

Regular Meeting
Ogden Dunes Environmental Advisory Board
March 12, 2012
Ogden Dunes Town Hall

Present: Susan MiHalo, John Morris, Judy Mollway

A motion was made by John and seconded by Susan to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2012 regular meeting. The motion carried.

Judy reported that Mark Henry is the contact for pollution/noise complaints at USS Midwest. His number is 763-5869. Susan will serve as the main contact.

Judy will find out the town clean up date from the Beautification Committee. She proposed promoting recycling of items during that week (week of April 23) for Habitat for Humanity, which takes things like construction materials, wood, pipe, and furniture. People would have to sign up in advance with Judy for this pick up – the public could not just put stuff out expecting it to be picked up. The ODEAB members agreed by consensus to support this effort. She will promote it on the TV and website, and Susan will announce it at the April Town Council meeting. We will also encourage people to recycle their E-waste at the town garage the clean-up weekend.

Susan organized a meeting with IDEM recently about Gary Sanitary District's National Pollution Elimination Discharge (NPDES) permit and other issues such as Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). She and the other groups in the meeting (Save the Dunes, Alliance for the Great Lakes, Environmental Law and Policy Center, Natural Resources Defense Council) urged IDEM to place a firm deadline for their long-overdue Long Term Control Plan that will resolve CSOs in the NPDES permit. IDEM is considering this as it reviews comments submitted regarding the NPDES permit by the ODEAB and the other entities. There are many issues that are hard to overcome by IDEM due to a modified Consent Decree being developed by the Department of Justice and the ongoing environmental crimes investigation that is underway regarding United Water, the former contractor for the facility.

Once IDEM provides a response to comments, the commenting entities would have 15 days to determine if the permit should be appealed. It would be very doubtful the town would be asked to engage in an appeal, should it arise, even though our beach is directly impacted by Gary's CSOs, among others. Susan noted that Gary did have a CSO several weeks ago and took photos of toilet paper at West Beach.

It was suggested that Sharon Guy be approached to fill Gerry Lehmann's vacancy. Judy agreed to approach Sharon.

We have been asked by IDEM to scale down our beach grant to four days per week, which will be Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (Wednesday is required in order to maintain consistency with an ongoing USGS project that compared our sampling results to their results). There will still be four sampling sites on the beach; and the beach will be split into Eastern OD Beach and Western OD Beach with two sampling sites on each "beach." This is being done so that if the Eastern OD Beach shows an exceedance of the EPA standard, and the Western OD Beach does not exceed the standard, we can still keep the Western OD Beach open (green sign) for swimming.

Note: since this meeting there has also been a new development. All the beaches in NWI were asked to scale down their budgets a little more due to a calculation error at IDEM. So, I worked to shorten the beach season a little.

I have not seen the final contract yet but proposed that we start monitoring on Saturday, May 26 and end the season on Labor Day (September 3). Everything else remains the same, especially the compensation to especially help offset gas costs. Polly Costanza/John Wilcox will be paid \$31 per day, and Karen Berrier will be paid \$30 per day for their work.

I have requested that the IDEM contract be sent to me ASAP so that the Town Council can see it – hopefully before the meeting on Monday, April 1. It is the same contract we have been using since we started monitoring using this grant funding around 10 years ago.

To help kick off the 2012 beach season, the ODEAB plans to sponsor an Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach clean-up on Saturday, June 2 at 9:00 a.m. Recently Susan asked the National Park Service to make sure they place a tarp or lid over the dumpster at the end of Shore Dr. because last year's clean-up effort indicated that chip bags and other light-weight items were blowing out of the dumpster. She also plans to ask the Portage Parks Department to consider banning the use of straws and cup lids at the Portage Lakefront Site concession stand because that kind of litter is being found more often on the beach, and those items are not really necessary. (Plastic waste never really leaves the environment if it gets into the lake; it just gets smaller and smaller.) At Susan's suggestion, John Morris will check out NOAA's marine debris program to see if there is any material we can use to discourage beach trash.

Susan will hire someone to weed whack around Long Lake Marsh. This is a one-time effort, in lieu of doing nothing or burning, to keep down some of the weedier species, and to open up the ground to the young native plants. It is not wise to burn young, native plantings.

Due to lack of time, the ODEAB has decided not to do anything specific about the swallows on the beach this year. It would have required a lot of effort to contact the homeowners and advise them how to handle the nests, which by law should not be tampered with once they are occupied. We will just monitor the situation for another summer and see if there are exceedances of E. coli at that location. It's possible that USGS may do a study project on their own as Dr. Whitman has shown some interest in the issue.

Susan will try to ascertain interest in the community in having NIPSCO do a program on their sustainability efforts, which includes opportunities for energy savings, renewable energy and free off-peak charging for electric cars for a specified period of time.

Note: the next meeting of the ODEAB, scheduled for Monday, April. 9, has been cancelled.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan MiHalo