

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board
Meeting January 4th, 2023 at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

Officers Present - Mike Hogan-Vice Chairman

Members Present - Dan Crum, Stephen Fielder, Dick Colby, Ken Sooy, Belinda Chester,

Members Absent - Lisa March

Commissioner Representative - Andrew Parker -present

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

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

Guests- Alex Perri, member of the public

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 PM and a flag salute was conducted. The minutes from our November 2nd, 2022, meeting were approved as well. Reorganization took place with Mike Hogan being nominated and approved as Chairperson. Steve Fiedler was nominated and approved as Vice Chairperson. Possible speakers and topics were discussed for upcoming meetings as well.

Roundtable Discussion topics:

Dick Colby updated the board on his investigation of other boards and commissions in Atlantic County. He noted our board was the only one he could find posting monthly meeting minutes online. He did find the Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs maintains an interactive website and robust online presence. Commissioner Parker noted other boards could still be meeting but, for a variety of reasons, may not be posting minutes on the county websites. General discussion ensued regarding whether resolutions can or should be publicized on the website.

Eric Husta discussed the status of several park projects including the completion of the latest phase of improvements at Lake Lenape East, new docks at Lake Lenape West, and ongoing renovations in Estell Manor Park. He also mentioned a recent fish kill at Lake Lenape likely caused by the recent drop in temperature in conjunction with the lower lake level. Most fish were alewives with a few shad mixed in judging from a few pictures he had seen.

Greg Brookins discussed ongoing County efforts to phase out the use of underground fuel tanks and replace them with above ground tanks. He also summarized for the group, the various types of NJDEP compliance inspections undertaken on the various fuel sites owned by the County.

Belinda Chester updated the group on the Environmental Stewards program and the Gardening Education program. She also discussed the Master Composting program and mentioned they are moving towards in-person programs. Her office continues to look for speakers for the Master Gardener program as well.

Steve Fiedler updated the group on progress being made to convert the Smithville pit to a park. He also provided an update on the tree remediation process. Fish and Wildlife intends to plant warm season grasses on site as well. The park itself will contain a sledding hill and a bike trail traversing the perimeter of the site. Steve also provided an update on the Veteran's Memorial Park on the Glen by the Bay property where three pollinator stations are being built. He also mentioned Ken Able's new book "Coastal Landscapes- South Jersey From the

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Air”. The book is available at www.rutgersuniversitypress.org. Discussion was had regarding whether there should be a suggestion to make this board a member of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC). Cost of membership would be \$40/person. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Commissioner Parker discussed the EHT Nature Preserve and the pollinator stations being built there. He relayed information on an upcoming Trail Maintenance Day in Wharton State Forest on January 7th, 2023 where staff and volunteers will be creating a new trail in the Goshen Pond area. He concluded with a mention of upcoming Green Acres Grants.

The evening concluded with discussion regarding the various boards and commissions throughout Atlantic County.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, February 1st, 2023, at 7 PM at the Canale Training Center.

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