

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Kiawah Island Municipal Center**  
**Council Chambers**  
**June 16, 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  
                                  John Wright  
                                  Marilyn Olson  
                                  Norm Shea, KICA  
                                  Jim Jordan, TOKI  
                                  Aaron Given, TOKI  
                                  Tumiko Rucker, TOKI Administrator

Absent:                    William Stewart  
                                  Amanda Mole  
                                  Dave Achey, KICA  
                                  Leila Gable, KICA  
                                  Liz King, KIGR  
                                  Jack Kotz, KINHC  
                                  Justin Core, KINHC

IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

- A. Environmental Committee Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2014

*Mr. Chitwood made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2014 Environmental Committee meetings. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jordan and was unanimously approved.*

V. **Old Business**

- A. Coyote Monitoring Update

Mr. Jim Jordan, Town Biologist, reported that an attempt to trap two coyotes for GPS collaring began on March 12<sup>th</sup> and was ongoing for approximately three months until June 13<sup>th</sup>. He indicated that caught was; one coyote, one bobcat, one

domestic dog, six opossums, seven raccoons and one turkey vulture. Mr. Jordan stated that the coyote was collared on April 1<sup>st</sup>, was an adult female and caught near the Ocean Course and had been generating data since that date.

Mr. Jordan explained an experienced local Johns Island trapper was used to set approximately eight to twelve foothold traps that were checked by Town staff daily. He stated that, with permission of the land owner, trapping was done mainly on the eastern end of the island near the Ocean Course on Resort property. He noted that for a short time, until beach season began, trapping was done on the west end near Beachwalker Park on Kiawah Partners property.

Mr. Jordan stated that the study showed the coyote travels the length of the Island from Captain Sam's Spit to the Stono River. He noted that she does not tend to utilize undeveloped and/or isolated areas of the Island and uses the beach as her main travel corridor.

Mrs. Olson inquired if the data showed that the coyote was on the beach or on the dune close to the beach. Mr. Jordan stated that most of the initial points showed she was traveling on the beach at night. Mr. Jordan indicated that the collar was initially reporting her location every three hours. He stated that after the first turtle nest predation the collar was adjusted to report the coyote location every two hours during the day and every thirty minutes at night. Mr. Jordan stated that this was to gather data on to determine if she was at the location of the predated nests, if there is a pattern to how she locates the nest, and if there is a specific time of night or tide cycle that she is on the beach.

Mr. Jordan stated that to date nine nest predations had occurred and it was determined that the collared coyote was at or near three of the nine. He indicated that monitoring showed the coyote was moving inland along the golf course and abruptly change course to the beach to a depredation sight. He concluded that with the sudden change of course that the coyote saw the female turtle on the dune.

Mr. Jordan reviewed with members the statics on the nests and predations so far for this year;

- *46 nests total*
- *9 predations by coyotes, 8 on the first night and 1 on the second night*
  - *One total predation of an estimated 88 eggs*
  - *Approximately 324 eggs were relocated and screened*
  - *More predations on the east end of the Island (from Surtson, east)*

Mr. Jordan estimated a predation rate of 7.6% predation rate of the nests laid to date for Kiawah. He noted that rate was double over last year. Mr. Jordan stated that it was likely that no other animals were responsible for the predations.

Mrs. Olson expressed the concern that the nest season had just begun and still two months to go. Mr. Chitwood inquired if was any indication of the predation of any nests that had been screened. Mr. Jordan replied that there had not been. Mr. Chitwood noted that coyote sightings were down for this year but predations were significantly higher.

Committee members discussed the use of trapping and the difficulty distinguishing the number and size of the animals that predated the nests. Mr. Elliott noted the number of nests were significantly lower than last year. Mr. Jordan stated that in discussions with Ms. Charlotte Hope, a Turtle Biologist with SCDNR, it was determined that the number of nests was lower across the state. Mr. Jordan presented some predation rates by coyotes and raccoons on some of the islands across the state;

