

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Council Chambers and via Zoom

August 9, 2023, 1:00 PM

Minutes

I. Call to Order: *Mr. Jordan called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.*

Present: Jim Jordan, Chairman

Lynne Sager

KINHC: Lee Bundrick

KIGR: Liz King

Present via Zoom: Jim Chitwood

Jack Kotz

Michael Heidingsfelder

Absent: Pam Wilson

Jane Ellis

KICA: Matt Hill

TOKI: Aaron Given

ARB: Tommy Manuel

II. Approval of Minutes:

A. Minutes of the June 21, 2023 Environmental Committee Meeting

Ms. Sager made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2023, Environmental Committee meeting. Mr. Bundrick seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

III. Citizen's Comments:

None

IV. Project Updates:

A. Shorebird Stewardship Program

B. Grow Native

Mr. Jordan provided information on the showcase event planned for the afternoon of Friday, October 6th, at Town Hall. The event will be named either *Bobcats, Bourbon and Bluegrass* or *Bobcats and Bluegrass*. The event, possibly scheduled for 2:00 pm, will include a presentation or panel discussion, lasting approximately one hour, then moving outdoors for the bluegrass band and a bourbon tasting from a local distillery. The tasting would preferably be set up along the nature trail and prompted the focus on reclaiming the Nature Trail for use at the event. The event will be free but ticketed to control the number of attendees.

Dr. Heidingsfelder stated the Town would be hosting its 35 Anniversary event on September 8th and questioned if the Nature Trail could be ready at that event. Mr. Jordan stated that he would push for that to happen.

C. Rodenticides/Wildlife

Mr. Jordan stated that 156 samples had been submitted to date, and 34 samples were submitted in 2023. He reviewed the issue in February at Mingo Point, where six raccoons were found sick or dying in a very short period. The thought was that the issue was related to the use of anticoagulants when a SGA (Second Generation Anticoagulant) was found at the site. He noted

that all of the raccoons tested negative for SGAs and it was likely an outbreak of distemper.

Mr. Jordan presented and reviewed slides of the trend data for the time the work started in 2020. Slides included the exposure rate for opossums, which dropped progressively from 2020 to 2023, and the exposure rate for raccoons, which dropped from 2020, leveling out and showing a slight increase in 2023.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the average exposure levels data, noting that bobcats showed a drastic drop early on and stayed at that level through 2022. Exposure levels in raccoons were shown to have dropped by 50%, and opossums showed varying levels. It was noted that 2023 had the lowest concentration levels seen. Despite a small increase in raccoon levels, the data continues to show positive trends.

Mr. Jordan stated that the small increases have prompted a renewed push of the guardian program coinciding with Save Kiawah Bobcats week to generate interest around the topic again.

D. Kiawah Conservancy Projects

Mr. Bundrick reported the installation of the rain gardens had been completed, one of which is outside Town Hall. There was a workshop session with representatives from Clemson Extension and Weston Sampson for people to learn about rain gardens. The session then moved outside to prepare the soil and install the native plantings, including milkweed, red sage, and sweet grass, along with all the accessories. The rain garden is currently being watered two to three times a week and will be cared for in the coming year, at which time it should be able to maintain itself. He noted the Weston Sampson designs for the rain gardens would be made available to the community.

Mr. Bundrick stated that since Town funds can not be used behind the gate, the Conservancy is working with the Community Association on the installation of another rain garden at the Rhett's Bluff boat ramp.

E. Clemson PhD Bobcat Anticoagulant Study

Mr. Jordan reported that the graduate student, Ms. Keating, is nearing the completion of her academic work and will be taking her written final exams in September and her comprehensive oral exam on October 5th.

F. Marsh Management Plan

Mr. Jordan stated that one component of the Marsh Management Plan is the Kiawah River Access, which will be discussed later in the meeting under *New Business*.

G. Kiawah Go Green Initiative

Dr. Heidingsfelder reported there had been several meetings of the workgroup as well as the ten sub-workgroups created to focus on individual initiatives. The workgroup focusing on the installation of charging stations on the island released a survey with over 1400 residents responding. The survey data showed there are approximately 150 hybrid and electric vehicles on the island. They included questions asking if residents would consider purchasing an electric vehicle if a station were made available. The workgroup is in the process of selecting a vendor for two stations, one at Freshfields and one at the Sandcastle, along with working out the logistics involved with having one of the stations installed before the end of the year. A large grant application was filed with the US Department of Transportation to support the Town with the installation of four charging stations outside the gate.

