

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, March 13, 2025 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

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

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Laura Lovins, Mary Pringle, Eric Cicora, Cindy Marrs, Sean Popson,

Todd Murphy

Absent: Dane Buckout, Lucia Spiotta, Council Member Miars

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

2. Citizen's Comments

Blair Amon spoke with concern about the presence of cyanobacteria in the water. She hopes to secure more recent water quality tests from the Charleston Water System and the IOP Water & Sewer Commission than what is currently available.

3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Ms. Pringle made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2025 meeting, and Ms. Marrs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- 4. **Presentations none**
- 5. Old Business

A. Wildlife

Ms. Pringle said she recently worked at the native plant garden, noting that Purple Martins are moving into the gourds. Another cold-stunned turtle was found in Wild Dunes. Turtle nesting season begins on May 1. She said the QR code on the turtle signs at the beach access paths is no longer working and is working to get it fixed.

Ms. Lovins shared that she and Ms. Smith looked at possible spots for the signs at the public dock and have discussed content. They have spoken to sign companies and shared the idea with Kirby Marshall of ATM. A portion of the funding may come from the Marina and Islander 71. Any outstanding funds will be brought to City Council for their consideration. More details about the number of signs, costs, and content will be reported at the April meeting.

B. Litter

Mr. Murphy reported that a review of lighting ordinances from surrounding coastal municipalities show that IOP's ordinance needs to address other areas of the island and not just the front beach. The proposed ordinance offers some changes including shining light down and not shining light beyond the boundaries of your property. It is not as technical as the lighting ordinance from the City of Folly Beach, but more could be added later.

Discussion ensued about ways to communicate the specifics of the lighting ordinance to residents and visitors. Of concern was the use of flashlights on the beach at night. Mr. Cicora believes there would be a lot of pushback from people prohibited from using a flashlight on the beach, adding that most people on the beach from October through May are residents. Ms. Pringle added that she has seen families with flashlights hunting ghost crabs. Director Kerr shared that the City's intent with the lighting ordinance as it relates to turtle season was only meant for buildings.

Word changes were offered. Mr. Murphy will make revisions and send it back to out to the Committee. He shared that compliance in other communities is citizen enforced. Director Kerr will have the Police Department weigh in on its enforceability.

Asst. Director Asero said the RFP for the beach trashcan pickup is ready to go out in June or July. He has spoken with those who might be interested submitting a bid. He is waiting to hear from Wild Dunes about the placement of the corrals.

City staff is implementing roadside cleanups during summer and hopes to offset some of the expense with a Palmetto Pride grant.

C. Water Quality

Ms. Lovins reported that Ms. Amon used AI to help interpret the water quality testing data from GEL. She reviewed those with higher than acceptable outcomes. Mr. Murphy said he would like to match the readings from the first water quality study against these current results. Zoning Administrator Simms stated he is meeting with the environmental specialist from Mt. Pleasant Waterworks next week to discuss the results. He has a map of outfalls he can send to the Committee so the data can be matched up.

Director Kerr added that it will be important drill down in the data to understand the origin of the higher nitrogen levels in three area.

Director Kerr said the Administration Committee interviewed two federal lobbyists and will make their recommendation to the City Council at the March 25 meeting.

D. Climate Action

Director Kerr said the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan was formally presented to City Council on March 11. Members of the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator Simms will be working with that plan and the recommendations from the Community Enrichment Plan to

identify areas of overlap. He anticipates environmentally-related recommendations making their way to this committee in 2-3 months.

The USACE has begun placing sand at Breach Inlet. The City has received the State permit for the shoal management project.

6. **New Business**

A. Discussion of using tree fund money to treat trees on the island that need nutrients and trimming

Ms. Lovins said she noticed a live oak at the Recreation Center is not looking well. She would like to have an arborist identify those trees in public areas that are in need of care. Zoning Administrator Simms, who is an arborist, said the tree at the Recreation Center has been treated, and he will look at the others across the island.

Director Kerr believes the tree fund, which is used to pay for palm tree trimming, can also be used to treat trees in public areas as needed. He said that if the care that is needed is below a certain threshold, they can move forward without needing to present it to City Council.

B. Discussion of glyphosate pesticide ban

Asst. Director Asero said the City does not use glyphosate in its landscaping. Ms. Lovins will meet with the landscape contractor for the WDCA to see if they are using glyphosate in their work. Ms. Marrs said she would speak to the resort about how the golf courses are treated. Both Ms. Lovins and Ms. Marrs will report back their findings in April.

