

CAPE MAY POINT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

November 12, 2025

Start Time: 10:00 AM

End Time: 11:28 AM

The Environmental Commission of the Borough of Cape May Point was called to order by Chair PM at 10:00 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. Sandy Alison, Sean Burcher, Mary Lynn Mackenzie, Paula Massanari, and Emelia Oleson were present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of MLM, seconded by EO, the minutes of the October 8, 2025 EC meeting were approved by all present.

ON-GOING BUSINESS

Commissioner Liaison Report: SY reported that Public Works is winterizing everything. They've also continued to work on tree trimming, sidewalk removal, and removing dead trees around the Point. SY learned from PW that the new well depth is 95ft. When Billy first turned it on, he noticed some grass was dying around the area and leaves were coming off the tree nearest the well. They need to have the water tested and are looking to see if there is a need for softener due to too much iron. The Pavilion Circle Park sprinkler system currently uses 30,000 gallons per night, five days per week from April 15 to Sept 30.

In addition, PW measured the south end of the lake and estimated 7,000 sq. feet from the island to the bulkhead. This measurement will be used to determine the purchase of lake mats to be put in over winter. SY has been in contact with CleanFlo to get a quote for Winter Warrior and will pick that up to be applied to the lake. It should be put in over December to help control muck throughout the winter. PM offered to pick up the treatment after Christmas. SA also offered to pick it up December 8. SY will find out the size of the product for transport and thanked those who volunteered to pick it up. SY added that they also asked for a quote for 2026 for a full new analysis on the lake water profile.

PM and SY received tree training at the fall New Jersey Shade Tree Conference.. SY followed up with EO about soil testing in Triangle Park, and SY is currently looking into doing a soil sample for the area where the EC wants to plant trees in the spring. EO emphasized the importance of testing since some of the trees have died in that area in the past.

Questions/Feedback for SY:

- EO asked after the lake mats and if there are any concerns about turtles that might be hibernating at the bottom of the lake and potential adverse effects. SY had spoken to the lake mat company about this, and they assured that it should not be an issue since the mat installation is shallow and should not prohibit any wildlife from moving out from underneath them. When moving around in the lake to install the mats, the wildlife is also expected to move away on their own due to the disturbance. The mats will sink to the bottom, but SY assures there should be room for wildlife to escape if the mat settles above them.
- SA asked about the cost for the well in the circle and if any other wells have a filtration system. SY reported that one of the problems they had with the three other shallow wells was when one of the three failed, the others weren't always able to cover the load. Every year multiple sprinkler heads had to be replaced due to iron. SY was unsure of the cost for installing the new well but will find out. SA asked about which company dug the well, and SY will find out about that as well.
- PM added that the day after their tree training, she noticed that one of the three willow oaks planted the previous spring appeared to be stressed, with the bottom two thirds of the tree not

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looking healthy. It is the same area where Bill noticed that the grass was dying and wanted to test the water.

- EO asked why there is so much iron in our water. SY is unsure. It was shared that fences and sidewalks even turn brown from the iron in the water. EO was curious of the source given how high the concentration in the well water appears to be. SY will investigate further.

Triangle Park: SY heard back from Heartwood Consulting. They are responsible for the community forestry plan. They shared their thoughts on the existing approved tree list attached to the ordinance, as well as the trees that SY came up with from crossmatching lists in the surrounding local areas with Riggins' and Catherine's suggestions. Heartwood evaluated the list and agreed with some of the trees and suggested about ten additional ones. They mentioned that they too were looking at not just NJ or Cape May but the Coastal Plains of the Mid-Atlantic due to climate change. There are lots of conversations in forestry about trees that would thrive here in NJ from VA, NC, and DC due to shifts in climate. They also warned us to be careful of trees we might want to take off the list due to the increased risk of blight and diseases. PM and SY brought the list to the Tree Committee, and PM confirmed that information from Heartwood lined up a lot with what was learned at the Tree Conference.

