



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, March 9, 2023

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

and broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Deb Faires, Linda Plunkett, Doug Hatler, Mary Pringle, Sandra Brotherton, Jonathan Knoche, Belvin Olasov, Council Member Bogosian

Absent: Jordan Burrell

Staff Present: Director Kerr, Zoning Administrator Simms

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Dr. Brotherton made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2023 meeting, and Ms. Pringle seconded the motion.

Ms. Pringle corrected the spelling of Laura Russ to Lauren Rust.

Dr. Plunkett asked for further explanation of Litter goal 3 to be added to the minutes.

VOTE: The amended minutes passed unanimously.

3. Citizens' Comments -- none

4. Presentation on the Charleston County Greenhouse Gas Audit

Arielle Gerstein, Charleston County's Director of Sustainability, gave a presentation on the County's most recent Greenhouse Gas Audit. The timeframe studied for this audit was 2018 and 2020 and focused on outputs of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. The audit studied outputs from Charleston County, Charleston County government operations, and all municipalities within Charleston County.

Key findings of the audit at a county level showed an 18% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions, a 3% increase in county government emissions, and a 16-35% decrease across municipalities between 2018 and 2020. The Isle of Palms showed a 15% decrease in total greenhouse gas emissions during that same time period.

Charleston County has just begun meeting with consultants and forming committees to formulate climate action plans.

5. Presentation from the IOP Cleanup Crew

Susan Hill Smith, co-founder of the IOP Cleanup Crew, provided a detailed review of the activities of the Cleanup Crew from the past year including the volume of trash removed from the beach. She said they conducted 45 litter sweeps last year, more than the previous year, and expanded the area they cleanup. She shared that 60,000 items were removed from the beach and 44,000 items were removed from roads, parking lots, etc. Approximately 45 people volunteer at the Monday evening beach sweeps. Of note, Howard Hogue “Beach Santa” was responsible for the pickup of 36% of the litter cleanup.

She mentioned they will follow a similar schedule in 2023 and expect a lot of participation. The group is looking to become a 501(c)(3) this year and will further develop their conservation station at the Front Beach. She spoke about several partnerships with local groups including the Charleston County Public Library and the IOP Police Department. The Cleanup Crew would like to work with local businesses about best practices when it comes to good environmental habits.

Ms. Smith gave an extensive list of recommendations that the Environmental Advisory Committee could work on in tandem with the City government.

Linda Roe, Conservation Programs Coordinator for the South Carolina Aquarium, gave a detailed review of the makeup of the litter collected from the beaches and roadways on the island in 2022. 21% of all litter on the beach and 44% of all litter in roadways and parking lots were smoking-related items. 9% of collected litter is plastic litter, such as Styrofoam, straws, and retail bags.

Ms. Roe also detailed recommendations of action for the Committee to consider.

Mr. Howard “Beach Santa” Hogue spoke about his many litter sweeps he conducts between his home and the Isle of Palms. He said one sweep on Ocean Boulevard on February 25, 2023 yielded 241 cigarette butts, all of which, he said, would end up in the water if not picked up and properly discarded. Ms. Smith said there has been a 25% decrease in cigarette trash since the implementation of the smoking ban on the beach.

Director Kerr said he would speak to Chief Cornett about the enforcement of the smoking ban.

MOTION: Mr. Hatler made a motion to adjust the agenda to allow for discussion of beach signage and the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan RFP and to defer the remainder until the next meeting. Mr. Olasov seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Old Business

Update on signs regarding beach rules

Ms. Pringle stated the text on the signs discussed by Lauren Rust of the Lowcountry Marine Mammal Network last month must be approved by NOAA since they are providing the signs. Ms. Rust said that she does not believe text about shore birds could be added to the sign since they are not federally protected. She said that OCRM has not been involved in the placement of

other signs. A firm commitment and installation date is needed. The Committee must make a decision about this offer for free signs by the end of March.

Ms. Smith said the signage would not fit in the plans for the expansion of the Conservation Station. She mentioned that the new Marina operator seemed very interested in the signage.

Director Kerr said the City is involved in a “constant push and pull” about the volume of signs across the island. He said, “I do feel like this sign is contrary to a years-long effort to reduce visual clutter. Additionally, I think we already have this group’s sign at the Breach Inlet.” He believes this sign is at odds with the cohesive look of island-wide signage the City is trying to achieve.

Dr. Plunkett agreed on the visual clutter aspect of Director Kerr’s thoughts as did Mr. Hatler and Dr. Knoche. She also mentioned that the need to approve the sign now feels rushed.

The Committee agreed to not move forward with this offer of free signage at this time.

7. New Business

Review of Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan RFP

Director Kerr said, “This is a project in the City’s budget to do this year. It is also a goal included in the City’s draft of the Comprehensive Plan.” He expects that the group chosen to do the plan will want to come speak with this Committee as part of their report preparation process.

He added, “It would be a high-level plan of these are your community’s vulnerabilities. We think it is primarily in our infrastructure that as we deal with rising tides, it is going to heavily impact our infrastructure. So we would expect that the plan would have goals, strategies, and projects to address that.”

The Planning Commission will interview the respondents, grade their responses, and then make a recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Hatler would like to see the identification of the risk for each vulnerability (the likelihood of an occurrence and the consequence if it happened) noted in the report. This type of risk assessment will help the City prioritize projects and funding for such.

Dr. Brotherton suggested a word change to quantitative from qualitative on the first page of the RFP.

The City is in contact with the Sea Grant Consortium about companies that do such work.

8. Miscellaneous Business

Mr. Olasov shared that Mt. Pleasant Town Council will be voting on the formation of a Green Commission at their next meeting. He thought it would be helpful for Committee members to share the work of this committee with the Council ahead of their Monday vote.

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee will be Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 4pm. Presentations on PFAS and an update on the glass recycling will be postponed until the

May meeting. The April agenda will consist of the remainder of this agenda's Old Business and the takeaways from the Beach Advocates meeting.

9. Adjournment

Dr. Plunkett made a motion to adjourn, and Dr. Knoche seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk