



Environmental Advisory Committee

4:00 p.m., Thursday, September 14, 2023

Council Chambers

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC 29451

Agenda

1. **Call to order** and acknowledgment that the press and the public have been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act
2. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes** – July 13, 2023
3. **Citizen's Comments**
4. **Update from Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission on upcoming projects**
5. **Old Business**
 - i. Water Quality- update on potential water quality testing program
 - ii. Climate Action- replacement of gasoline vehicles and equipment
 - iii. Wildlife- discussion of native plant exhibition and classes
 - iv. Litter- update on cigarette canisters
 - v. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP
5. **New Business**
6. **Miscellaneous Business** - Next meeting date: 4:00 p.m., Thursday, October 12, 2023
7. **Adjournment**



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, July 13, 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 (via Zoom), Doug Hatler, Mary Pringle, Linda Plunkett, Belvin Olasov, Council Member Bogosian

Absent: Jonathan Knoche, Jordan Burrell, Sandra Brotherton

Staff Present: Director Kerr, Zoning Administrator Simms

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Mr. Hatler made a motion to approve the amended minutes of the June 15, 2023 meeting, and Mr. Olasov seconded the motion. The amended minutes passed unanimously.

3. Citizen's Comments - none

4. Old Business

A. Water Quality

Mr. Hatler reported that some of the testing they were considering is expensive. They would like to have some testing conducted on the water samples to differentiate between human and animal fecal coliform and to understand the sources of those contaminants. Additionally, they would like to continue to understand the relationship between water quality on the island and the septic systems and PFAS.

Director Kerr said that any significant expense will need to go through City Council if it exceeds the budgeted amount for the Committee's initiatives or such an expense could be worked into the the FY25 budget.

B. Climate Action

Mr. Olasov spoke about the City of Charleston's resolution to dedicate City resources for City staff to change to electric leaf blowers by the end of 2023. The resolution also encourages citizens to do the same, noting several health concerns surrounding the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. He believes such a resolution should be considered by City Council.

Director Kerr said that the City does not do its own lawn maintenance, but they could perhaps discuss the switch to electric leaf blowers with their landscaping contractors to see if they could do that and if there would be any associated costs. Council Member Bogosian said the response of the City's landscaping contractors would be needed before taking this recommendation to City Council. Director Kerr shared the vendors for vehicles used by Public Works do not recommend a change to electric vehicles at this time.

C. Wildlife

Ms. Pringle reported that the Turtle Team will be monitoring the beach every morning of the upcoming nourishment project on the south end of the island. She said it would be better if the project started before August 15 as the regular Turtle Team patrols end at that time.

She said there have been no reports of where the least terns are following the destruction of their nesting area on the island from the Memorial Day weekend rains.

Discussion ensued as to the importance of educating the public on the use of native plants and grasses in the home landscaping efforts. Director Kerr said Committee members need to provide the Recreation Center staff with contact information of individuals or businesses that would be willing to conduct such seminars. He also encouraged Committee members to speak with the Water & Sewer Commission about the possible use of their lot at 7th Avenue and Palm Boulevard as a place to showcase native plants and grasses. He also suggested they speak with Director Pitts and Assistant Director Asero about what it would take to move the City's landscaping towards native plants and grasses.

D. Litter

Dr. Plunkett spoke with concern about the candies thrown and left along the path of the 4th of July golf cart parade. Director Kerr said this is not a City-sponsored event. He suggested reaching out to the parade organizers to make them aware of the litter concerns. Mr. Hatler suggested making cleanup of the parade route a condition of the permit they need to hold the parade. He said he will reach out to Chief Cornett about how to manage a cleanup requirement.

E. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP

Director Kerr reported the contractor for the Sea Level Rise Adaptation plan has been selected and the agreement has been executed. He anticipates their work to begin soon and believes they may come speak to the Committee during their work process.

5. New Business -- none

6. Miscellaneous Business

7. Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Hatler made a motion to suspend the August meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee and for subcommittee work to continue as discussed prior to the September meeting. Ms. Pringle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee will be Thursday, September 14, 2023 at 4pm.

Mr. Hatler made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Olasov seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk

EAC Native Planting Project Narrative

The City of Isle of Palms' Environmental Advisory Committee has recently begun considering ways to promote and encourage residents to plant more native species on the island. The idea initially drew inspiration from Kiawah's "Naturally Kiawah" Recognition program and their various initiatives related to environmental stewardship and promotion of native landscapes.

Native plants refer to plants that occur naturally in a specific region, ecosystem, or habitat without human introduction (National Wildlife Federation; Audubon Society). Moreover, they refer to plants that are locally adapted to climatic and soil conditions and co-evolved with the other naturally occurring species. In contrast, non-native or exotic plants are introduced plants that do not occur naturally in a specific region. Non-native plants do not always pose a threat to native wildlife and sometimes can become naturalized. However, they are generally not as adapted to the local physical conditions or support native wildlife as well as native plants. In some cases, they can even become invasive species that are detrimental native species and natural habitats.

Aside from their compatibility with the landscape, native plants provide many benefits to people, wildlife, and landscapes. Firstly, native plants support and preserve native biodiversity by providing food sources and habitat. Because native plants coevolved with local wildlife, they are more equipped than non-natives to sustain and attract local wildlife and are crucial to maintaining the balance of natural ecosystems. Second, native plants require much less resources and maintenance than non-natives. Non-natives are typically maintained with significant levels of water resources, fertilizers, pesticides, and fossil fuel-based equipment. Native plants, on the other hand, are adapted to local soil and climatic conditions and are more resilient to common pests and diseases. Thus, they generally require less resource inputs and maintenance to thrive. Lastly, native plants are highly valued for their beauty and sense of place they provide. They reflect the natural landscape and are a way to preserve the natural history of a particular region (South Carolina Wildlife Federation).

Two-Tiered Approach

To meet this objective of encouraging more native planting on the island, the Environmental Advisory Committee have explored a two-pronged approach thus far:

1. **Educational Seminar on Native Plants:** provide a limited series of seminars to educate people about native plants and promote their adoption. These classes would cover multiple topics including what native plants are and the benefits they provide, compatible conceptual designs and best practices, how to get started, etc. The City would engage with local nurseries, experts, and consultants familiar with each respective subject matter and present at the classes, ideally held at the IOP Recreation Center
2. **Demonstration Garden/Pilot Garden:** dedicate a portion of available green space on the island for a demonstration garden that features various native plants feasible for residential landscape designs. The two possible locations for the demonstration garden

that have been discussed are the triangle lot off 7th Avenue and Palm Boulevard and the Carmen R. Bunch Park. The demonstration garden will likely be implemented on a pilot basis for one to two years. The reception by the community and practicality of maintenance will determine the longevity of the demonstration garden.

Next Steps

The next steps in the planning process are as follows:

1. Identify and contact potential instructors for the seminars
2. Obtain permission for the demonstration garden; the City owns Carmen R. Bunch Park, but the IOP Water and Sewer Commission own the triangle lot
3. Decide which green space to utilize and the demonstration model (traditional garden space or walking trail featuring natives along trail)
4. Find nursery/consultant who will develop conceptual design and planting scheme and install the plants
5. Determine who will maintain the garden
6. Decide what will happen at the conclusion of the pilot program