

CAPE MAY POINT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

March 12, 2025 – 10:00 am

Start Time: 2:00 pm

End Time: 3:37 pm

Present:

(x) Sandy Allison
(x) Rich Johnson
(x) Mary Lynn Mackenzie
(x) Paula Massanari

(x) Emelia Oleson
(x) Tom Reilly
(x) Commissioner Yunghans

The Environmental Commission of the Borough of Cape May Point was called to order by Chair PM at 2:00 PM 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.

PM welcomed everyone to the meeting, said that the EC believes their work is critical to protecting the environment of Cape May Point, and read the following mission statement: The EC is responsible for the restoration, preservation and development of the natural resources located in Cape May Point. In practice, this involves reviewing, coordinating, researching, and advising the Borough on all environmental matters including the management of public lands. PM concluded by saying that the role of the EC is that of an advisory group to the Borough. PM welcomed new members of the EC and called on those present to introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of PM, seconded by EO, the minutes of the December 11, 2024 EC meeting were approved by all present.

ON-GOING BUSINESS

Commissioner Liaison Report:

- The annual tree accomplishment report as mandated by the State of New Jersey was submitted. She thanked
- Catherine Busch, Elise Geiger and Peg Fraatz for their work on the tree committee and for the over 300 volunteer hours they have dedicated to the removal of invasive plants and trees around the lake.
- SY shared that there are two new employees joining PW replacing the three employees who left the Borough, all for different personal reasons.
- Water main replacement on portions of Lehigh and Ocean Avenues has been completed. Concrete work comes next and the asphalt work will begin in April.
- The recent storm led to severe damage to a tree on the circle that needed to be removed, as well as many branches that came down.
- All sprinklers have been repaired around Lake Lily following months of back-and-forth with Atlantic City Electric regarding a faulty panel that they needed to replace. The panel now works, and the sprinklers will be tested this month to ensure they will work next month for the gardens. Courtney Leo has four new Bedfellows who are volunteering, and mulch day is scheduled for May 3.
- There have been a lot of issues with Clean Flo and the work they do for the Borough in Lake Lily. They were contacted in November to repair the bubblers so that we could apply the Winter Warrior treatment. They are finally onsite today, and are fixing all of the bubblers. They volunteered to disperse the Winter Warrior in the lake while they are here. PW has asked Clean Flo for a report on the health of the lake, which she will then share with the EC. We have also asked them to comment on how the extreme drought throughout NJ is impacting the health of the lake. September and October 2024 were the driest months on record for our area.

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- Last year the EC worked on creating the template for a sign for the Salem Oak tree. KR explained that the sign went to the Commissioners for approval, and there was concern over vandalism and whether drawing attention to the tree would put it at risk. PM explained the history of the Salem Oak tree and the Borough's seedling, and said the EC spent a significant amount of time on creating the sign. She requested that SY look into what was submitted to the Commission, and that we discuss at the next meeting and render a decision. KR will send the communication to the new members of the EC. EO said that Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware has written several best-selling books on the environment and has a number of YouTube presentations that will help educate new members. The Salem Oak will remain small for at least 5 years as it establishes its root structure. PM said she sent an email about Doug Tallamy to the new members and recommended they watch some of his videos.
- SY said another item that the EC worked on in the past was a proposal to the Commissioners about a light trespass ordinance. Last night during the Commissioner's meeting it was discussed, and Mayor vanHeeswyk said she was passing it on the Planning Board for review.
- The EC budget for 2025 is \$5000; the Tree Trust Fund has a zero balance; the Environmental Trust Fund has \$6,263.53; the Lake Lily Trust Fund has a negative balance of -\$461.00. The Taxpayers Association and the Civic Club have approached Public Works stating they have money to donate and they are asking what our needs are. PM asked if SY will be asking the EC for recommendations on where donations could be used, and SY said she would appreciate that. PM requested that it be added to the next agenda for discussion. TR asked where the money in the Lake Lily Trust comes from, and who authorizes expenditures from those funds. KR said the Lake Lily Trust Fund was established specifically to receive donations for the lake, and the Borough doesn't add money to that account. We receive donations from the Friends of Lake Lily and from private donations. As far as the expenditures, SY would be the one to approve, but she hasn't been here long enough to do that. SY confirmed that the money donated to the Trust cannot be used by the Borough in any other way. PM asked if the money received from the Warren Garden Club every year goes to the Environmental Trust Fund. KR confirmed it does and said she believes there is nothing in the Tree Trust because that trust was just established last year and has not received any donations yet. RJ asked who determines how the money is spent from the trusts. KR said that all Borough expenditures fall under one of the three commissioners, and while it is under their purview to approve, they can certainly discuss an expenditure with other commissioners in a public meeting and decide based on that discussion.

Invasive Patrol: PM said that what started as a request that the EC deal with a large garden bed in Pavilion Circle that was overgrown with invasive species has now led to an ongoing effort to remove invasive species around the perimeter of the lake, beginning at the south end. PM said that she would like to write letters to the three primary volunteers (Elise Geiger, Catherine Busch and Peg Fraatz) to thank them for their hard work and dedication. She will draft the letter and send it to KR. If anyone is interested in joining them, they meet every Monday at 9:15 am on the southwest side of the lake.

Follow up discussion on Triangle Park:

PM requested that KR share the minutes from the December EC meeting on her screen to facilitate a discussion on Triangle Park. Catherine Busch had reported at that meeting that the EC needs to decide what they will do with wooded area of the park. PM said she sees three possible recommendations and would like us to vote on these at the next meeting:

- The EC can ask the Tree Committee for their recommendation on next steps
- The EC could contact NJ Audubon and ask if they are interested in signing a new contract with the Borough, which would be based on their available staffing.
- The EC could partner with a tree company to provide annual maintenance to the trees.