- *Kiawah Nest Predation*
  - *Coyotes - 8%*
  - *Raccoons- 0%*
- *Other Coyote Predation in SC – only three other beaches reporting coyote predation – DNR Properties – Natural preserves with no development or public access.*
  - *South Island (TYWC)-12%*
  - *Sand Island (TYWC)-16%*
  - *North Island (TYWC)- 10%*
- *Raccoon Predation in SC - all undeveloped islands*
  - *Botany Bay Island- 33 %*
  - *Botany Bay Plantation -18%*
  - *Capers Island- 100%*
  - *Cedar Island- 7%*
  - *Little Capers Island- 20%*
  - *Murphy Island- 25%*
  - *Otter Island- 3%*
  - *Pritchard's Island- 29%*

Committee members discussed that South Island had a predation rate approaching 50% and with trapping heavily from 2008 to 2010 dropped the level to almost 10%. DNR has now begun trapping again as the predation rate has started to increase..

Mr. Labriola asked if in discussion with Ms. Hope if she had any suggestions on deterrents for coyote predations. Mr. Jordan stated that she was interested in the data gained from the collared coyote, but made no recommendations.

Mr. Chitwood indicated that in his opinion the three mechanisms to improve the situation would be to;

- *have no coyotes,*
- *place a barrier around the nests as soon as possible after detection,*
- *implement a deterrent to keep coyotes off the beach.*

Mr. Jordan added that the fourth would be to view the situation as part of nature.

Mr. Labriola noted that the coyote sightings are very rare and questioned if the residents have gotten used to coyotes. Mr. Jordan explained that when coyotes move into an area that there is a time where the coyotes are very visible while establishing territories and determining where to hide to get away from people. Mr. Elliott noted that past discussion and the statics presented suggest that once you start disturbing the population, you don't eliminate the problem, but make it worse without stabilized territories and a somewhat self-controlled population.

Ms. Rucker introduced another option of the addition of an element of monitoring the beach at night when the nest predations are taking place. She discussed the feasibility of having two volunteers or professionals to watch the isolated areas of the beach. Members discussed the options of what time frames should be monitored and if these patrols could potentially disturb the nesting turtles. Mr. Jordan stated that a research study done by DNR provides information how to set up night patrols and that patrols in the latter portion of the night were as effective as all night

patrols.

Mr. Chitwood expressed he felt the biggest roll that the Town and the Environmental Committee can play is to better understand the behavior of the coyotes, by doing more trapping, which would allow for better decisions to be made. Mr. Jordan stated the trapping efforts had been suspended due to the heat, and with the availability of an additional collar, it was the intention to trap two animals for better data.

Mrs. Olson inquired, with trapping not available, what the next step would be. Mr. Jordan stated that variations on trapping using different baits, attractants and locations, there is no other way to catch a coyote other than a foothold trap. Mrs. Olson indicated that with no other option, she would suggest to explore setting up night patrols for two or three weeks for the possibility of making observations and collecting data. Mr. Chitwood inquired of Mrs. Olson if her suggestion would be the responsibility of the Town or the Turtle Patrol. She responded that it seemed that the Town was leading the research so it should fall to the Town as another component of research. Mr. Labriola suggested the exploring the use of additional cameras rather than individuals. Committee members discussed further what options were available.

Ms. Rucker stated that the night patrol option advocating the use of a professional research student for the parameters the Committee determined suitable. Mrs. Olson stated that she felt that it was up to the Committee to determine if it is a worthwhile project and to define its scope. She stated it would then be up to staff to work out the logistics and bring recommendations back to the Committee. Ms. Rucker referred back to the earlier discussion in which Mr. Jordan described work that had already been done in a community, setting forth the scope and parameters which could be used as a basis for this project. Mr. Jordan cautioned that any individuals that did anything with the turtles other than observing at a distance will have to have training and a permit from DNR along with the support of the biologists. Committee members engaged in an in-depth assessment of the proposed project.

*Mrs. Olson made motion to move forward with the night patrol research and turtle nest protection efforts.*

*Mr. Chitwood amended the motion to request Mr. Jordan to design a night patrol program of activities that would be helpful in turtle nest protection and present his recommendation back to the Committee.*

Mr. Labriola noted that with the time sensitive nature of the issue that Mr. Jordan be allowed to implement his program once completed rather than to wait another month for the next meeting. Mr. Jordan stated that the Committee can advise staff but the funding that will be required would have to be approved by Town Council.

