

Town of North Beach
Environmental Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 7, 2023
7 PM at Town Hall

Attendees: Lisa Garrett, Mary Healey, Jeff Noyes, Herb Wolff, Allan Creamer

Agenda and discussion: This meeting touched on various topics including recycling, the new Overlook Park Nature Center, and some local residential projects generating concern regarding their environmental impact.

General Discussion/Greeting of Mary Healey as new Town Council Liaison to the EC

- Lisa announced that in March she will begin her 5th year working for NB! The team congratulated her on her great work so far, recognizing the many personal (and professional) challenges she has faced these years.
- Mary talked about her interest in environmental issues, as well as a desire to possibly help with the NB House & Garden Club.

Recycling Contract

- Jeff explained (mainly to Mary) that the EC had spent a lot of time discussing the recycling program, but that it had not really been asked to make any recommendations to the town regarding the recycling contract.
- Mary explained that the discussion up to this point in Town Council meetings has been mainly the cost, how many days collection would be, and that the recycling aspect had not been discussed yet. She suggested the EC attend the upcoming council meeting to provide input.
- Allan explained that the main problem with recycling was contamination of the recyclable materials with regular trash or other non-compliant materials. The challenge is how to tackle that problem. In general the two ways are:
 - Education
 - Enforcement
- Mary was in favor of more education – she suggested that a video posted to the town website would be useful. The contractor’s public relations person might be able to provide the video (or perhaps filmable training), or the town could make a video if necessary. Additional information about how the recycling is processed after collection would also be helpful.
- The hang tags were discussed as a potentially useful tool to educate and improve compliance.
- The team agreed that it makes sense to provide new educational materials once the “new” recycling program terms are known, since they may differ from the current ones. That NB’s current program differs from Calvert County’s due to where the recycling is taken for processing has made education more difficult. It is unknown if the next contract will align requirements with the county’s.
- Herb raised the question of what happens to a recycling truck that is contaminated – the team believes the entire truck just goes to the dump instead

of the recycling center. He suggested the next contract could perhaps deal with this situation differently.

- Jeff suggested that the new contract include monitoring by the contractor for compliance with recycling rules by residents, to include monthly or weekly reports from the contractor with enough information that corrective action could be taken by the town for non-compliance from specific residences as necessary. The EC doesn't expect code enforcement or volunteers to do random recycle bin checks, but if monitoring/reporting were built into the contract, the infractions could be acted upon by town staff. Lisa said Code Enforcement may be adding another staff member, which gave rise to a discussion that Lisa has repeatedly requested additional support as well. She has added a line in her budget for PT and seasonal staffing. More on this under Future Goals

Future Goals

- Lisa discussed the importance of the EC's role as a consultant to the Town Council on environmental issues.
- She discussed the Sustainable MD spreadsheet Elizabeth Lawton created and the importance of meeting some of those goals, including a re-training of Green Team members. She reviewed some other Sustainable MD goal/projects for Mary's benefit.
- Lisa said she will be getting part time support on the weekends (paid staff), but wasn't sure if she would lose that person in the spring to the waterfront. The team saw that as a good start. Mary asked how much additional support she needed initially, and Lisa said she had requested 20 hours per week to help with weekends, special events such as Campfires on the Beach, Farmer's Market and others.

Nature Center Updates

- The Nature Center will be open 5 days per week 10a – 3pm, which would be Wednesday-Sunday as additional staffing allows. Lisa will need support for the center (beyond just the spring) to cover Sundays, as well as a backup person to cover the Nature Center when events are running at the same time. Water will be turned on in March. Heat and backup power are available. The plan is to open April 22. Lisa is seeking necessary permits to have native fish and reptiles and amphibians. She doesn't anticipate any problems with that.
- Earlier in February Lisa attended the MAEOE – Maryland Association of Outdoor and Environmental Education Conference - she learned how outdoor education is being done by communities of various sizes. She would like to improve NB education and outreach programs based on what she learned. She made contacts that will lead to getting wildlife for displays at the Nature Center.
- The Nature Center will be getting Baywise certified at the end of February. The certification may make it easier to get volunteers (such as Watershed Stewards and master gardeners) to remove invasive species. She mentioned the Attack of the Invaders talk being done in Chesapeake Beach on March 4th at Town Hall in CB at 10AM.