PM received a concern from a community member about the two trees the EC are looking at planting in Triangle Park; one is a black cherry, and the other is a sweet gum. The community member was specifically worried about the sweet gum being a "messy" tree due to the seed droppings. PM brought the concern to the Tree Committee, and they determined that due to the location away from the path, the sweet gum was still a good addition since it'd be out of the way. PM wrote back to the community member with additional information.

PM met with Brett Ewald, the Director of NJ Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory (CMBO), about Triangle park. They discussed invasive vine removal in the wooded area of Triangle Park. Brett directed PM to a member of their stewardship department. PM wrote to them with requests regarding the removal, and it was approved by their committee. PM was provided the following information for moving forward:



Stewardship Department

2350 Route 47, Building 1
Woodbine, NJ 08270
(609) 400-3840
E-mail: danielle.bara@njaudubon.org

Project Quote

Date: November 11, 2025

Prepared for: Cape May Point Environmental Commission

Property Location: Triangle Park, Cape May County

Project: Community Workday, Spring 2026

Scope of work:

1. Participate in 2-hour community workday in May or June 2026 to remove invasive plants from the wooded area of Triangle Park
2. Identify plants to be removed by volunteers, provide samples
3. Answer questions raised by participants

Total quote amount = \$250.00

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The cost would come from the 2026 EC budget. PM opened the floor for any questions or concerns regarding Audubon providing this service. SA expressed her concern that since there isn't a team set up yet, how will we know if people show up to volunteer for the work. PM confirmed that the EC won't pay Audubon until the work is done. SA also wondered about the budget since it has not been formally released. PM shared that the budget for this year was \$5,000 and has not been entirely used up. PM does not anticipate the budget being reduced for the upcoming year.

SA offered additional concerns following the information that the budget has not yet been currently used. PM has discussed with SY about the budget from prior years being \$7,500 before it was cut to \$5,000 due to the EC not spending their allotted funds. PM wants to ensure the budget allocated to the EC is spent each year. PM would like to spend the leftover money this year to update the EC website. PM and SY also briefly discussed creating a booklet like the one from Avalon's EC about recommended native plants for community members.

PM was not concerned about covering the amount quoted from Audubon to conduct the work at Triangle Park since the EC does not have the expertise to do it themselves. PM added that the workdays can be advertised and the Taxpayers Association can also recruit volunteers for the effort in the spring. If the quote is approved, PM will add it to the agenda in Jan. to discuss dates and further planning for the work day. PM called for a vote to approve the cost of the quote from NJ Audubon. On motion of MLM, seconded by SB, the expense was approved by all present.

Brett also shared that there is going to be a renovation project to the Audubon Northwood Center which should last four months starting at the end of Nov.. He expressed excitement about further partnership opportunities with the EC. PM asked Brett specifically about a Dark Sky presentation. PM wants to connect with SB, CMBO, and the EC to bring in a presenter for Dark Sky. PM was also very interested in joint communications. CMBO will have a summary of their monarch tagging, and Brett will send it to PM to draft an article to send to the community. He's going to continue to think about different things CMBO does that the EC can share with the community.

Brett did express concerns about the lakes mats going in, understanding the EC has to manage the lake, but expressing that there is a fine line between not enough and too much. He is very interested in the construction of a bird blind across the street from where the CMBO office is. He was also excited to read our fishing report and happy to see no action moving forward with fishing on the lake.

Planning Board: MLM had nothing to report since there was not a hearing. She was unsure if there will be a Dec. meeting, depending on if there will be a hearing or not. There was nothing to report on the ordinance with the lighting plan requirement. MLM shared that the materials can be finalized if there is a meeting in Dec.

Mayors' Monarch Pledge: CL shared the nine action items that the EC will be submitting this year to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). PM asked for any comments. None were shared. PM highlighted that receiving credit for eight or more action items will earn the community "Leadership" status, if they're approved by NWF.