Dr. Heidingsfelder also provided an update on the following:

- The workgroup focusing on vehicles on the beach was in the process of collecting data points on how many vehicles are operating, their type, and their requirements.
- The workgroup focusing on single-use plastics is in the process of collecting data from the businesses in Freshfields on the materials used in their take-out containers, cups, and silverware.
- The work on the program certifying Kiawah as a green destination was put on hold because the Sanctuary lost its marketing manager and was unable to make a decision on supporting the program.

V. Old Business

A. Kiawah River No Wake Zone

Mr. Jordan provided an outline of the history of the efforts made to establish a No-Wake Zone going back to 2017, in which the legislators at that time indicated installation of a No-Wake Zone would happen but had no follow-up. This has been brought up several times in the years that followed. In his opinion, the only way to make a No-Wake Zone happen is to use political connections with state legislators rather than using the formalized DNR process Ms. Rust has tried.

Dr. Heidingsfelder indicated that he had done research and reviewed the steps in the process that, included gathering:

- Strongly worded letters of support from
 - all of the different entities involved
 - KICA, the Club, Cassique, Seabrook, Briar's Creek
 - all of the Regimes and HOAs involved
 - The Point, Riverview, Inlet Cove
 - Beachwalker County Park / Charleston County Parks and Recreation
- Contact the Lowcountry Land Trust and the Lowcountry Marine Mammal Network
- Make a trip to Columbia to meet with legislators and possible professional support
 - Nikki Haley

B. Storage Boxes, Chairs, and Trash Cans on the Beach

Mr. Jordan stated that since the last meeting, Ms. Sager has contacted several local beaches to obtain information on how they handle items on their beaches. He noted that while the Committee is investigating the issues with storage boxes, chairs, and trash cans on the beach, the Town will be creating a workgroup to investigate these issues further. The kickoff meeting for the workgroup is scheduled for September 8th, and the goal is to provide recommendations on the changes to be made before the next beach season.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the following beaches:

- Seabrook
 - No beach chair or umbrella rentals.
 - Leaving items on the beach overnight is prohibited by ordinance.
 - Trash cans are located near roads or along boardwalks close to the beach.
- Isle of Palms
 - Leaving items on the beach overnight is prohibited by ordinance.
 - Two chair and umbrella rental companies, set up daily, not stored on the beach.
 - A private contractor picks up yellow trash barrels and blue recycling barrels on the beach in a small golf cart-sized gas vehicle with a mechanized arm.
- Sullivan's Island
 - No beach or umbrella rentals.

- No trash barrels on the beach. Trash cans are located on the street side at the start of beach accesses.
- **Folly Beach**
 - Have chair and umbrella rentals. Store most of their equipment near the pier, which turtles avoid.
 - No storage boxes or trash containers on the beach. Trash cans are on the street side of every block.
- **Hilton Head Island**
 - Storage boxes on the beach for chairs and umbrellas but no significant interaction with sea turtle nesting
 - Trash and recycling on the beach.

Dr. Heidingsfelder stated that in addition to himself, Ms. Tillerson, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Belt, Mr. Berner, and Mr. Nardelli would probably be attending the September 8th meeting. He reviewed the topics that would be included in the discussion and the information he would like to have provided for the meeting.

VI. New Business

A. Kiawah River Bridge Access Feasibility Study

Mr. Jordan presented the Kiawah River Bridge Access Feasibility Study proposal, which takes a holistic approach at the bridge access. He indicated the proposal was presented to the Ways and Means Committee. After the first review, the recommendation was tabled. It was recommended for approval at the next meeting with the caveat that following the initial assessment, the Ways and Means Committee and Town Council approve proceeding with the rest of the study.

Mr. Jordan stated that the Bridge Access subcommittee will be meeting the week of August 21st to meet with Ms. Elko and other members of his team to plan the exact details of the initial assessment of the project.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of the elements of the Feasibility Study along with kayaks and watercraft launching expressed by members.