C. Discussion of Kiawah's Good Neighbor policy

Mr. Murphy referenced a brochure in the meeting packet that is distributed by Kiawah Island. He believes it is worthwhile to have such a brochure for the Isle of Palms that could be added to rental agencies' welcome packets, the City's website, and beach signage.

7. **Miscellaneous Business**

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 4pm.

8. **Adjournment**

Mr. Murphy made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:34pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane City Clerk

Fireworks Update - Feb 13, 2025 EAC Meeting Presented by Susan Hill Smith, Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew Cofounder

Bottom Line on How We Can Reduce Environmental Impact

Other available alternatives to July 4th fireworks shows don't seem viable at this time:

- **Drone shows** in windy coastal environments currently appear to pose a greater risk for injuries and cancellations than firework shows see further details from Folly Beach on page 2. Plus, drone shows are currently more expensive than fireworks when looking at costs for shows of the same length.
- **Laser shows** evidently require a backdrop for the display than the ocean & empty sky cannot easily provide.
- No-debris fireworks are much more expensive and apparently don't have the same range for viewing. They are typically used when people need to be close to the show displays (cruises & stadium events). Even though they burn up more completely, no-debris fireworks involve more plastic materials than the fireworks shells used by the City of Isle of Palms' fireworks contractor, Munnerlyn Pyrotechnics, according owner Brent Munnerlyn.

But there appears to be an easy opportunity that could significantly reduce the plastic debris and some smoke caused by the show on Isle of Palms, starting this summer.

- In addition to fireworks shells, the IOP's July 4th show include "cake barrages" rapid fire sequences of smaller fireworks typically seen at lower levels.
- Most of the plastic debris and lower-level smoke generated from the IOP show comes from including a lot of cake barrages, according to Munnerlyn, who says IOP's former fire chief liked and requested them.
- Cake barrages are fun but not essential to a good show, and it's not unusual for a coastal community to go without them. Munnerlyn told me he agrees with removing them for environmental reasons and as a result of our discussion plans to remove them from other coastal shows that his company does.
- Other than cake barrages, Munnerlyn says the fireworks shells that his company uses are almost all biodegradable, with the exception of the "quick match" a roughly 2-foot-long fuse that ignites the shell. For safety reasons, he said, that needs to be plastic, but most of the quick match burns up, so it generates only a small amount of debris.

There are other concerns related to fireworks that this does not address:

- Impact of noise and light on wildlife & pets
- Residue of fireworks/explosives left in the air, ocean and beach
- Cost of show \$40,000 + staff overtime

- Stretching staff on what is already the busiest beach day/week of the year
- Late-night traffic gridlock, event management & public safety issues

However, removing fireworks without some kind of replacement could be a difficult/ divisive conversation for the community and is at risk of being shot down by City Council.

The only other alternative that I can think of would be in staging a July 4th event - maybe at the Rec - geared toward residents. This could be during the daytime & tied to the longstanding golf cart parade - or a small-scale fireworks display at night with no-debris fireworks (if that's even possible in that space). But making either of those switches would come with challenges, planning demands, etc. and might not be embraced by the community.

Also, a likely valid line of thinking is that by providing a professional fireworks display, less people are likely to set off fireworks on their own, which is illegal on the island but happens anyway, impacting neighbors and creating safety issues.

Details from the Folly Beach drone show

- I spoke directly with Kelly Travers, Folly Association of Businesses (FAB) event coordinator & the point person for the attempted New Year's Eve drone show.
- With their Town Council approval, FAB organizes and pays for Folly's fireworks shows on July 4th & Dec. 31.
- On behalf of FAB, Travers researched alternatives to fireworks, including laser shows, which she ruled out because it lacks the needed backdrop for projection.
- She got quotes from three drone companies and chose the middle quote.
- She invested time in assisting the selected company on the 15 slide designs most of which had local meaning, for example, Morris Island Lighthouse.
- They did a "beautiful" test run of the drone show on Dec. 30 with no concerns.
- The next day, however, high winds were forecasted. While the contractor was certified to do shows in winds up to 30mph and the CEO told Travers they should be safe, she expanded the area restricted from viewing out of an abundance of caution.
- While not the same company, the Folly event came on the heels of an Orlando, Florida incident earlier in the month in which a boy required heart surgery after a drone injured him during a holiday show.
- Early reports say the winds on the ground were 18mph, but Travers suspects the wind sheer at the top of the display was much stronger. She noticed that the top of the lighthouse display was missing and said a few of the drones did fall.
- The show stopped early on when one of the viewers reported being brushed by a drone and had scrapes on his cheek. The drones used by the company were a little larger than a hand.

