



Environmental Advisory Committee

4:00 p.m., Thursday, October 12, 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** – September 14, 2023
3. **Citizen's Comments**
4. **Old Business**
 - i. Water Quality- update on potential water quality testing program
 - ii. Climate Action
 - iii. Wildlife
 - a discussion of native plant exhibition and classes
 - b discussion of tree pruning
 - iv. Litter
 - v. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP
5. **New Business**
6. **Miscellaneous Business** - Next meeting date: 4:00 p.m., Thursday, November 9, 2023
7. **Adjournment**



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, September 14, 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, Doug Hatler, Mary Pringle, Linda Plunkett, Jonathan Knoche, Jordan Burrell, Sandra Brotherton, Council Member Bogosian

Absent: Belvin Olasov

Staff Present: Director Kerr, Zoning Administrator Simms

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Dr. Plunkett made a motion to approve the amended minutes of the July 13, 2023 meeting, and Ms. Pringle seconded the motion. The amended minutes passed unanimously.

3. Citizen's Comments

Susan Smith shared her concerns with the Committee about cheaply made and easily broken boogie boards left on the beach. She said the Clean Up Crew sees at least one a week discarded on the beach. She would like the City to prioritize getting them off the beach. Her complete comments are attached to these minutes.

Laura Lovins, speaking on behalf of the Barrier Island Preservation Association, said she is pleased to hear the Environmental Advisory Committee and City Council speaking about the dangers of septic systems. She is unsure if the septic systems on the island are working properly since inspections are not required. She would like to urge City Council to be proactive and not reactive to issues surrounding septic systems. Mr. Hatler said the Water Quality subcommittee is gathering data about septic systems and water quality.

4. Update from Isle of Palms Water & Sewer Commission on upcoming projects

Director Kerr said the Planning Commission's assessment of septic systems and the IOP Water & Sewer's Commissions sewer expansion plans were sent to Committee members for review. He shared the details of the MOU between the City and the Water & Sewer Commission and said there is considerable collaboration between the two entities regarding water and sewer concerns.

Chris Jordan, General Manager of the IOP Water & Sewer Commission, shared the details of three upcoming projects the Commission will be working on as part of their sewer expansion

plans. These projects will be funded by \$4.7 million in SCIIP grants. He said further expansion of the sewer system towards Breach Inlet is dependent upon funding. Director Kerr stated the City shares all possible funding sources with the Water & Sewer Commission.

Dr. Brotherton asked if neighbors are notified when a home wants to tie into the system. General Manager Jordan said surrounding neighbors are notified and asked if they wish to be part of the expansion. He shared a small project with a group of neighbors was recently completed on Merritt Boulevard.

Dr. Plunkett asked about the plan for a more detailed MOU regarding sewer expansion. She said more strategic plans will keep the issues in the minds of City Council and the public.

5. **Old Business**

A. **Water Quality**

Mr. Hatler said the revised goals of the Water Quality subcommittee were sent out and will be discussed at the October meeting. There is no further update on the water quality samples taken earlier in the year. The subcommittee is working to identify hot spots around the island to sample. Dr. Knoche said DHEC does sampling on the beach and along the intercoastal waterway. He will share this information with all Committee members.

Dr. Plunkett asked about the Adopt-a-Drain Program. Director Kerr said this program is done in conjunction with the City of Charleston and Charleston County. It was launched on the island in May. He said the adoptable drains cannot be any of those maintained by SCDOT. He will send the link to the program on the City's website to Committee members.

B. **Climate Action**

Director Kerr said the proposals for City Hall renovations will include the costs of making City Hall more energy efficient.

C. **Wildlife**

Ms. Pringle said several articles about native plants and grasses have been published in the *Island Eye*. Discussion ensued about potential plans for the triangle-shaped lot owned by the Water & Sewer Commission at 7th and Palm. Director Kerr said the Commission is very open to the idea. He said he could provide a conceptual layout of the property so that an implementation plan for the garden could be developed.

Director Kerr said the native plants and grasses seminars to be held at the Recreation Center should coincide with planting seasons. A January/February timeframe was suggested in light of March-May planting season.

