

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Kiawah Island Municipal Center
Council Chambers
July 7, 2014; 3:00 PM

MINUTES

I. **Call to Order:** *Mr. Labriola called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.*

II. **FOIA:** Notice of this meeting has been published, and posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Kiawah Island.

III. **Roll Call:**

Present: John D. Labriola, Chairman
 David Elliott
 Jim Chitwood
 Amanda Mole
 Norm Shea, KICA
 Liz King, KIGR
 Jim Jordan, TOKI
 Aaron Given, TOKI

Absent: William Stewart
 John Wright
 Marilyn Olson
 Dave Achey, KICA
 Leila Gable, KICA
 Jack Kotz, KINHC
 Justin Core, KINHC
 Tumiko Rucker, TOKI Administrator

IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. Environmental Committee Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2014

Mr. Jordan made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2014 Environmental Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Given and was unanimously approved.

V. **Old Business**

A. Coyote Monitoring Update

Mr. Jordan presented to the Committee the most current update on turtle nest depredation;

- ❖ 78 Turtle Nests (total to date)
 - ◆ 19 depredated by coyotes {16 first night}
 - ◆ 2 nests totally depredated (88 and 83 eggs)
 - ◆ 17 nests partially depredated, relocated, and screened

- ✓ eggs depredated - average of 42 eggs depredated per nest
- ◆ 888 total eggs depredated by coyotes
 - ✓ 9.8% of total estimated number of eggs
- ◆ 766 eggs depredated by coyotes during same time period in 2013
- ◆ 632 eggs depredated by coyotes during same time period in 2012

Mr. Jordan noted that the number of eggs depredated over the past three years is very similar though slightly higher in each year. Mr. Labriola added that the abnormally high amount of nests in 2013 had an impact of the higher percentage rate this year.

Mr. Jordan also discussed the coyote egg depredation rates in the other South Carolina nesting beaches;

- *Botany Bay Island* - 3%
- *Hobcaw Beach* - 10%
- *South Island (TYWC)* - 10%
- *Sand Island (TYWC)* - 23 %
- *North Island (TYWC)* - 31%

Mr. Jordan stated that nest depredation by mammals on sea turtle nests is a common, natural occurrence. In South Carolina, mammalian nest depredation is most common on undeveloped beaches with low human disturbance. He also noted in his report that raccoons are a much larger turtle egg depredation problem across the state and historically, nest depredation rates by raccoons on Kiawah may have exceeded 95%.

Mr. Jordan reported Town Staff has been working closely with the Environmental Committee to develop strategies to reduce nest depredation rates by coyotes. Currently, the Committee has asked Town Staff to investigate non-lethal strategies of:

1. **Nest screening;**
3 out of 19 (16%) depredations could have been prevented if the nests had been found and adequately screened the first night of laying. Town Staff recommended that all nests east of The Sanctuary be screened. This recommendation was accepted and implemented by Turtle Patrol and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR.)
2. **Night Patrols;**
Hiring seasonal employees to patrol the beach each night to locate and screen nests immediately after they are laid. This strategy has been used on other beaches and can be very effective at significantly reducing nest depredation. Annual labor costs to implement this program would be approximately \$15,000. One-time equipment costs for this program would be approximately \$7,000. Town Staff does not believe it would be possible to implement this program during 2014 taking into consideration that hatching season is about to begin.
3. **Deterrents;**
Coyotes and other predators can be kept away from certain areas utilizing lights and noise. Town staff has recently installed two different types of deterrents on the beach in the areas with the highest level of coyote predation. One type of device utilizes a pair of flashing red lights to scare off coyotes and will operate all night long. The second type utilizes a flashing light combined with the sound from a radio station to scare coyotes away. This device is motion activated and will be used primarily at turtle nests that are about to hatch in order to reduce predation on hatchlings as they exit the nest.

