

Minutes

Ogden Dunes Environmental Advisory Board

19 May 2021

Via Zoom

The Environmental Board met on 19 May 2021 at 5:30 PM via Zoom. Attendees were Susan MiHalo, Jim Biancotti, Bianca Passo, Frank Lani, Sue Adams, and Karl Krizmanic.

John Morris was absent, so a temporary secretary needed to be appointed. Bianca Passo volunteered. Sue Adams moved to accept Bianca as the temporary secretary and Jim Biancotti seconded. The motion passed.

The agenda was reviewed and approved by the members present. However, later in the meeting Frank Lani remembered that we needed to discuss the status of the Environmental Board updates on the town website. This was added and discussed at the end of the current meeting's agenda.

Jim Biancotti moved to accept the minutes from the 21 April 2021 meeting. Sue Adams seconded and the motion carried.

Susan MiHalo gave the board an update on the US Steel NPDES permit renewal and comments that the subcommittee started working on. IDEM has granted an extension on the deadline for comments. The new deadline to submit comments is 17 June 2021. Susan shared the rough draft of comments that have been compiled, but would like to organize and finalize the document before sending a copy out to the Environmental Board and Doug Cannon/Karl Krizmanic. Susan has asked Doug if he would represent the town in the virtual public hearing on 26 May 2021 since he is the president of the Town Council and we are just an advisory board. Doug has not gotten back to Susan with a response yet, so the board asked Karl if he would be willing to do so if Doug is unable. Karl suggested keeping the comments simple and bulleted so they will be easy for all to understand.

The virtual public hearing for the US Steel NPDES permit renewal is via zoom on 26 May 2021 at 6:00 PM. Here is the link to attend:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86414104747?pwd=VVpsOWErSjRQekRyV1RVdms5ZHlpZz09&from=addonon#success>

The US Steel Midwest Agreed Order has been finalized. Sue Adams commented that the Agreed Order was thorough and seemed satisfactory. Everyone agreed.

We are still waiting for the public notice of the Cleveland Cliffs NPDES permit renewal. Susan MiHalo spoke with her contact at IDEM and was assured that we would probably not receive public notice of the permit renewal until after we are done working through the US Steel NPDES permit comments.

Susan MiHalo has briefly communicated with Cleveland Cliffs to introduce them to the town and the Environmental Advisory Board. She suggested planning a community meeting via Zoom between Cleveland Cliffs representatives and the residents of Ogden Dunes in an effort to engage both the town and Cleveland Cliffs, which they were open to. Cleveland Cliffs reached out to Susan last week, but Susan did not respond right away because she had to check in with the ELPC to make sure there would be no conflicts that could affect the ongoing litigation. Susan was instructed that she can communicate with Cleveland Cliffs officials on behalf of the Environmental Advisory Board as long as she is clear that they are not to discuss any aspects of the lawsuit.

There will be a new contact for Ogden Dunes at IDEM. Currently, there is no replacement and we will receive contact info when IDEM finds a replacement.

Save the Dunes has created a Pollution Prevention Plan draft. Susan MiHalo will be sending out a copy to the Environmental Advisory Board members for thoughts and comments. The purpose of the Pollution Prevention Plan is to strengthen our goals of protecting the dunes and wetlands and to step up our game as a watchdog for the environment.

There is nothing new with the Septic Coordination Workgroup. Frank Lani will be attending the meeting next week and will report back to the Environmental Advisory Board at the next meeting.

The town council approved the beach water quality monitoring contract with Karen Berrier in the town council meeting on Tuesday. There is still a lab contract with Gary Sanitary District that needs to be signed and executed within the next week because water quality monitoring starts on 29 May 2021. Susan MiHalo expressed her concern to Karl Krizmanic that the contract will not be signed and executed in time if the town council is going to require us to have it approved in an official town council meeting. This has never been necessary in the past, but it was subjected to a town council vote for approval this year. Karl suggested we reach out to Mimi Ramos, the Clerk Treasurer, to see if she is able to sign the contract. Another concern with the water quality monitoring for this year is that there are two testing locations on the East end of the beach that we were granted funds for that are not accessible for testing due to the higher water levels and boulders that would be dangerous to climb on. The contracts may need to be revised to address this. Karl asked if we could potentially test a location further East, closer to Portage Beach, in order to have some testing maintained on the East side of town. Susan explained that this would not be possible because testing locations assigned are very strict for scientific/accuracy purposes and cannot be changed.

Sue Adams updated everyone on the residential lighting task force. We will not be able to provide brochures or documents with lighting recommendations to new residents in the welcome packets, so she has suggested posting this information on the website instead. Sue will also share these documents with Karl Krizmanic in hopes that he can get it in front of the plan commission. We are not trying to have the recommendations codified, just recognized as an official recommendation from the town.

A town resident asked about the Terracycle program. Frank Lani has volunteered to research and report back to the Environmental Advisory Board with his information on the program and whether it would be practical to utilize. It was also mentioned that we need to verify with Republic what the current recycling guidelines are and update the town recycling guidelines onto one document that can be posted onto the website and shared with residents. The current guidelines are outdated and inaccurate. There were a few other questions from residents about what is recyclable in the store front receptacles designated for plastic shopping bags. Peggy will be looking into those questions and will report back to everyone at the next meeting.

There is nothing new on the MS4 exemption.

There are concerns among the town that Long Lake Marsh has dried up and there was misinformation being spread about the cause and how it should be handled. Susan MiHalo gave a presentation at the town council meeting and explained that the water levels are dependent on precipitation, which has been low lately, as well as water that was being discharged into Long Lake by American Water. Long Lake did not dry up because of beavers. This was proven in a scientific study by Indiana University Northwest. Susan would like to plant more sedges around Long Lake Marsh to enhance the wetlands, but we may have already missed the opportunity to apply for community fund grant money. We are leaving the option open to potentially engage community members for seed donations for additional native Iris Virginica plants in Long Lake Marsh.

In regard to the planning effort with Beautification and Historic Preservation Standards Committee, Susan MiHalo and Frank Lani created an outline with planning efforts and information. The two committees need to meet and collaborate efforts in order to move forward further.

Frank Lani asked for confirmation on who was currently managing the town website. Jim Slawinski is temporarily doing this until we can get a new webmaster. Frank will be working with Jim to update our page on the town website and fix broken links, as well as to assist Sue with getting her documents with lighting recommendations up onto the town website.

Sue Adams moved to adjourn the meeting and Jim Biancotti seconded. The motion carried. The meeting ended at 6:45 PM.

Submitted by Bianca Passo.