic sawdust and some ways to mitigate the potential damage it can cause. *(Steve's materials are attached to these minutes for distribution)*

General Discussion topics:

Dick Colby suggested the group find a way to participate in the upcoming local elections. He mentioned the lack of resources when it comes to learning more about the candidates since there was no formal meet and greet with a question-and-answer session. Sue Lazarchick and others mentioned using Vote411.org as a way to find information on candidates.

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Dick also mentioned a conversation he recently had regarding the designation of “Wild and Scenic” for the Mullica River. Discussion about the topic followed.

Emma Witt mentioned school is back in session and a recent research project on the water quality of the Great Egg Harbor River.

Dan Crum provided the group with details on the Health Department’s role in water and well testing. Discussion followed on where to get different types of water testing done and which facilities test for specific contaminants. Dan also reported that EEE has been found in the county.

Eric Husta mentioned the County is indeed aware of the crowds at Weymouth Furnace and noted park rangers have been controlling parking access during times of high volume. He made mention of the difficulty in striking a balance between allowing public access and protecting the natural resource. He also noted much of the river traffic is a result of the kayaking and tubing liveries in the area and not simply an increase in park visitors.

Belinda Chester noted Master Gardeners are always available for educational purposes and programs. She updated the group on recent work on the structure of the Garden Education series and the redesign of in-person programming. She also encouraged the group to provide any input on new program ideas.

Jason Howell noted he enjoys the park system but has observed the increase in traffic in recent years.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for June 5th , 2024 at 7PM at the Canale Training Center in EHT.

cc: Dennis Levinson, County Executive
Jerry DelRosso, 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