- Lisa discussed having Wetlands Overlook park designated as an Important Bird Area, which would bring with it certain (environmentally positive) restrictions. She cited the Blackwater Wildlife refuge as having that designation, which resulted in preventing a development from being built on environmentally sensitive land.
- Lisa discussed getting a water fountain for Overlook Park, of the type that can refill water bottles and maybe even dog bowls. Mounting needs to be vandal-proof to the extent possible.
- The vandalism problem at the park is being worked on. Sherriff's Department has been routinely patrolling and walking in the woods. They've added walking on the trails as the vandalism is occurring there.
- Lisa discussed the issue of adding signage to indicate where NB starts on the Burnt Oaks side to better identify NB parks boundaries.

EC Involvement in Comprehensive Plan

- Allan discussed lessons learned from discussing building permit issues with Rick Crump – he believes involvement by the committee can strengthen local laws that would empower code enforcement to require silt fencing around smaller construction projects that don't meet the threshold for state and county regulations.
- Mary Healey, who lives (near Allan) by the subject construction project highlighting the need for silt fencing around smaller projects, provided additional evidence of the need. She described how the project was sending mud up and down the street. While the contractor was technically in compliance (as the disturbed area was less than 5000 sq ft,) there was still an obvious need for the fencing.
- With additional pressure from code enforcement, the contractor did put up a silt fence, but only on the north side, where it didn't really help.
- Mary agreed that the committee would be useful in supporting changes to the comprehensive plan, including soliciting valuable input from the community on suggested changes to the plan at EC-supported community events. Getting quality input from residents has proven difficult in the past. Allan cited the example of his constructive comments on the raising of RT 261 by Walton Beach – the EC adopted those comments, and they were submitted to the Mayor, Town Council and the state.

Walton Beach

- Lisa discussed much needed signage at Walton Beach – both educational, and rules.
- The lack of signage is presently keeping Walton Beach from being used for anything; it is off limits to the public.
- Allan asked if Environmental Concerns needs to be brought back for a re-evaluation of the living shoreline's effectiveness. Lisa said that it doesn't have to be the original contractor. She recommended that the EC request a 5 year evaluation be done, to include how the rocks and flow structures are working, if there is enough beach for the horseshoe crabs, if any construction materials are

exposed, etc. Necessary corrective actions should then be taken, and the beach could be opened for appropriate activities. Signage could then be posted.

- Lisa discussed pushing the Walton Beach gate back to create two spaces for bird watchers to park.
- Jeff pointed out that the house directly adjacent to Walton Beach was up for sale, and what an opportunity for the town that is – the land could be included as part of Walton Beach public space, and the building could be reconfigured as a bird watching/wildlife observation platform and eco-tourism hub. There might even be a small amount of parking there as well. The EC felt the property was overpriced, but location was certainly good.

Maryland Municipal League (MML)

- Allan asked Mary Healey if she was attending the MML conference this year. He discussed the possibility of EC members attending to learn about environmental programs of other municipalities. Mary said she did plan to attend and would share information about the conference as it becomes available.

Chesapeake Beach Green Team Coordination

- Herb asked about possibly coordinating efforts with CB's environmental committee. Allan explained that Chesapeake Beach doesn't have an EC, but they do have a Green Team. NB's Green Team (comprised of members of the Environmental, Flood, and Tree Committees, as well as other ad hoc members) has coordinated with Chesapeake Beach in the past.
- Lisa discussed the possibility of Green Team volunteers doing in-town environmental projects, with a new opportunity being created by having the Nature Center in which to meet.

Earth Day

- Lisa said Earth Day will be celebrated Saturday, April 22, from 1-3PM. She avoided the morning because there are sometimes environmental cleanups scheduled that morning. She asked if 2 hours is enough time for a Nature Center Grand Opening/Ribbon cutting ceremony, as well as the tree giveaway being done by the Tree Committee. Arbor Day is the day before – trees could also be given away then.
- Wetlands Overlook Park is parking-challenged. This still needs to be figured out for events like this one.
- She talked about having a recycling display, but the committee was hesitant due to the new contract potentially introducing new rules. However, the EC could still have a table with giveaways. She is trying to avoid plastic giveaways from now on.

Meeting adjourned

The next Environmental Committee meeting will be March 7, 2023.