Native Tree Listing Update: SY shared that there's been important discussion on how to reframe the tree list that accompanies the tree ordinance. SY has been doing a deep investigation on the tree ordinance itself. The ordinance is something mandated by the state and is in place to ensure an overall canopy percentage which is all tied to stormwater management. SY has seen that between the application of the ordinance and looking at all of the tree permits, there is a huge lack of understanding on why we have the ordinance, how to explain it, and how to tweak it to make it more streamlined. SY emphasized that working on the tree ordinance is complex. SY has put

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together a flow chart to help the community understand the application of the ordinance and how to meet the state mandate.

Tree Removal and Replacement in Cape May Point

OVERVIEW: The CMP Tree Removal and Replacement Ordinance is mandated by New Jersey to comply with state stormwater permit requirements. **NJ requires no net loss of tree canopy.** Trees reduce soil erosion and pollutant run-off, promote infiltration of rainwater in soil and protect our town from flooding. Native trees support birds and wildlife which is consistent with our Master Plan to “preserve and conserve natural resources, including native vegetation, especially for migrating birds and butterflies that use the Borough resources as a stopover point.” Native trees have a better chance of survival in our coastal microclimate as well as provide sustenance to the bird population. It’s a win-win!

It's a Healthy Tree on my private property but I don't want it:

Homeowner pays the \$75.00 permit fee and submits Application Form
Homeowner replaces tree (choose tree from Approved Tree List) on their property, OR
Homeowner seeks exemption based on number of trees from Approved Tree List already on property, OR
Homeowner donates to the CMP Community Tree Trust (per Table) so that a native replacement tree can be planted on public property

It's a Hazard Tree (as determined by a Borough official) that meets the following criteria:

- Is determined to be dead or dying
- Has an infectious disease or insect infestation that requires removal
- Obstructs the view of traffic signs or the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles, where pruning attempts have not been effective
- Is causing damage to structures (e.g. building foundations, sidewalks, utilities, etc)
- Is determined to be a threat to public health, safety, and/or welfare (e.g. storm-damaged fallen or broken trees)
- Is an invasive or prohibited species itemized on the CMP Prohibited Non-native Trees and Woody Plants list

It's a Healthy Tree in the Public Right of Way but I don't want it:

Homeowner pays the \$75.00 permit fee and submits Application Form
Borough official determines viability of tree
If tree is viable and not determined a hazard, tree remains in place.

If on private property: Homeowner pays permit fee, pays to have tree removed and must replace tree. If in public right of way: No permit fee required, Public Works removes the tree, no replacement tree required.

For every tree someone wants to remove, it is a \$75 fee per tree assessed on top of the actual removal cost and replacement expenses. One of the things that's been discussed is that if Bill comes out to do a tree assessment, he would do a holistic assessment of all the trees of concern for that homeowner. This would alter the cost from \$75 per tree to \$75 per visit. SY emphasized how confusing the ordinance is for community members and how they come to the office upset because they have a fee that they don't fully understand. SY is hoping to redo the ordinance in a clearer way with supporting documents that make it easier and more reasonable for community members to digest.

For the approved tree list, the Tree Committee discussed adding the redbud and the southern magnolia. Both species should thrive in the area. The redbud is also native to NJ and can flourish within the Point's specific environmental conditions. SY would love for EC members to look at the approved tree list again. SY also followed up that they are still looking to separate the list from the ordinance so that additions and alterations in the future are easier to accomplish.

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While at the tree conference, PM asked about adding trees to the list that are not native to the county but native to NJ. Both people at the conference she asked were very enthusiastic about adding trees native to NJ. The hornbeam was discussed, which is native but doesn't do well in a salt climate. PM suggested to the EC moving away from calling it a "native" tree listing since all the discussions about the list continue to account for the shifting climate and including trees that are not exclusively native to our county. PM recommended calling the list "Approved" tree listing.

NEW BUSINESS

Initial discussion of 2026 Goals/Priorities: PM shared four potential projects that she brainstormed for 2026: pursuing Tree City USA designation, asking Cape May Point community members to create native plant buffers, creating pollinator pockets in association with Mayor's Monarch Pledge (MMP), and the possibility of a community Dark Sky designation. PM asked for EC members to share other potential ideas to consider for 2026.