- The FAA is still investigating. FAB has not received a refund for the show.
- As a result of Folly's experience, Travers would not currently advise paying for a drone show in a coastal environment that's susceptible to high winds. She also noted that it can be hard to get insurance for drone shows. FAB will likely discuss the issue at its March meeting.

Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew Annual Report



Looking back at 2024

IOP Cleanup Crew Snapshot

IOP Cleanup Crew uses volunteer power to keep the coast clean, protect natural ecosystems and public health, document litter data, and help solve the pollution crisis. Since 2018, thousands of volunteers have joined the crew to collect more than 225,000 litter items, while documenting the data in the <u>Litter Journal</u>, established by South Carolina Aquarium, which also assists us at our events. **Note:** We plan to create an official board and become an 501c3 nonprofit by spring of 2025.

Our Welcome Committee

Cofounder/leader Susan Hill Smith, Howard Hogue (Beach Santa), Rebecca Stephenson, Colleen Lehrke, Paula Richnafsky (South Carolina Federal Credit Union community representative), Linda Rowe (conservation programs manager for South Carolina Aquarium), and Beth Timon (aquarium volunteer).

Event Schedule

We have established a year-long rhythm of regular litter sweeps. Frequency correlates to increased beach traffic and warmer weather, which influences the amount of litter.

- October through February second Monday of the month, 4:30-5:30 pm
- March to end of May spring litter sweep series every other Monday, with a 5:30 pm special welcome that's good for students and other new volunteers, with a litter sweep until 7 pm.
- Memorial Day week Wednesday to Labor Day 2 litter sweeps a week: Mondays from 6-7 pm and our Wednesday Breakfast Club from 7-8 am
- In 2024, we partnered again with IOP Police on a July 5th morning litter sweep for three litter sweeps that holiday week.
- We occasionally support other groups, businesses and orgs with off-schedule litter sweeps.



Our Volunteers & Supporters

We involve volunteers from IOP & throughout the Lowcountry, as well as out-of-town visitors.

Our average attendance at our special spring series of sweeps was 90. That includes our April 22 Earth Day litter sweep, one of our highest ever attended events with 125+ volunteers, including City of IOP employees. In summer, our weekly Monday night litter sweeps have an average attendance of 37, and Wednesday morning Breakfast Club average was 12.

The City of Isle of Palms supports the "citizen scientists" of IOP Cleanup Crew by covering costs of T-shirts & magnets, which allow volunteers free City parking during events. Palmetto Pride and the aquarium have helped with supplies. IOP restaurants - Windjammer, Coconut Joe's, Lawrence's, Smugglers, The Boathouse, Acme, Sea Biscuit & Cafe Paname - offer discounts to volunteers after litter sweeps.

Special 2024 Litter Sweeps

- We held a "pop-up" Saturday litter sweep after mild impact from Hurricane Helene. With the OK of City staff, we intentionally targeted debris related to the severe erosion and destruction of docks, etc. at the southwest end of the island.
- In October 2024, we went on location for the first time to support Sullivan's Island Elementary School's PTA & Kaleidoscope with an after-school litter sweep with guests from North Charleston Elementary, which put together this excellent video.







Building up awareness through news coverage & social media

- We typically have at least 3-4 visits a year by TV news in addition to articles in the Moultrie News, Island Eye and now Island Vibe, but in 2024, saw a big bump in media attention.
- We worked with South Carolina Aquarium in April to stage a well publicized recognition event for Howard Hogue (Beach Santa) as he documented his millionth item in the Litter Journal. While he is a valuable member of the IOP Cleanup Crew Welcome Team, he does regular litter sweeps on IOP and across the Lowcountry on his own, and is far and away the biggest Litter Journal contributor.
- o Howard received <u>1A centerpiece coverage in The Post and Courier</u> and added <u>kudos from the P&C's editorial board</u>. All local TV news outlets have highlighted his achievements.
- o A related <u>Post and Courier opinion column</u> by Cofounder Susan Hill Smith focused on the power of data collection.
- In spring, an interview by Live 5 TV anchor Raphael James with Susan highlighted styrofoam litter created by cheap boogie boards.

- We secured extra attention from local TV news outlets <u>like this Channel 4 segment</u> around the post-Fourth of July litter sweep that we typically do with Isle of Palms Police Department helping to draw attention to the "dirtiest beach day of the year."
- We are thankful to be featured on the City's website and see our Facebook posts shared occasionally in the City's social media.