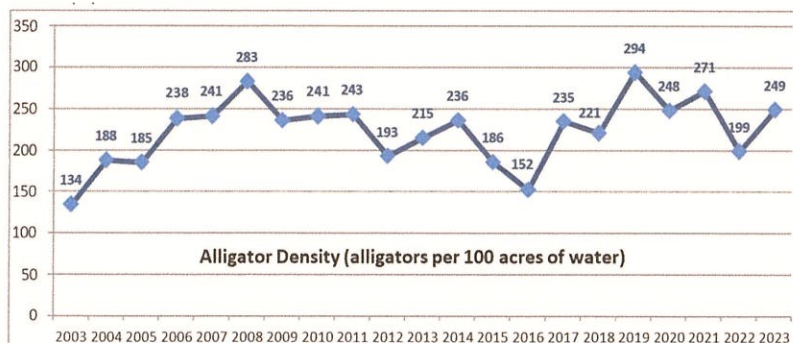
VII. Reports:

A. Town of Kiawah Island

Mr. Jordan reviewed his August report on the following:

🚩 Alligators

- four nuisance alligators removed in 2023 (6, 7, 9, 12 feet)
- Alligator spotlight surveys conducted July 18-19 (Density 249 alligators/100 acres of water). Stable population.



✚ Bobcat GPS Study

- six bobcats captured in 2023.
- five collars malfunctioned; the battery died within a few weeks
- One collar currently working.
- one bobcat den was found in 2023. 2022 Adult Female 700 had two 2-week-old kittens (one male and one female) in a den in The Preserve. Bobcat 700 was originally collared on February 5, 2022, in The Preserve as a juvenile and weighed 12lbs, 2 oz.

✚ Fall Migration Banding

- Daily banding will begin August 15 and continue through November 30.
- Banding sites include Captain Sam's Spit and Little Bear Island.
- six banding technicians have been hired.

B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management

None

C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Ms. King reported that Sunday would be the very last day the Nature Center would ever be open. Throughout the next week, the snakes, turtles, alligators, a rabbit, and an opossum will be moved to the trailers where they will be housed for the next two years while the existing Nature Center is torn down and rebuilt.

Ms. King also stated that she had a job opening for a full-time Nature Program Manager—someone who is super strong in science and has a strong environmental education background.

D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board

None

E. Kiawah Conservancy

Mr. Bundrick reported the Conservancy had closed on two properties on the island and two applications in to acquire properties on Betsy Kerrison Parkway. An 18-acre tract that is currently Rosebank Farms and a 15-acre tract just to the north that includes Maritime Forest. Funding applications were submitted to the County Greenbelt and Conservation Bank for both the properties, and closings for the properties will be by the end of September.

Mr. Bundrick stated that along with the projects done with the Town, the Conservancy has completed the four-year project with the National Fish and Wildlife Service. He and Mr. Hernandez have been accepted to speak on the project at the National Land Trust Conference in Portland, Oregon.

F. Turtle Patrol

Ms. Sager reported that currently, there are 419 nests, the third highest year since 2004. She noted that it was the second day of no new crawls; there needed to be five consecutive days before the nesting season ended.

Ms. Sager stated there were coyote predations this year, which had not been an issue since 2015. Mr. Jordan stated the numbers he had were that approximately 5% of the eggs, or 15 to 18 nests, had been depredated by coyotes. One nest was a total loss, with the others tending to have lost 30 to 50 eggs.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of the areas of the depredations, screening nests to prevent the depredations, how coyotes locate the nests, the history of coyotes on the island, and if any actions should be taken to communicate the presence of the coyotes on the island.

Dr. Heidingsfelder asked that the members unable to attend the meeting provide a written update prior to the meeting.

VIII. Citizen Comments:

None

IX. Chairman's Comments:

None


X. Committee Member Comments:

None

XI. Adjournment:

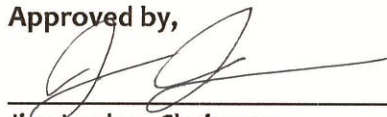
Mr. Bundrick motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:28 pm. Ms. Sager seconded the motion, and it unanimously passed.

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



Jim Jordan, Chairman

1-30-24
Date