*Mr. Elliott made a motion that the Committee recommend that staff propose and implement a program to enhance protection against coyote predation of turtle nests.*

Mr. Chitwood stated that with the turtle egg laying season ongoing, it is his concern that there will be a rush to do something. He suggested having another meeting to review the recommendations before implementation to allow for modification and to review any costs involved.

Mrs. Olson inquired if the funds for the project would come out of the Environmental Committee Budget and asked if there was sufficient funding available for limited implementation. Mr. Jordan stated that Committee budget would be used and that funds were available.

Mr. Labriola summarized by stating that the majority of the Committee supported Mr. Jordan developing a plan and proposal that hopefully could be ready by the next meeting. The Committee also supported the hiring of an individual that can be permitted, for a short term project, and work with the volunteer Turtle Patrol to replicate their work only, earlier in the morning. Mr. Labriola noted that the project is not inconsistent with what is already be done, just expanding the timeline for a period of time.

*Mrs. Olson stated that it was her hope that the sooner some kind of intervention can begin on the nesting the more beneficial it will be on the hatching season and then with the fall and winter weather the trapping can begin again. Mr. Labriola took the comment as a second motion.*

*Committee members voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Chitwood's and Mrs. Olson's motions.*

## VI. New Business

### A. Chapter 5; Control of Pets Ordinance

Mr. Labriola stated that the review of the dog ordinance is in response to issues at Beachwalker Park. Mr. Jordan stated the number of unleashed dogs on the beach on west end of the Island adjacent to Beachwalker County Park has become a reoccurring issue over the last three months. He noted that after Memorial Day there has been one hundred plus dogs on the beach daily. Mr. Jordan stated that local residents coming to the beach for the opportunity to allow their dog to run unleashed is a big attraction to the County Park. Mr. Jordan stated that complains were received and that staff had observed the issue.

Mr. Jordan indicated that he researched the dog leash regulations across the local region. He noted that Kiawah has the most liberal leash regulations on the beach.

- *Edisto Beach – during summer, on leash at all times*
- *Seabrook Island – designated off leash area – 550 yards wide – not adjacent to a public park - restricted to "on leash" for 10 am to 5 pm.*
- *Folly Beach – no dogs allowed on the beach during the summer 10am to 6 pm - on leash between 6 pm and 10 am.*
- *Sullivan's Island – off leash 5 am to 10 am – no dogs from 10 am to 6 pm – on leash from 6 pm to 10 am. Dogs on beach requires a permit.*
- *Isle of Palms - off leash 5 am to 8 am – on leash all other times.*
- *Kiawah Island - No dogs allowed in Critical Habitat Areas on extreme east and west end of Island*

#### *2 Designated Dog areas (West Area 900 yards wide, East Area 2,000 yards wide)*

- *Dogs off leash during daylight hours only*

#### *Remainder of beach*

- *March 16 – October 31 - Dogs on leash at all times*
- *November 1 – March 15 - Dogs off leash during daylight hours only*

Committee Member discussed that the entire Island was not identified as a problem, only with the area that is located

next to the County Park Beach and attracts hundreds of individuals during the summer.

Mr. Jordan stated that in review of the Municipal Code, Chapter 5, speaks to the Town's dog leash ordinance and asked if the Committee recommended changes.

Mr. Jordan discussed with Committee members the presented hand out showing the violations of the leash laws for the year 2014;

- *Code Enforcement – 121 Verbal Warnings – 17 Written Warnings – 0 Tickets*
- *Town Staff - 23 Verbal Warnings – 1 Written Warning – 0 Tickets*

Mr. Jordan noted that there had been, across the entire beach, almost 170 violations of the lease law in 2014 alone, and no tickets have been written. He stated that beach patrol was asked in June to keep a record of where the written violations were occurring and 90% were on the west end of the Beach in the critical habitat area adjacent to the Beachwalker Park.

Mr. Jordan stated it was his recommendation that the entire "off leash" area should be done away with and phased in with the rest of the beach or absorbed into the critical habitat area and keep dogs out of the area completely. He clarified that at the moment the center of the beach has a seasonal "off leash" regulation that only allows dogs off the leash in the winter months. He noted that this would require that dogs are on a leash at all times from March 16<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Chitwood agreed that it would be easier to enforce and suggested to remove the almost unenforceable requirement that a dog is under voice command when off leash. Committee members also discussed the possibility of adding the entire area to the critical habitat area and not allowing any dogs.

