

Minutes: OPA Environment & Natural Assets Advisory Committee Meeting September 25, 2024

Members Present: Pat Ryan Garcia (chair-elect), Brian Burgess (vice chair-elect), Patty Gamby, Anne O'Connell, John Maziuk, Don Wolski, Karen Detter, Pat Benner (via MS Teams), Jeff Heavner (Board Liaison)

Call to Order: Pat Garcia called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of August 2024 Minutes

Pat Garcia thanked committee member Patty Gamby for drafting the August minutes. Brian made a motion to approve the August minutes. Don seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

CHAIR-ELECT COMMENTS

Pat Garcia informed the group that in addition to the Microsoft Teams meeting recording, she would also be recording the meeting using an AI transcribing app called Otter.ai. She noted that the committee members may also receive some meeting notes from Otter via email. She added that it was the first time using the app so she would also take some notes as a backup.

Pat Garcia noted that the ENA Committee list on OPA.org had not been updated to reflect the election of the new chair and vice chair. She said that she and Brian had submitted the requested forms regarding their election. Jeff Heavner said that the forms were in the OPA Board packet for their September 28 meeting. He added that anytime there is an advisory committee member application or a committee election it must be approved by the OPA Board of Directors. Pat Garcia explained that the terms of two ENA Committee members—Anne O'Connell and Karen Detter—were expiring soon. Anne noted that she was interested in extending her term and Karen added later that she was also interested in an extension. It was determined that eight is the allowed ceiling for committee members so there is currently an opening for one additional member in the wake of Tim Peck's resignation. Jeff said he would look into the possibility of term extensions for Anne and Karen and that they can use the online form to request extensions.

Pat Garcia noted that the video of the committee's August meeting had not been posted on YouTube or OPA.org. Jeff 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 Garcia said that there is 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

Future of Goose/Duck Crossing Signs

Pat Garcia said that OPA's interpretation of the new Worcester County law prohibiting so-called "snipe" signs on County roads applied to the Goose Crossing signs on Manklin Creek and Cathell Roads. She asked Jeff if that law would also apply to the OPA amenities banners hanging on the light poles on Manklin Creek. He said OPA may have applied to have them there. Pat Garcia said that means the Goose Crossing signs should then still be allowed on OPA-owned roads and property. Anne offered the opinion that since the crossing signs were not advertising and are purely in place for safety reasons. Jeff that the subject matter of snipe signs would not warrant an exemption.

Pat Garcia concluded that the committee has done its part and should be pleased that OPA created the signs as requested. She added that the signs are now OPA property and the committee cannot dictate how they will be deployed going forward. Jeff noted that the North Gate electronic sign has a warning about duck/goose crossing and that if the board approves additional electronic signs they would also include geese and duck crossing warnings.

Turtle Sanctuary Charging Document

Pat Garcia inquired about the status of the document. Jeff said that he had submitted it to the OPA Board president and asked him to review it with the general manager. A committee member noted that it would be simple and cost effective to use fallen trees for turtle platforms. Jeff said that he hoped to give an update on the turtle project at the next committee meeting. It was noted that logs or platforms would be needed in the South Gate and North Gate ponds and possibly also in the Route 90/Offshore pond.

Other Items Awaiting Feedback

- Requests for committee-sponsored events such as the proposed clean-up day to be posted on the electronic sign
- Permission for a committee Facebook page
- Posting of committee video that debuted at the 2024 Season Kickoff on the OPA YouTube site
- Request to remove committee members' personal email addresses from the OPA website has been approved and a single committee email (environment@oceanpines.org) has been established. Mail to that address will be forwarded to Pat Garcia and Brian Burgess.
- 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.

Goose Egg Addling Request

Pat Garcia said that she had received files from the previous committee chair but could not find a charging document requesting 2025 egg addling. She added that in searching for a vendor for the project she was unable to find one that offered addling. Anne mentioned that she believes A-1 Wildlife Services of Lincoln, Delaware, can do egg addling. Pat Garcia said she would contact them.

Fall OP Report Greenstreet Article

Pat Garcia reported that she had submitted an article about planting native trees and sources for free and discounted trees available through state programs.

Worcester County Recycling Center Visit

Pat Garcia said she would contact the Center's director about setting up a visit on Wednesday, November 20.

Litter Cleanup Event

A committee member said that they believed the event was mentioned at the May 2024 meeting. Pat Garcia said she would review the minutes from that meeting and report to the committee next month.

Critical Areas Laws Workshop

A committee member noted that this event was to be a project of Assateague Coastal Trust (ACT). Pat Garcia said she would contact Taylor Swanson at ACT to follow up.

NEW BUSINESS

MCBP Ten-Year Plan

Pat Garcia alerted the committee to Maryland Coastal Bay's request for public input on its proposed ten-year management plan that will begin in 2025. She noted that the current plan could be viewed on the MCBP website and that a final public meeting on the new plan was scheduled for September 26.

Request Regarding Wind Turbines

Pat Garcia shared a letter received from Ocean Pines resident and former ENA committee member Martin Clarke. Mr. Clarke requested that the ENA Committee consider endorsing the opposition to the proposed wind turbine project off the Ocean City coast as expressed by local government officials and ask the OPA Board of Directors to formally support that position. After a thorough discussion of the request, the committee voted unanimously to decline it. Pat Garcia said she would write to Mr. Clarke and inform him of the committee's decision.

2025 OPA Kickoff Event

Pat Garcia said that the ENA Committee's exhibit at the inaugural event in 2024 was well-received and asked Jeff if it would be held again in 2025. Jeff said that OPA Treasurer Monica Rakowski is the lead on the planning for the event and that it would be discussed at the Board of Directors September 28 meeting.

Bay Day 2025

Maryland Coastal Bays would welcome the ENA Committee's participation in the event. The 2025 date has yet to be announced.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION/COMMENTS

Don Wolski provided some additional information on OPA's response to the "Ghost Forest" issue in Colonial Village. He said that flooding from a damaged pipe caused water to back up for a period of time, which created a larger wetland area that saturated tree roots and killed trees. He noted that since the pipe was repaired, newly planted trees including bald cypress are thriving.

Pat Garcia suggested that the next Green Street article focus on recycling and particularly on what items are accepted and preferred by Worcester County.

Patty Gamby suggested that the ENA committee's 2025 exhibits demonstrated ways to "upcycle" items that might otherwise be discarded and emphasize the "Reduce-Reuse-Recycle"

NEXT MEETING

October 23, 2024; January 22, 2025

(Possible visit to Worcester County Recycling Center in lieu of November 2024 meeting)

ADJOURNMENT

Don made a motion to adjourn at 11:15 a.m which was seconded by Anne and approved unanimously.