

Minutes
Tuesday, April 5, 2016
4:00 pm
Oak Bluffs Conservation Commission

Members present: Terry Appenzellar, Ron Zentner, Margaret Klugman

Others present: Maura McGroarty, Amy Billings, John Brennan, Barry Stringfellow

Discussion of beach rake

Ms. Appenzellar stated that the Commission meeting was rescheduled to Friday and that the Beach Committee will meet Friday but the Commission chose to hold this discussion as scheduled for any members of the public who are interested.

Ms. McGroarty stated that there may be long range costs of a beach rake since a tractor and staff will be needed to pull it, that there should be a maintenance schedule, and there may be potential unintended consequences.

Ms. Durkee stated that a permit is also needed from the Conservation Commission in order to use the rake on the beach.

Ms. Appenzellar stated that a study of the Highway Department several years ago revealed that the department has more work than it can handle.

Ms. Billings stated that if the downtown beaches are raked there could be a call for other beaches to be raked which means more work for the Highway Department.

Mr. Zentner stated that he understood maintenance of the beaches was a Parks Department responsibility while the Commission's role is to protect the beaches and prevent erosion.

Ms. Billings stated that the Parks Department handles lifeguards, and recently stairs, plantings and ADA accessibility. She stated that the Beach Committee can't get over the bad dredge material from a couple of years ago while everyone else is trying to move forward.

Ms. Appenzellar stated that everyone wants good beaches but there is no clear assignment of responsibility or budget, and no plan at a higher level.

Ms. Billings stated that all the beaches are equal, including Jetty Beach and Lagoon Pond beaches.

Ms. Durkee stated that buying a beach rake now is putting the cart before the horse, that there needs to be an overall beach management plan for maintenance and beach nourishment.

Ms. McGroarty stated that she would like to know the linear footage of beach to be raked and asked if Towns buy rakes for that amount of footage.

Ms. Durkee stated that rocks are not allowed to be removed from the beach and the Beach Committee has been told this. She questioned the purpose of the beach rake.

Ms. Appenzellar stated that raking a beach requires a skill set, that State Beach is successful in keeping trash off the beach with the carry in/carry out program, that State Beach gets funding from the state to manage the beach, and State Beach has a management plan.

Mr. Stringfellow stated that Greg Berman, WHOI/Sea Grant, told him rakes were used on the Cape on accreting beaches. Ms. Appenzellar stated that our beaches are eroding, not accreting, and that raking on eroding beaches causes more erosion.

There was discussion about whether the Town or County once owned a beach rake. Ms. Durkee stated that 30 or 40 years ago there was less erosion on the beaches, no wetlands protection laws, and less science about the functions of beaches. Ms. Appenzellar stated that seaweed serves a purpose on the beach, that it is bird habitat and helps protect against erosion.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Durkee