CURRENT COYOTE RESEARCH

1. Coyote Trapping

- a. Conducted from March 12 to June 13, 2014 in an effort to catch 2 coyotes.
- b. 1 female coyote (Coyote 300) captured and fitted with GPS collar on April 1, 2014
- c. Other captures:
 - ✓ 1 bobcat,
 - ✓ 1 domestic dog,
 - ✓ opossum (euthanized),
 - ✓ 7 raccoons (euthanized),
 - ✓ 1 turkey vulture

2. Coyote 300 Data Analysis

- a. Home range extends from Little Bear Island to Captain Sam's spit
- b. Coyote 300 shows a clear avoidance of developed portions of the island
- c. Coyote 300 has been responsible for 8 out of the 19 turtle nest depredations (42%)
- d. 75% of depredations by Coyote 300 have occurred between 3:30-5:00 AM

3. Other Research Findings

- a. It is likely that 2 individual coyotes are responsible for all of the nest depredations
- b. Coyote numbers have stabilized and sightings by residents are down 75% from last year
- c. Depredation events are concentrated between the Beach Club and the Ocean Course Clubhouse

Mr. Labriola asked Mr. Jordan to comment on option for the removal of coyotes, poisoning, trapping for relocation and hunting to kill. Mr. Jordan stated that the available strategies, if the decision were to be made to remove coyotes or control coyote numbers are trapping, shooting or poisoning;

- **Trapping can be used on the Island. Foot hold traps are the only way to catch them, box traps are not effective. Difficult to place traps where the coyotes are in a developed community while looking out for the safety of the public and other animals.**
- **Poisoning is not an option. Illegal and would also kill other unintentional animals.**
- **Shooting had been used to remove specific problem coyotes and can be effective, but are limited on the Island by a Town firearms ordinance, a Community Association restriction and the issue of public safety.**

Mr. Labriola question if a provision would have to be made to the ordinance that would allow the hunting of coyotes. Mr. Jordan clarified that in the past it was acceptable for previous mayors to issue a firearms exemption in writing for an individual for a specific purpose with set rules and guidelines. He added that he did not feel that such an exemption would be granted today.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of past hunting policies on the Island, expenses the Biologists incurred in recent trapping, and costs of the available options.

Mr. Pezzullo commented that he had been in attendance for three of the Environmental Committee meeting, listened to a variety of opinions and the bottom line is still that a federal protected program is at the mercy of a couple of coyotes. He stated in discussion with SCDNR, the lethal option is no longer an option and it has been established that the coyote is very hard to trap. He felt that trapping is an option that can be accomplished to rid the Island of the two coyotes that have been identified as having depredated turtle nests. Mr. Pezzullo added his and the Turtle Patrol's concern that there was no action taken by the Committee until losses were unacceptable. He noted that most of the depredation had occurred now, where as last year most occurred during the hatching phase which is now approaching.

Mr. Labriola questioned members if was the Committee's position to make a recommendation to Council for a commitment to engage trappers for the next five weeks to remove coyotes from the Island. Mr. Jordan indicated that he felt that trapping to attempt to control or alleviate this issue in not the approach to be taken. He indicated that the committee is within its right to recommend the use of a lethal option to target and remove the coyotes causing the problem. He felt to stipulate how it can/should occur is outside of the Committee's expertise and should be left to Council and then to the Biologists to decide the best option.

Mr. Jordan stated that even though they are not native to the Island, he considers the coyote as a wild animal that now lives in our environment and does not deserves any less respect than others that live on the Island. He felt that you should not kill one creature to protect another creature. Mr. Chitwood added that that in his opinion it would be against the longstanding environmental tradition of the Island by targeting the coyote instead of finding a way to coexist. He felt that making a move without enough knowledge was not a responsible action and recommended staying on course to collect that knowledge to find a way to protect the turtle eggs while coexisting with the other wildlife.

Ms. King made the suggestion to be more proactive in the protection of turtle nest and use the funding that would be expended in the removal of the coyotes to hire interns for night patrols during the hatching season. This would allow for the gathering of information and the protection of the eggs. Mr. Jordan confirmed that night patrols, specifically from 3:00 am to 6:00 am, on the beach could prevent approximately 75% of the nests in the patrol area but not likely to gather information. Ms. King questioned if the patrol could not be a short term solution rather than jumping into a lethal option. Mr. Jordan confirmed that all night patrols could possibly prevent depredation completely, but paid staff would take the place of the volunteer patrols. Committee members discussed the approaches offered and if resources are available.