MLM looked at the Climate Change Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, where one of the action items is to develop guidelines for properties to install rain gardens and buffers, or other action items that can reduce stormwater vulnerability. Something else MLM has noticed as a potential item to address in the community are trails of oil/residue from trash and construction vehicles which end up in our stormwater. MLM has been thinking about what we can do around these topics to make sure that the water entering the drains isn't contaminated. MLM wasn't sure if these concerns fell within the scope of the EC to remedy but noted that they certainly fall into the same hazards bucket.

MLM also included that the dunes and ensuring/continuing awareness about them is a priority but would be interested in anything else the EC can think of regarding supporting the dunes and their unique habitat within the EC's future goals. Regarding the MMP, MLM highlighted that since the EC had such great success with the milkweed giveaway, that additional giveaways should certainly be considered in the future. PM asked if MLM could send her bullet points with these ideas as further things to consider for the Jan. meeting as far as 2026 goals, since some of EC members were currently absent.

SB shared the idea of environmental surveys which could be volunteer based or sponsored from local organizations to get a record of different wildlife and plant life for the Point. It could be used to create a dataset for discussion when the EC is looking to place things like the lake mats. Whether that comes from the budget or via volunteers, SB highlights that it can also positively engage the public. PM asked SB to send a bullet on this idea for the Jan. meeting as well.

SY added that even just collecting existing data like monarch tagging information from the Cape May Point Arts & Science Center and from DEP who get shorelines data could be a useful initiative. SB pointed out that apps like iNaturalist and Ebird can and already are used by the public to collect data. PM shared that there may be somewhere on the website that has an iNaturalist listing for Triangle Park.

EO inquired if Brett knew about the native plant list project for Cape May County. SY did ask, but he didn't know anything about it or what happened with it. EO mentioned Mark Garland, who SY has yet to follow up with regarding the project. EO thought the list would be available for everyone to view once it was complete. SB knows MG well and will reach out about the project. It was mentioned that the project was done with Mike Crewe who was doing a plant/tree survey for Cape May County and that it would be available online. Garland did the survey at CMPT. SY believed Mike's listing was from 2018. EO emphasized that the survey could deliver some valuable information for the EC's questions and moving forward. SA added that MG was trying to make it available free of charge but doesn't know if it ever came to fruition.

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PM suggested that the EC can also use the [NJ Native Plant Society](#) website for native plant listings for the county as an additional resource. <https://npsnj.org/>

SA contributed that years ago when the south end of the lake project finished, it was pitched to add a kiosk about local information on what is happening in the area. SA wondered now, with the mats going in and potential surveys, that maybe a kiosk is something the EC could get. Posts/updates could be made four times a year about what people might see or are seeing as the seasons change. SA has been putting things up at the Alexander kiosk about what's happening at the beach like different fish that could be spotted. SA highlighted that there's not much information available to people at the south end of the lake.

PM noted that since a kiosk would need someone committed to keeping it up to date and creating the information, she doesn't think the EC can move forward with it by the end of this year, but said it could potentially be added to the list for 2026 goals. PM asked SA to send a bullet to add to the 2026 goals and projects list.

SY has also noticed the disrepair of the handful of kiosks at the Point currently. SY did have a conversation with RJ in collaboration with the Taxpayers Association about updating the kiosks everywhere in the Point. SY hopes there can be overall more coordination with other organizations in updating and maintaining the existing local kiosks.

Information sharing from the New Jersey Shade Tree Conference: PM's impression was the conference was a good use of time, but she left feeling that they learned less about trees and more about the organizations that support the Shade Tree Commission. PM did learn that the number one reason a tree fails to thrive is that it is planted too deep. Additionally, PM shared the following information related to tree maintenance: a newly planted tree that is 1.5 caliper (diameter of a tree trunk at chest height) needs 15 gallons of water a month for two years; if using a water collar on a new tree, it needs to be removed before the first frost; and stakes should be removed after one year of growth. PM shared that it would still be a great conference for anyone who would like to attend next year.

