

## **Minutes: OPA Environment & Natural Assets Advisory Committee Meeting October 23, 2024**

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

**Call to Order:** Pat Garcia called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Brian Burgess made a motion to approve the agenda which was seconded by Patty Gamby and approved unanimously.

### **Approval of September 2024 Minutes**

Pat Garcia apologized for the page numbering error in the minutes. Patty Gamby made a motion to approve the September minutes. Anne O'Connell seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

### **CHAIR-ELECT COMMENTS**

Pat Garcia asked the committee members to raise a hand when they have a question or comment so that she can recognize them by name which she hopes will be recorded by the Otter virtual assistant.

Pat Garcia reported that the appointments of herself as ENA chair and Brian Burgess as vice chair were approved at the September OPA board meeting. She added that the committee list on oceanpines.org was updated to reflect that and personal email addresses have been removed. A new email address for the committee—Environment@oceanpines.org was created and is operational. Emails to that address will be forwarded to Pat Garcia and Brian Burgess only. The committee was polled regarding listing of members' personal phone numbers and it was decided that only the chair's number will be posted on OPA.org.

Pat Garcia noted that the video of the committee's August meeting had not been posted on YouTube or OPA.org. Jeff Heavner said that he believed that the chair must request that meeting videos be posted. He added that he believed it is good practice to have the videos available. Pat said she would request that all meeting videos be posted on the OPA YouTube account.

Pat Garcia noted that there was a November 20, 2024 meeting of the committee on the OPA online calendar even though she thought the members had decided not to meet in November. After querying the members it was agreed the committee will not meet in November or December 2024 and that meetings would resume in January 2025.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Follow-Up on Projects Needing OPA Approval/Action**

- Turtle Sanctuary Charging Document: Jeff Heavner reported that OPA General Manager John Viola has sent the request for placement of logs for turtle basking to Public Works for implementation at their convenience.
- Signage on Fishing Gear Disposal Tubes: Jeff said he would contact Josh Davis about creating an awareness campaign to educate residents about the purpose of the tubes.
- ENAC Facebook Page: No feedback on that request was received.
- Term Extensions for Committee Members: Anne O'Connell's request was to be reviewed at the October 26 OPA Board meeting. Karen Detter decided not to request an extension leaving two openings for new committee members. Pat Garcia said that she would ask that the openings be publicized on OPA social media.

### **Goose Egg Addling**

Pat Garcia reported that she came across a 2018 *Bayside Gazette* article about the culling event that led to community backlash and discovered that it was done with assistance from the Department of Agriculture and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. She added that her search for a vendor to handle egg addling, including one that had been suggested by Anne O'Connell was unsuccessful and pointed to an article on the Maryland DNR website on controlling conflicts with resident Canada Geese. Pat Garcia also suggested that the committee look into how the OPA Golf Course deals with geese. She noted that one of the public commenters at the September OPA Board meeting spoke against controlling the goose population.

There was some further discussion about other ways to discourage geese from nesting around OP's ponds including planting tall grasses around the shorelines. Pat Garcia noted that the Maryland Coastal Bays (MCBP) supported South Gate Pond shoreline erosion/buffer project included planting of vegetation. Jeff Heavner said some meetings with MCBP and OPA GM Viola had been postponed because of illness. Pat Garcia suggested that the committee wait to see if the shoreline project helps with goose control.

### **Litter Cleanup Event**

A litter cleanup event was discussed at an earlier meeting this year. It was suggested that we team up with the Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation. Pat Garcia noted that they focus on ocean beaches. She added that they are probably not a likely partner for us since the only OPA beaches are on the St. Martin's River property at the Swim & Racquet Club and the Beach Club.

### **Litter Cleanup Event, con't**

She suggested that since the ENA Committee has adopted the Swim & Racquet Club Park; perhaps cleanup efforts should be focused there. It was suggested that the committee check the 2025 swim meet schedule and plan cleanups after each meet. Patty Gamby suggested that we also schedule occasional inspections of the park. Pat Benner has suggested that cleanup efforts there are particularly needed after swim meets.

### **Fall OP Report Greenstreet Article**

Pat Garcia reported that she submitted an article encouraging native tree planting which was published and promoted on OPA social media. She asked for suggestions for the Winter Report Greenstreet article. Committee members suggested an article on the Recycling Center visit.

### **Worcester County Recycling Center Visit**

Pat Garcia said she would contact the Center's director about setting up a visit on Wednesday, November 20. Several committee members said that they would be able to participate in the tour. She asked the committee what they thought of Republic Services' new trash bin program. Jeff Heavner reported on the Town Hall meeting that OPA held to discuss the program and explained that the new bins can be picked up by manual lift device on the trucks. He also updated the committee on how Public Works and Republic Services will be collecting bagged leaves on certain dates through the end of the year. Jeff added that customers can request smaller trash bins if the larger ones don't fit their needs.

### **Critical Areas Laws Workshop**

Pat Garcia said she had contacted Taylor Swanson of Assateague Coastal Trust who reported that he was unable to obtain Worcester County's cooperation to hold a public meeting on the topic. He suggested that a future meeting with a smaller group including the ENA committee might be helpful. Patty Gamby mentioned the concerns about grass clippings being dumped in OPA canals that have been raised by committee members. It was that the clippings and fertilizer encourage the growth of dangerous cyanobacteria. Pat Garcia noted that since there are no laws related to these issues in Worcester County that a public education effort might be helpful.

### **2025 OPA Kickoff Event**

Plans for ENA's participation will be discussed once a date is announced for the event.

### **Wind Turbines**

Pat Garcia shared her response to a request from an OPA resident that ENA encourage the OPA Board to join other local leaders opposed to the wind turbine project on the Ocean City coastline. The response reflected the committee's decision to remain neutral on the issue.

### **Committee Sponsored Oyster Cage**

Pat Garcia said that Don Wolski had agreed to maintain the cage through December 2024. Brian Burgess volunteered to take on the maintenance duties for first quarter 2025.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Committee Annual Report**

Pat Garcia said that she had just recently discovered that Advisory Committee Annual Reports are due October 31 and that she did not believe there is time for committee members to provide input before the deadline. She said her intention is to submit the report on time.

### **Plans/Ideas for 2025 ENA Committee Exhibits**

The committee discussed a “Reduce-Reuse-Recycle” theme for 2025 exhibits at the Kickoff and Bay Day and perhaps sharing some of the takeaways from the Recycling Center visit. Patty Gamby volunteered to chair exhibit efforts.

### **Adjournment**

Patty Gamby moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:18 a.m. Anne O’Connell seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.