Mr. Labriola requested that Mr. Jordan double his efforts in respect to "night patrols" utilizing any resources available. He requested that Mr. Jordan direct funding requests to the administrator for submission to the Mayor and Council and to expedite the approval process.

B. **Ordinance 2014-08** – An Amendment to Article 16, Dog Restraint

Mr. Labriola stated that **Ordinance 2014-08** was in response to the community’s apprehension with the number of dogs in the “off leash” area on the beach near Beachwalker County Park. Environmental and safety concerns prompted Committee members to review the pet restraint ordinance. Committee recommendations to eliminate the blue “off leash” area (represented on the map attached to the ordinance) and changes in the language of the ordinance where presented to Council who approved the first reading of **Ordinance 2014-08**. He noted that the ordinance has an effective date of November 1st to allow the notification of the County and visitors to the park of the impending changes.



Committee Members discussed notification of the changes with the placement of new signage and the enforcement of changes. Mr. Jordan indicated concerns with the unclear confusing language in the ordinance. In section 2 (b) of the ordinance which dealt with requirements during the “off-leash season” November 1st thru March 15th, he stated the change would require the dog be within 5 feet of the owner. This would prohibit owners from playing fetch with their dogs and questioned if the change would also effect what was designated an “off-leash” area. He also pointed out areas where the language was contradictory.

Mr. Jordan stated that since the Committee had not discussed the language changes, if members were in agreement. Committee members discussed the intent of the changes and made the recommendation the “5 ft.” language be changed to “under control”.

VI. New Business

None

VII. Reports:

A. Town of Kiawah Island Wildlife Department – Jim Jordan/Aaron Given

 2014 Predator GPS Project

➤ **Bobcats**

- Bobcat 350- Adult Female- Den on Sora Rail Road on May 28 (3 male, 2 female)
- Bobcat 600- Juvenile Male- Roaming Johns Island (Briar Creek to Mullet Hall)
- Bobcat 250- Adult Female- No denning yet
- Bobcat 800- Adult Male- V-gate east to Preserve/Falcon Point
- Bobcat 400- Adult Female- Collar malfunction, needs to be dropped off
- Bobcat 200- Juvenile Female- Collar malfunction, needs to be dropped off

➤ **Coyotes**

- Coyote 300- Adult Female- Ocean Course
Territory covers most of island from Little Bear to Captains Sam's spit. Shows clear avoidance of developed areas. Has been involved in 8 sea turtle nest depredations

📌 **East End Beach Erosion**

- Permit application submitted on May 30
- Biological Assessment submitted on June 10

📌 **Painted Bunting Banding**

- Ongoing

📌 **Black Rail Survey (SCDNR)**

- First 2 surveys completed. 1 additional survey to be completed in July

📌 **Nuisance Alligators**

- Male Alligator (10' 2") removed from Ocean Park pond on June 10-very aggressive and had been fed

B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management – Norm Shea

No Report

C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort – Liz King

No Report

D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board – Amanda Mole

No Report

E. Environmental Science Committee – Jack Kotz

No Report

VIII. Correspondence:

None

IX. Citizen Comments:

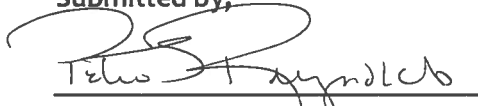
A citizen suggestion was made to remove coyotes from the Island and euthanized if it is not agreeable for them to be shot on the Island. She disagreed with the continued study of the coyotes and indicated that it is her option that the problems will only get worse without the elimination of the ones that are here at this time would save countless turtle eggs. She stated that many residents are upset by the presence of the coyotes.

X. Committee Member Comments:

None

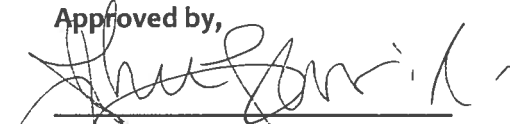
- XI. **Adjournment:**
The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



John D. Labriola, Chairman

9.16.2014
Date