



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, December 12, 2024

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

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

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Sandra Brotherton, Mary Pringle, Belvin Olasov, Doug Hatler, Todd Murphy

Absent: Dane Buckout, Lucia Spiotta, Laura Lovins, Council Member Miars

Staff Present: Director Kerr, Zoning Administrator Simms, Asst. Director Asero

2. Citizen's Comments

Susan Smith told the Committee that Dominion Energy is a for-profit company and a monopoly. She believes the City should stand up for its citizens with regards to the trees Dominion Energy is removing from the island. She also encouraged the Committee to advocate for the City to pay for a drone light show in place of a fireworks show on July 4th. She said fireworks create noise, air, and light pollution as well as toxic debris on the beach and in the ocean and animal anxiety. She said Folly Beach will be testing this option at the end of the month. She would like the Committee to discuss the matter further at their January meeting to make a recommendation to City Council prior to the start of the FY26 budget process.

3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Ms. Pringle made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2024 meeting, and Mr. Hatler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentations - none

5. Old Business

A. Wildlife

Ms. Pringle said the native plant garden has been winterized. She said that she and Park Williams will share the cost of additional gourds for the Purple Martins to nest in.

B. Litter

Director Kerr reported that Asst. Director Asero is speaking with potential contractors regarding the beach trash pickup. He said some of the prices on the spreadsheet shared last month have

changed. Contractors have noted that challenging nature of the job. This issue will be discussed at City Council's January workshop.

Dr. Brotherton mentioned a concern she has seen in social media about people tossing their dog waste bags onto piles of yard debris waiting to be picked up. Director Kerr said the Police Department is aware, and it is considered littering. However, to charge anyone with littering, the police must see the person leaving the bag. Dr. Brotherton suggested trash cans along Waterway Boulevard when it is completed. Mr. Hatler suggested a piece in the Island Eye to draw attention to the matter.

Mr. Murphy said he has collected ordinance information from other beach municipalities regarding their lighting ordinances. He will summarize the information for further discussion at the January meeting. Mr. Olov said light pollution is an islandwide concern. Ms. Pringle said streetlights need to be included in the conversation, asking Dominion Energy to install low-intensity lighting.

C. Water Quality

Mr. Hatler has received the results of the water quality testing and has begun to analyze them. He shared some of the results. Mr. Olov would like to know how the water quality of the island's waterways compares to other barrier islands. Mr. Hatler will complete his analysis of the results and present it to the Committee at a future meeting.

Director Kerr said the City is still discussing engaging with a Federal-level lobbyist. He pointed out to the Committee that City Council's objectives for a lobbyist will focus on beach nourishment, drainage, and City infrastructure improvements. They will consider the cost for the FY26 budget.

D. Climate Action

Mr. Olov expressed concern about Dominion Energy's tree removal project. He believes that if they pause the project and look more closely at the trees, some of the trees could be saved.

Director Kerr said the Public Services & Facilities Committee has invited Dominion Energy to their next meeting to discuss using the Non-Standard Service Fee to develop a master underground plan for the power lines in an attempt to make the selection of undergrounding projects more strategic. He explained to the Committee that putting lines underground requires 15' x 15' easements on private property for the transformers. He also said that Dominion Energy does not favor putting these boxes on the ground of an island prone to flooding.

Mr. Olov suggested the City hire an arborist. Director Kerr said there is not a push from City Council to pause or study the tree removal effort any further. He said the only thing an arborist would do is measure the proximity of a tree to the power lines. He said it is in Dominion Energy's service agreement with the homeowner to protect the lines on their property. The City has no authority to stop them. 120 trees have been removed so far.

Mr. Olov asked about the Recreation Department's willingness to switch to electric leaf blowers when their current blowers need replacement. Director Kerr said neither the Recreation

nor the Public Works departments have committed to such a change. Mr. Hatler asked about their objections and suggested changing the procurement standards to require the use of electric leaf blowers. Director Kerr said City Council has not shown a willingness to make the change. They would need to see that the change is cost neutral before making the modification.

6. New Business

Discussion of 2024 Committee Accomplishments

Dr. Brotherton compiled a list of the 2024 Committee Accomplishments and created a list of potential goals for 2025. She will add more ideas to that list based on information received from Ms. Pringle and distribute the list. Mr. Olasov suggested adding working with Charleston County on their Climate Action Plan.

She thanked Zoning Administrator Simms and Mr. Olasov for their work in securing the grant on the solar panels for the Public Works building, Mr. Murphy for working with the City's PR Officer placing environmental information on the City's website, Mr. Hatler for securing the water quality samples and testing, and Ms. Pringle for her work on the native plant garden.

Mr. Hatler thanked Dr. Brotherton for her leadership. Director Kerr noted the Committee has completed a lot of work in its first three years.

7. Miscellaneous Business

8. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 4pm.

Mr. Murphy made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Hatler seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk