

CAPE MAY POINT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

January 10, 2024 – 10:00 am

Start Time: 10:00 am

End Time: 10:59 am

EC Members present:

(x) Sandy Allison
(x) Barb Bassett, Chair
(x) Commissioner Catherine Busch
() Peg Fraatz

(x) Elise Geiger
(x) Isabelle Neary
(x) Paula Massanari, Vice Chair
(x) Emelia Oleson

The Environmental Commission of the Borough of Cape May Point was called to order by Chair Barb Bassett (BB) at 10:02 AM and the Open Public Meetings Statement was read. This meeting was held electronically via ZOOM under local operation guidance from the NJDCA pursuant to P.L. 2020, c. 11.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of PM seconded by SA, the minutes of December 13, 2023 were approved by all present.

MEETING SCHEDULE 2024

BB said that we will be canceling the March EC meeting due to scheduling conflicts for herself and Vice Chair PM.

ON-GOING BUSINESS

Salem Oak Tree

PM stated that at the last meeting the EC had agreed upon the proposed content for the sign. CB said that as a next step she will have it circulated to the other Commissioners so that they may provide their feedback. CB also confirmed to SA that the EC only agreed upon language and not the actual design.

Invasive Patrol

EG shared that they have been making significant headway along the shore of the lake, and she wants to thank CB, PF for volunteering their time to help clear the invasive plants and vines along the southeast portion of the lake. The group will now begin meeting on Tuesdays.

Commissioner Liaison

CB just completed a training course on land management of invasive plants with and without the use of herbicides.

The contract between the Borough and New Jersey Audubon ended in December 2023 and they did not want to renew; CB and the Public Works (PW) Department and community volunteers have taken these activities over. We may on occasion hire someone for herbicide application but that has not been determined at this time.

CB corrected the misperception that the south end of Lake Lily is more shallow than it used to be. It isn't more shallow, but there is muck and organic material at the bottom supporting the vegetative life, which is part of the natural eutrophication cycle of the lake. CB met with Clean-Flo to discuss what can be done to slow down or reverse the growth. She was advised that we should add a fourth treatment per year to help with algae growth and muck reduction, and that it should be done as quickly as possible this winter. This will increase the cost of treatments that she had previously conveyed to the Friends of Lake Lily

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organization. CB has informed them and is waiting to hear whether there will be donations to support this before scheduling any work.

Also related to Lake Lily, CB discussed the preemptive actions taken by the Borough when we are expecting significant rainfall. There is a pump at the north end of the lake that pumps water to the outfall pipe that travels west on sunset boulevard to the Delaware bay. When we pump this water out Lake Lily we notify the police in case they receive any calls when people see it bubbling up. Many storm drains in Cape May Point lead to Lake Lily. If we do not pump the water level down, we could have flooding in the streets, especially in the lower parts of town. The water level in the lake quickly recovers after storms.

Planning Board

BB stated that the submission for review at the next PB meeting (506 Cedar Avenue) was discussed by the EC at a prior meeting.

Project to Review/Summarize Borough Landscaping and Tree Ordinances

EG has reviewed the Borough code on landscaping and trees. She has created a summary which is being reviewed by PF and PM. The next step will be to meet with Zoning Official Bruce Britton to discuss. BB agreed that this is a worthwhile project to better help homeowners understand the requirements.

Light Pollution

BB sent 7 light pollution ordinances from other municipalities to the members of the EC and assigned them to individual members. BB asked that if anyone reviews documents and has comments that they send them to her and KR who will ensure that they are distributed to other members.

PM said that she felt the one most applicable to Cape May Point was from Bloomfield, but also liked the pictures of the examples in Cape May's. She is in favor of an ordinance that covers more than nuisance light. PM also contacted ANJEC to ask if they had an understanding that ACE will eventually replace older traditional sodium street lamps with LEDs, which appear to be whiter and brighter. The ANJEC representative said they were unaware, and that they will contact ACE. They will also contact other NJ municipalities to see if they are experiencing any issues in their communities related to this.

EG said several of the ordinances we reviewed are for municipalities with commercial applications and highways that would require significantly more lighting. Regardless, it all comes down to nuisance light and light trespass. Cape May included in their ordinance what triggers action to be taken by the city, like a complaint regarding light trespass. We have to determine whether we actually have a light trespass problem in Cape May Point, and consider whether we feel we have a right to tell people what they can or cannot have on their property. PM stated that the issue is important because we are on the Atlantic Flyway.

SA read through all of the ordinances and agrees that having the drawings of acceptable lighting fixtures are helpful and could be given to builders. She also said that she has heard some locals complain about bright security lights that are left on all night. EO agreed with this and said there is a similar issue that she is aware of where motion detector flood lights go off and on throughout the night when triggered by wildlife, shining into the windows of neighboring houses.

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BB shared her screen and the outline she created of what the EC could highlight in their summary of recommendations to the Commissioners to determine if any items are missing. CB said the outline provides a framework for the report but additional detail will need to be listed under each bullet point. Our responsibility isn't to write an ordinance, but to recommend to the other Commissioners whether one is needed and if so what we want in it.

BB closed the discussion by saying security lights can be put on timers to limit impact, and light projection should always stay within property lines.

NEW BUSINESS

KR said that progress has been made on the website and the library of documents on the Our Environment page are being linked as they were on the prior website. Some information, like recycling, could be listed on other parts of the website like the Public Works page. There will be a brief update on progress at each meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SA shared that the Garden Club of Cape May hosted a presentation by Pat Sutton called Unfolding Wildlife Garden on January 9. Pat has always been very complimentary of Cape May Point's work towards invasive removal and native planting. She has a program on gardening for monarchs that could be hosted by the EC as part of the Mayors' Monarch Pledge.

CB shared that the Nature Center of Cape May is holding Harborside Chats, with the next one being on light pollution with a panel discussion the following week with Dr. Jim Webster, known as Dr. Dark Sky. Also, the Cape May County Library will be hosting a presentation by the Wetlands Institute at the Lower Township Library called Winter on the Marsh.

PUBLIC PORTION

On motion of EG, seconded by SA, the meeting was opened to the public. Cape May Point homeowner and architect Annie Roberts thanked everyone for their volunteer service to the EC. She is particularly interested in light pollution and would be willing to contribute her expertise in this area. She said there are houses with outside lights on throughout the entire night, and motion detection lights can be very sensitive, even coming on when there is wind.

ADJOURNMENT

When no one else wished to speak, on motion of PM, seconded by SA, the meeting was adjourned at 10:59 am.

Respectfully submitted, Kelly L. Redington, EC Secretary