TR asked if the contract with Audubon was a positive experience; SA said there were many discussions about Audubon's staffing and timing. PM concurred, saying she recalls those comments being made about work around

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the lake, but she is unsure about their work experience in Triangle Park. PM said if anyone else has ideas they can present them. She also said the current EC doesn't have a lot of knowledge about trees, and she is planning to take the training that the Tree Committee participated in. If anyone else is interested, please send her an email and copy KR.

Planning Board: PM thanked MLM for being the liaison for the PB. The first item she reported on was that PB Chair Matt Brown is putting together a project team for the completion of a Climate Change Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment. The project team will be meeting virtually for less than two hours a month but there may be four to eight hours of work to complete in between meetings. They are looking for a member of the EC to join that team. As of now, PM and RJ both declined to join because of other priorities. PM said if anything comes up MB can reach out to us. If any EC member is interested in joining this group, please let PM know and we can put you in touch with MB. The second item of discussion relates to the upcoming hearing for the CMBO at 701 E. Lake Drive. MLM said she will take feedback from the EC and provide it to MB. She described the project as follows: CMBO wants to renovate the first floor, add to the second floor, renovate the steps and deck, construct an ADA compliant handicap ramp, install new steps, install a new observation deck and install a handicap parking spot. These changes will not increase the building's footprint. In terms of potential impact, the parking space would be asphalt paving, which is being described as pervious. There will be an addition to lot coverage, but based on their lot size they are well under the floor area ratio. They state that all drainage will follow the same patterns that they do now and should not affect adjacent properties. In the plan they state that existing trees will remain, but given the construction of the ramp it could be a challenge. EO said that she was unable to pull up the plan in email, but she finds it difficult to believe that the trees won't be harmed. SA read everything and reviewed the maps and plans at Borough Hall. She understands why they want to make it ADA compliant and the front steps are difficult. It appears they will have to dig into the berm to create the parking space, and trees will have to come down. In order to install the ramp, trees and underbrush will have to come out. Back in the seating area they have markers on trees with red and orange tape, but she is unsure if they will stay or go. She is concerned about the use of pavers in the project because the rain will run down to the seating area in the back or to the handicap parking. PM sent MLM an article on ways to prevent damage to trees during construction so that when she outlines expectations she will include that in the discussion. PM thanked MLM for her report.

Mayors' Monarch Pledge:

PM said that everyone should have received an email from her about the MMP so that the EC can vote on whether to sign up for a fifth year. On motion of TR seconded by MLM, the EC unanimously voted to participate in the MMP 2025. PM will handle the submission to the National Wildlife Federation. She requested KR share her screen with the proclamation she created to be signed by Mayor vanHeeswyk. The group reviewed, and had no comments. PM requested that KR have the Mayor sign the pledge and send out to the community. PM asked that if anyone wants to work with her to support the MMP this year to please email her with a copy to KR.

Communication on Nectar Producing Plants/Review of Educational Walk

In 2024 the EC discussed doing a series of communications on nectar producing plants, as well as potentially leading an educational walk. PM asked if anyone felt they had the expertise to lead the walk, which would require them to be knowledgeable about the garden at the south end of the lake. TR said he could ask Courtney Leo who is leading the Bedfellows program.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of OPMA/Sunshine Law: KR briefly reviewed the Open Public Meetings Act and the Sunshine Law with the new members of the EC to ensure that members do not discuss Environmental Commission business unless they are in a public meeting. As a five-member EC with two alternate members, any time three EC members or alternate

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members are together discussing business, it creates a quorum, which must be avoided. All email communication to the group should be routed through the Chair or Secretary, and no one is permitted to 'reply all'.

ANJEC Training

PM described how the EC has used ANJEC in the past and said that everyone has been signed up for membership this year and should begin receiving emails. Everyone should have received a message encouraging them to take the ANJEC training for effective ECs. You can review recorded sessions through ANJEC's YouTube channel.

CORRESPONDENCE

The only correspondence was related to the Planning Board application that MLM covered.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TR asked if the Borough has ever made a public announcement on the exact type of fertilizer we encourage people to use because of runoff into the lake and its contribution toward plant and algae growth. PM said the EC has asked people to cut back on fertilizer application, but hasn't specifically said what kind to use. As an EC we may not want to name a particular product, but we could name the components of one that would be less detrimental to the lake. She also thinks the Borough should look at what they are also applying to public lands, particularly Circle Park. ANJEC might be a good resource for this information. If someone wants to volunteer to research this topic and present on it at the next meeting, PM will contact ANJEC to get their feedback as well. PM asked for a volunteer to do the research; TR volunteered. SY said that she had learned that garden beds at the edge of green space like Pavilion Circle help to absorb stormwater runoff. We have to be cognizant of not just fertilizer, but dog waste too, as we sometimes have to pump water out of the Lake into the drainage pipe that leads to the Delaware Bay. It would be helpful if the EC keeps educating the community on this topic. TR said that he looked at the website and the EC promotes what native plants and trees to use but not what kind of fertilizer to use. PM said the use of native plants and trees will help cut down on the use of fertilizer and water. PM concluded saying that this topic would be added to the April agenda.

The next EC meeting will be on April 16, 2025 because of a conflict for KR.

EO requested that we talk about compost bins and rain barrels at a future meeting. The Borough previously gave compost bins to interested homeowners, and Peg Fraatz previously did research on the rain barrels. PM requested that Kelly add this to the agenda for next month.

PUBLIC PORTION/ADJOURNMENT

On motion of SA, seconded by TR, the meeting was opened to the public. When no one wished to speak, on motion of TR, seconded by MLM, the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kelly L. Redington, EC Secretary