Continuing efforts around cheap boogie boards





• In early 2024, Susan and IOP Environmental Advisory Board Chairwoman Sandy Brotherton successfully lobbied the IOP Harris Teeter to stop selling a common kind of cheap boogie boards that break apart easily with the potential to unleash hundreds to thousands of styrofoam beads into the environment.

- More recently, Susan has connected with the director of Isle of Palms County Park. She
 is talking to the all the county beach parks about eliminating this class of boards from the
 options they sell to park-goers.
- We are targeting a distinguishable kind of board fabric cover on top, plastic mesh on bottom crumbly old-school styrofoam inside. All boogie boards contain some kind of foam, but these low-quality boards appear to pose the most threat.
- Susan plans to reach out directly to wholesale distributors of beachgear, starting with one in Myrtle Beach that supplies stores throughout the Southeast, to see if they will eliminate the cheap boards from their offerings.
- We will also try to promote opportunities on IOP to rent boogie boards that are built to last.

Analysis of 2024 IOP Litter Data

Isle of Palms Cleanup Crew uses the South Carolina Aquarium's Litter Journal (an online platform available to the public) to itemize and document the litter we collect, as do other individuals and groups. A large percentage of our data – and the Litter Journal data for IOP – comes from the Front Beach area, which along with the adjacent area for Charleston County Park attracts the most IOP visitors.

Litter Journal Totals & Trends for IOP

Smoking litter continues to decrease on streetscape

The percentage of recorded beach litter tied to smoking declined from 34% in IOP Cleanup Crew's first year (2018) to 21% in 2021 & 2022. This correlates with increased conversation/awareness around cigarette litter and IOP enacting a ban on smoking at the



beach at the start of 2020.

• From 2022 to 2023, the percentage of litter tied to smoking dropped again on the beach (21 to 16%) and on the streetscape, including parking lots (44 to 39%). This correlates

with the City installing more cigarette receptacles, including Surfrider's eye-catching "Save Your Butt" canisters, with Environmental Advisory Committee support.

- During 2024, the City made more concerted efforts to empty canisters, and the percentage of litter tied to smoking on the streetscape, where smoking is still legal, dropped 5 points to 34%.
- While the percentage of beach litter tied to smoking stayed constant YOY at 16%, we anticipate a further drop in 2025 if IOP Beach Services Officers continue to issue warnings and tickets for smoking on the beach, as they began to do mid-summer 2024.
- Working more with Front Beach businesses to increase available receptacles on their properties and encourage proper litter disposal could help continue the downward trend on the streetscape. Sandy Brotherton worked on this previously for the EAC.
- Cigarette litter is still the #1 litter item documented for the streetscape. It dropped to #2 on the beach in 2023 and remained there for 2024.

IOP's Litter Journal count dropped noticeably in 2024 with less "solo" sweeps by Beach Santa

For nearly a decade, Howard Hogue (Beach Santa) has devoted a significant amount of his time to independently collect litter on Isle of Palms for free, and in 2018, he began to document that with the Litter Journal. He continues this practice, but is steering more time to other parts of the Lowcountry, and early last year, he had a heart attack, which initially slowed him down.

While the total 2024 litter count for IOP in the Litter Journal showed a YOY drop of 7,826 items, an 11% dip, Howard's IOP totals dropped by 9,566 as he did less than half the number of "solo" litter sweeps on IOP as he did the year before. The City of Isle of Palms should factor this into their efforts to increase paid litter collection in the Front Beach area.

A look at the relative volunteer level of effort

This snapshot looks at counts from volunteers in similar group efforts for comparison purposes and can indicate changes in the amount of litter over time. The 2022 to 2023 drop was likely influenced by the notable drops in the % of our litter count tied to smoking on both the beach and

the streetscape - declining smoking litter may mean declining litter overall, though there is little



change from 2023 to 2024.

- 2022: 60,487 debris items were removed by 1,382 group volunteers (43.7 debris/volunteer LOE)
- 2023: 48,786 debris items were removed by 1,339 group volunteers (36.4 debris/volunteer LOE)
- 2024: 51,786 debris items were removed by 1,409 group volunteers (36.7 debris/volunteer LOE)

We can't track this but know many groups and individuals collect litter on their own without recording in the Litter Journal. With growing awareness and initiatives that include the Fill A Bag bucket tree at Front Beach, untracked efforts have likely increased and influence the litter amounts our volunteers encounter.

