



The Town of Fenwick Island

800 Coastal Highway, Fenwick Island, DE 19944-4409

302-539-3011 ~ 302-539-1305 fax

www.fenwickisland.delaware.gov

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

MEETING NOTES

March 6, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

Town Hall

MINUTES

Members Present: Janice Bortner (phone), Sharon Harris (zoom), and Deborah Cowell (zoom).

Other Participants: Natalie Magdeburger (zoom), Colleen Wilson (zoom), Susan Brennan (zoom), Jack Pine, Lynn Zimmers, Michelle Roenke, Carol Anderson-Austra (phone).

Staff: Kathy Grab

Flag Salute & Call to Order at 9:05 a.m. The meeting was brought to order by Deborah. The group said the pledge of allegiance and began the meeting.

1. Review and Discussion of the meeting minutes. The minutes from the January 30, 2025 meeting were presented and Janice made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, seconded by Sharon. The motion was passed unanimously.
2. For Discussion and Possible Action.
 - a. Okie Property.
 - i. Recent activities on site
 - ❖ Planning Process notes from Carol received on 2/28/2025, laying out her steps for a planning process. Reviewed with her by phone.
 - ❖ Evaluation from Stephen P. Lea – Received report 3/3/2025, giving his initial observations and impressions of the Okie Property from an outside perspective. A copy of his report is attached to the notes. He identified both native and invasive species. His observation is that this is more of an ecological restoration project more than a “rip and replace” project, keeping those things that we want and are good for the site and eliminating invasive species that we identify we would like to remove.
 - ii. Updates for action items from last meeting:
 - ❖ *Action item (Debbie): It will be asked if Mike Locke would be able to put approximate corner point markers on the property to guide our work. A follow-up was done with Natalie and she reported that Mike Locke provided 12 different property stakes just inside the property lines. He also made a call to Miss Utility to have any markings made.*
 - ❖ *Action item (Janice): reach out to see what grants are available through our liaison, Ann. Janice reached out to Ann but we don't have any information yet and are really not at a point to look specifically for any grants as we are just in the planning stages of this project. Natalie called to Susan Brennan that she sent the step by step instructions on how to apply for grants. Susan talked about making sure we have a plan first before applying and that she would be available to help at that time.*
 - ❖ *Action Item (Debbie): Follow up with architect and ask them to provide a list of outcomes and costs if hired. The architect is coming up with a proposal and associated costs. This will need to be presented*

to the Fenwick Island Council for approval of any funding before the next meeting on April 4, 2025. Natalie said there is a budget item for parks but not a lot of funding. The paperwork needs to be in to them prior to March 22nd. The Residential Concerns Committee (RCC) may require a special meeting prior to their scheduled meeting in April to get this accomplished. Janice will reevaluate the RCC meeting date to accommodate this request. Natalie suggested that she had toyed with making the GIWG particularly for the development of the Okie property an “ad hoc” committee to make it more convenient to make recommendations directly to FI town council. Deb said she would take it under advisement but doesn’t want to disrupt the support she currently gets from Janice and is fine leaving it under the RCC. Natalie and Deb can discuss at a future meeting.

3. Old Business.

- a. Phone conversations with Landscape Architect. Debbie is working with Carol to get a proposal for services she will provide. Make sure we have our targets and costs identified.
- b. Outreach to Taryn Davidson for Assistance. Taryn reached out to us to have a meeting sometime next week.

4. New Business.

- a. We had to cancel our last meeting due to snow in Fenwick Island.
- b. Prepared and delivered a letter of support for the Delaware Center for Inland Bays (CIB). Received request/invitation from CIB Sunday, Feb 23, 2025.
 - Letter of support includes outlining how we have worked together over the past year.
 - CIB is including us as a potential project (to install a pocket forest on the Okie property) that could benefit from the grant if it is available and they receive grant money.
 - Letter was presented at last Fenwick Town Council meeting on 2/28. It was approved to move forward.
 - Janice and I didn’t want to miss an opportunity to get support from CIB.
- c. Schedule a time to meet with as a team to do a walk-through. This would include our meeting guests (neighbors to the Okie Property), to get the “lay of the land” onsite.
 - Introduction of Lynn Zimmers, Michelle Roenke and Jack Pine – brief intro from each and things to know about the property. We gave them an opportunity to introduce themselves and discuss their concerns about the property. Among concerns/observations:
 - ❖ Joy of the cardinals and other birds – caution on pigeons and grackles
 - ❖ Grateful to the Okie family legacy and this project
 - ❖ Bamboo forest and trails already established, an enchanted place
 - ❖ Name of forest and not in favor of having it be a “park”
 - ❖ Gain access to a plot plan to make notes on their ideas
 - ❖ Being part of the walk-through
 - ❖ Maintain largest trees; keep cedars
 - ❖ Natural pathways; mulching of branches and brush
 - ❖ Walking/stepping stones
 - ❖ Egress and Ingress on Rt. 1 vs. Bayard St.
 - ❖ Lighting; any low lighting
 - ❖ Parking
 - ❖ Benches
 - ❖ Bird houses
 - ❖ Not disturbing the foxes
- d. Janice noted that we were in good hands with our team, Deb, Stephen Lea and Carol. We also had a successful Fenwick Nurtures Nature event where we had many experts express interest in Fenwick Island.
- e. Sharon Harris first asked before public participation section to address two items:
 - To provide a date for the walkthrough, we would like to do something in the next two weeks. Deb asked for everyone’s schedule on when they could do the walkthrough.
 - ❖ *Action item: Deb to check with experts and team for a date to do the walkthrough.*

- Name of the property – there was much discussion about the names we had already proposed and new name from Lynn “Okie Nature Preserve”. Many said they did not want it to be a park. Natalie suggested that it was something that should be done by the Town Council and reiterated her view that it should be a preserve. Mr. Okie wanted to give back property to show what Fenwick Island was like “in the day”. Jack Pine and Lynn said yes on calling it a preserve. Janice, reminded that we should remember we are focusing on ecological restoration so the preserve name would be wonderful and great alignment. In lieu of having a motion to name the property, Natalie offered to take the name directly to the council for approval. All meeting participants were in agreement.

5. Public Participation.

Natalie, Susan and Colleen all walked the property the week prior. Susan talked about the landscape architect work and what she was thinking. All agreed about working in phases but asking if the proposal can be more “ala carte.” Deb discussed having a proposal from the landscape architect with specific deliverables. Susan discussed the foxes, and some plants on the property. Both Susan and Colleen offered their help and support to clear dead branches to allow better access to the site. The neighbors discussed the current paths through the site. Preserving the bamboo part of the site seems to be a priority for most of the neighbors. Colleen talked about designating the Okie property as a cleanup sight for Earth day but some clearing is necessary.

Susan Brennan and Colleen both gave accounts of the process used by the pollinator park team to get the property cleared and prepared for their work. They recommended Brother Nature Landscaping to help with the project and provided contact information. Deb expressed appreciation to Susan and Colleen for the offer of their time to provide access to the site.

Colleen suggested that we rope off area where the fox dens are to keep people away from those dens. Natalie clarified.

- ❖ *Action item: Deb to follow up with Colleen and Susan about scheduling a time to clear up for access.*

Janice suggested reaching out to Stephen.

6. Announcements.

- The next meeting will be March 20, 2025.

7. Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m. with a motion made by Sharon and seconded by Janice.

Attachment 1: Fenwick Island 272 E. Bayard Street Greenscape; written by Stephen Pryce Lea.