Ms. Rucker stated that there is also the ambiguity with the beginning and ending times as now stated as ½ hour before and after sunset. She asked for a recommendation of a more defined beginning and ending time that is more consistent with other beach regulations. Ms. Rucker agreed that clarity of specific times and the deletion of "voice command" would make it much easier for Code Enforcement officers.

Ms. Rucker recommended that 16-501, which she described as a preamble, be added to section 16-502 *Restraint on the beach and dunes* as an introductory language. Ms. Rucker also recommended the addition of subsection [C] which would include language similar to;

- Beach goers will be subject to penalties if found to be in violation of the ordinance;  
*listing violations.*

Committee members discussed the options with regard to the off leash dogs on the beach;

- Do nothing
- Extend the critical habit area to include the "off leash" area
- Extend the "on leash" area to include the "off leash" area

*Mr. Chitwood made a motion to that, if it is confirmed that Beachwalker Parks is the only park in Charleston County to*

*allow dogs, then expand the critical habitat area to include the "off leash" area and far enough beyond the Beachwalker access as to not allow public dog access to the beach. Mr. Labriola seconded the motion.*

Committee members discussed the motion and the negative reactions that could possible follow the announcement of the changes and the need to publicly explain their decision. Mr. Jordan agreed that making the area critical habitat is defended by the fact that loggerhead turtles are nesting in the area along and Wilson's plovers nesting in the nearby dunes.

Mrs. Olson addressed the portion of Mr. Chitwood's motion that dealt with Beachwalker Park being the only county park that allowed dogs. She indicated that Edisto Beach is in Charleston County and allows dogs and asked if that can be confirmed. She also noted that many area beaches allow dogs both on and off leash for limited times during the day.

*Mr. Chitwood amended his motion to state to expand the critical habitat area to include the "off leash" area and far enough beyond the Beachwalker access as to not allow public dog access to the beach. Mr. Labriola seconded the motion.*

Committee members discussed the difficulty of immediately enforcing the change with the holiday being so close and the advertising materials that has been printed for this year stating the Park rules. Members agreed that implementation would begin next year.

Mr. Stewart stated that, being a dog owner, he was not in favor of moving the critical habit area to include the "off leash" area not allowing dogs on the beach at all.

*Mr. Stewart made a motion to extend the "on leash" area to include the "off leash" area and implement as soon as possible. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Olson and was unanimously passed.*

## B. Chapter 6; Critical Habitat Areas Ordinance

## 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 – Appears to be denning, unable to find den
  - Bobcat 200 – Juvenile Female – Collar malfunction, needs to be dropped off
  
- **Coyotes**
  - Trapping conducted March 12 – June 13
  - 1 coyote collar deployed - 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 at

- least 2 sea turtle nest depredations
- > Other captures – 1 bobcat, 1 domestic dog, 6 opossum, 7 raccoons, 1 turkey vulture

**Aerial Photography**

- Final draft delivered June 11

**East End Beach Erosion**

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

**Summer Breeding Bird Survey (Point-counts)**

- ↳ Completed

**Breeding Bird Survey**

- ↳ Completed on June 9

**Painted Bunting Banding**

- ↳ Beginning in June

**Black Rail Survey (SCDNR)**

- ↳ First survey completed. 2 additional surveys in June and July

**Nuisance Alligators**

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

**Sea Turtle Nesting**

- ✓ 46 Nests
  - > 9 depredated by coyotes (8 first night, 1 second night)
  - > 1 nest totally depredated (88 eggs)
  - > 8 nests partially depredated, relocated, and screened
    - 324 eggs depredated – average of 41 eggs depredated per nest
  - > 412 total eggs depredated by coyotes
    - 7.6 % of total estimated number of eggs

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

C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort – Liz King

D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board – Amanda Mole

E. Environmental Science Committee – Jack Kotz

**VIII. Correspondence:**

None

**IX. Citizen Comments:**

None

**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

7-19-2014  
Date