Draft article—Supporting birds in the winter: PM asked for feedback about the draft article she shared for supporting birds over the winter. No comments were made, so PM requested CL to format and prepare the article for launch.

CORRESPONDENCE

PM received an email from Sustainable Jersey about a moratorium that has been put in place. The EC will not have to take action on renewing their certification until Dec. 2027 while Sustainable Jersey is in the process of making changes. PM already covered the response she received concerning the sweet gum in Triangle Park. PM was contacted by the Middle Township EC. They shared that they do not have a tree ordinance and were inquiring about the initial writing process of the ordinance. SY was able to provide the member with information to get started.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PM announced that the EC will not have a meeting in December.

SY was able to check-in with Bill during the meeting to answer some of the questions following her report. She shared that DN Well drilling was the company responsible for putting in the new well, and its cost was \$19,000. In addition, the iron in the water is caused by the region's geology and the rock layers. Also, the aquifers have a lot of iron due to corrosion. Since some of our aquifers are unconfined (lack a protective, impermeable layer of rock or clay), they can be infiltrated by polluted surface waters that reach the well water below.

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PUBLIC PORTION/ADJOURNMENT

On motion of SA, seconded by SB, the meeting was opened to the public. Garret from the Friends of Lake Lily attended the meeting. Garret commented that when the EC does a listing of the native trees in the area, it should be done on an ongoing and repetitive basis since there are trees migrating north with the climate change. He talked with his arborists who shared that in ten years trees that typically reside in regions south of the Point will be here, and then they will be considered native. He emphasized that some of the things discussed are not one and done. He was glad to hear that there will be no change in the fishing ordinance given he's called many times about children and adults fishing in the lake. He shared that he has been unable to find minutes from the previous meeting. Garret hopes that in January he will have something to report from the Friends group.

Garret asked what will be happening with the island at the south end of the lake. SY confirmed that there is still a plan to do a prescribed burn with a NJ forestry permit on the island, but that it will be challenging because it will need to be on a day without any wind. SY is hoping for it to take place sometime between Jan-Feb. SY has drafted a statement for the first Commissioners Meeting in Dec. to remind the community what will be happening and why the EC thinks it is the best action. SY has asked the Friends of Lake Lily and Taxpayers Association for feedback. She is thankful to both for their funding contributions and assured that everything is in process to move forward with installation of the lake mats. SY is very hopeful that the mats will provide a non-chemical solution for managing the aquatic weeds. SY added that even the biomass on the island is shedding into the lake and increases the phosphorus and organic matter impacting the lake. SY reported that there will be replanting plans for the island after the initial round of invasive management.

EO asked SY about the permeable walkways on the southside of the lake around the Veterans Memorial, expressing that Bill was concerned with them holding up. SY said that it is something she will need to investigate further. SA did some of the research when the walkways were going to be put in but was unsure what material was used and what company did the work. SY will find out more information on these items. From what SA understood, there were only a few companies who work with permeable materials. After Bill shared his concerns at a meeting that took place the night prior, SA researched and learned there are five different porous mixtures used. SA doesn't mind doing more research and contacting the company for more information if SY can find out which company was responsible for the installation in the first place.

Garret asked SY about the removal of ash after the burn. SY has discussed with others about what to do with the residual plant matter after the burn, including the removal of roots that might need spot treatment. SY clarified that due to the amount of overgrowth, the plant material that has been shedding into the lake is the increase of phosphorus she's concerned about, not the burning itself. Even once the burn takes place, there are concerns such as swans which will try and get into the island to nest, so fencing may need to be considered to re-establish the plant life on the island. SY really hopes the community understands that this is a continuous effort to improve the lake.

On motion of MLM, seconded by EO, the meeting was adjourned at 11:28 am.

Respectfully submitted, Courtney R. Lacombe, EC Secretary