Ms. Pringle shared that the recent saltwater incursion from Tropical Storm Idalia was found to be the reason for the native plants dying around 36th Avenue. She also shared that of the 47 loggerhead nests on IOP, four are still to hatch, and none were lost by the storm. The Turtle Team watched all nests during the sand scraping project that was recently completed at Breach Inlet.

D. Litter

Dr. Brotherton said she recently sent a picture of an overflowing cigarette butt cannister, and Asst. Director Asero told her his staff has had difficulty entering the cannisters in a timely manner. The job of emptying these cannisters will be turned over to the contractor who empties the beach trash cans. She also noticed that the cannisters at the beach accesses are hard to reach because there is a trash can in front of them.

E. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP

Director Kerr reported that Seamon Whiteside, the contractor for the Sea Level Rise Adaptation plan, has been collecting information and will be speaking with stakeholders in the future.

5. New Business -- none

6. Miscellaneous Business

A discussion about boogie boards and the water quality action plan will be on the next agenda.

The Committee briefly discussed how membership on the committee will be handled regarding those whose terms expire at the end of 2023.

7. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee will be Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 4pm.

Dr. Plunkett made a motion to adjourn, and Dr. Knoche seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:18pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk

Finding answers to pollution from Cheap Boogie Boards

Presented to Isle of Palms Environmental Advisory Committee – Sept. 14, 2023

From Susan Hill Smith, Cofounder Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew

From the time our group started in 2018, Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew has seen boogie boards left behind on the beach. They are often broken or otherwise unusable because of missing straps.

This summer, we have become more intensely aware of pollution caused by a cheap type of boogie boards with easily torn, thin fabric covers over what appears to be white polystyrene (Styrofoam). The flimsy foam quickly breaks - first into chunks and then into countless small pellets that are extremely light and disperse easily in the water or with any kind of breeze.

Just one of these cheap boards has the potential to unleash hundreds to thousands of plastic foam beads into ocean and coastal ecosystems.

Mid-summer, one broken board reportedly left by the trash cans at 25th Avenue for a week resulted in polystyrene foam chunks blown over several beach blocks. I came across one of these chunks at the opening to the beach at the 23rd Avenue access & tried to get as many of the pieces as possible. Another beachgoer who saw me told me about the board that had been breaking down at 25th.



Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew is now making it a priority to get left behind boogie boards off the beach, and especially if they are broken. Our volunteers were typically collecting at least 1-2 cheap broken boards like these, often with exposed polystyrene pieces, at every Monday night beach sweep during the second half of the summer. I also happened upon one breaking apart in one of the Wild Dunes Grand Pavilion pools recently.



Starting Points to Solutions

- **The City needs to make removal of left behind boogie boards left from the beach a priority.** Removal should happen within 24 hours of a board being abandoned as part of routine beach trash collection – even if this requires the City to cover extra labor costs.
- **Going into the next beach season, public messaging about cheap & broken boogie boards should play an important role in mitigating the problem:**
 - As a starting point, we can ask anyone who winds up with a broken board, or comes across a broken board, to take it off the beach and dispose of it properly, preferably at home.
 - We can also strike themes around buying, renting & using boards that are sturdy & sustainable.
- **I would like to give this issue serious study in partnership with the Environmental Advisory Committee.** We should also engage other conservation groups like Surfrider’s Charleston Chapter, which has an active schedule of litter cleanups in local coastal areas and has partnered with us previously. This is actually an international issue and has been part of a recent series by the BBC on the environmental impact of surfing.
- **I am not advocating for restrictions on the activity of boogie boarding itself – it’s otherwise a fantastic activity in many other ways.** I believe we will have to work with consumers and retailers to prevent these cheap, poorly made boards from continuing to pollute our coast.

*In 2019, the city passed restrictions on items that could be brought to the beach included polystyrene (Styrofoam) coolers, cups and food containers. You might technically be able to apply this law to certain types of boogie boards made of polystyrene. But I know first-hand that the law was not intended to target boogie boards.