IOP Litter Data Totals

61,933 litter items documented for Isle of Palms (IOP), according to total Litter Journal data for 2024. That's down 7,826 from 69,759 litter items in 2023, likely due to the dip in litter sweeps by Beach Santa.

6,900 litter items (11% of total) removed by Howard Hogue (aka Beach Santa) in 23 "solo" sweeps (2 Beach sweeps, 21 Roadside sweeps). That's less than half his litter sweeps (52) and his litter count (16,446) in 2023.

51,786 litter items (84%) removed by IOP Cleanup Crew & friends, including 4 SC Aquarium-led sweeps. In total: 41 group sweeps (9 private groups, 4 off-season monthly sweeps, 6 Spring sweeps, 11 Monday Night Summer sweeps, and 11 Summer Breakfast Club sweeps). That reflects 1,409 recorded instances of volunteering, most for 30-60 minutes.

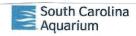
46,497 items (75%) involve some type of plastic. That includes cigarette butts, which have plastic threads. All other material types were found in much lower quantities (Paper - 12%, 7,202; Metals - 4%, 2,452; Glass - 1%, 655; Other items [clothes, wood & construction debris, fireworks, etc.] at 8%, 4,927).

41,512 litter items removed from beach habitat. Of these items, 16% (6,467) were some form of smoking debris (cigarette filters, cigar tips, eCig parts).

20,421 litter items removed from roadside, parking lots, and developed areas of the island. Of these items, **34%** (**6,902**) were smoking debris.

| Beach Top 15 Littered Items (87% of all beach | litter) |
|---|---------|
| Plastic Food Wrappers + Film | 7009 |
| Cigarettes + Filters | 6070 |
| Paper + Cardboard | 4535 |
| Plastic Caps + Lids | 3345 |
| Other Plastic | 2359 |
| Plastic Fragments (rigid) | 2218 |
| Clothing, Shoes + Fabric | 1805 |
| Styrofoam (other) | 1706 |
| Plastic Straws | 1526 |
| Plastic Straw Wrappers | 1381 |
| Other Items (please list) | 1056 |
| Plastic Toys | 955 |
| Fireworks | 839 |
| Plastic Cups, Plates, etc. | 718 |
| Plastic Bottles | 670 |

| Streetscape Top 15 Littered Items (93% of streetscape litter) | | |
|---|------|--|
| Cigarettes + Filters | 6642 | |
| | | |
| Paper + Cardboard | 2639 | |
| Plastic Food Wrappers + Film | 2173 | |
| Plastic Straws | 1702 | |
| Plastic Caps + Lids | 1031 | |
| Other Plastic | 752 | |
| Other Metals | 669 | |
| Plastic Cups, Plates, etc. | 565 | |
| Plastic Fragments (rigid) | 528 | |
| Clothing, Shoes + Fabric | 388 | |
| Plastic Straw Wrappers | 362 | |
| Glass Bottles + Fragments | 356 | |
| Beverage Cans (aluminum) | 349 | |
| Plastic Bottles | 299 | |
| Other Medical Supplies | 211 | |



Litter Journal Report

Input data and photos: https://www.anecdata.org/projects/view/122

| Name(s): Location: | Habitat: | Number of Participants: Date: Duration: |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | When possible, includ | e descriptions/brands! |
| Plastics | | Smoking-related Items |
| Bags –Non-Retail: | | Cigarettes/Filters: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | · · | |
| | | Cigars/Tips: |
| | | |
| ragments (rigid): | 4.4 | Lighters: |
| | | Tobacco Packaging: |
| | | |
| | | Balloons: |
| Styrofoam (other): | | Medical Supplies/Personal Hygiene |
| | | Band-Aids/Gauze: Condoms: |
| | | Diapers: Masks: |
| | | Other (list): |
| | | |
| Other Plastics (list): | | Metals |
| | | Beverage Cans (aluminum): |
| Dumping of Large Items | | Food Cans (tin/steel): |
| Appliances (list): | | Other Metals (list): |
| Full Trash Bags: | | |
| Tires/Tire Pcs: | | |
| Building Materials: | | Miscellaneous Items |
| | | Batteries: |
| Fishing Gear | | Clothing/Shoes/Fabric: |
| ishing Line/Nets: | | Fireworks: |
| Other (hooks, lures, etc.): | | Paper/Cardboard: |
| Glass | | |
| Bottles/Fragments: | | |
| Other (list): | | Rubber (hard/foam): |
| | | Other Items (list): |