

**Minutes of the Parks & Environment Advisory Board
Meeting April 1st, 2026, at the Canale Training Center**

In attendance:

Officers Present - Stephen Fiedler, Co-Chairperson, Emma Witt, Co-Chairperson

Members Present - Dick Colby, Joe Ambrose, Dan Crum, Belinda Chester, Lisa March, Alex Perri

Members Absent - Velevia Bush

Commissioner Representative – Richard Dase -absent

County Staff - Greg Brookins, D.H.P.W.- present

Secretary - Eric Husta, D.D.P.R. – present

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 PM and a flag salute was conducted.

Guest Speakers: Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Jason Howell and Steve Fiedler gave a joint presentation on the process of trying to acquire Wild and Scenic designation for the Mullica River. Slides showed aerial shots of different sections of the river while they discussed the different parameters used to designate sections wild, scenic, or recreational.

The challenges associated with cross-jurisdictional management were noted while emphasis was placed on the need for a congressional study authorization bill. Steve noted Herb Conoway was the bill's sponsor and the hope was to have the bill bundled for an increased level of consideration.

The presentation concluded with discussion regarding a resolution of support from the Board of Commissioners and the possible need for a resolution from the Parks and Environment Board encouraging them to draft one.

Round Table Discussion:

Discussion began with the group asking for updates on the Wharton State Forest Visiting Vehicle Use Map (VVUM). Time was then spent discussing Bikeway West and the recent public information session held virtually by members of SJTPO. The connection to Camden County, the Route 54 intersection, and the connection to the existing Bikeway East were of specific interest to the group.

Group discussion was also had regarding Hamilton Township's attempt to rebuild the trestle bridge over the Great Egg Harbor River and offshore wind projects along the east coast.

Dan Crum briefed the group on the emergence of measles in New Jersey.

Lisa March voiced her concern over the recent housing boom in EHT.

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Belinda Chester talked about the current status of volunteerism with the Master Gardener program. The care of public gardens such as those around county libraries will inevitably suffer due to the lack of volunteers.

Alex Perri updated the group on his community garden project in Absecon. He mentioned meeting with Absecon town council and working with the city to plant trees to mitigate damage resulting from recent construction activities.

Eric Husta briefed the group on the amount of storm damage and tree cleanup currently underway in parks.

The group ended with discussion on data centers and the possibility of introducing ordinances that ban them

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, May 6th, at 7PM at the Canale Training Center in EHT.

cc: Dennis Levinson, County Executive
Jerry DelRosso, County Administrator
John Risley Jr., Chairman - Board of County Commissioners
Richard Dase, Board of County Commissioners – PEAB Representative
Greg Brookins, Department Head Public Works
All Advisory Board Members