

Meeting Minutes
Delaware Native Species Commission
April 17, 2019 at 9 am
Kent County Administrative Building, 555 Bay Road, Dover, Delaware
Room 221

Minutes approved on: June 19, 2019

Members Present

James White, Chair
Robert Thornton, Vice-Chair
Jeffery Downing
Tracy Surlles
Ashley Kennedy
Michael Costello
Jessica Inhof
Sarah Cooksey
Janice Truitt
Katherine Holtz
Lori Athey
James McCulley

Members Absent

Michael Petit de Mange
David Saveikis
Christopher Heckscher

Administrative Staff

Jennifer Childears, Administrative Specialist III

Public Present

Stephanie Hansen, State Senator
Teddy Mortiz
Linda Newsome
Steve Cottrell
Valann Budischak
Faith Kuehn
Amy Highland
Flavia Rutkosky
BC Dant
Marie Fletcher

Call to Order

Mr. White called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The commission reviewed the minutes of the March 8, 2019 meeting. Ms. Cooksey made a motion, seconded by Ms. Kennedy to accept the minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously by the eligible commission members.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Law and Regulations Subcommittee Report

Mr. Costello reported that the subcommittee met on April 10th and reviewed the goals of the subcommittee. They also reviewed local regulations, ordinances and comprehensive plans that are working towards using native or non-invasive species that the commission can promote. The subcommittee is exploring an option to work with interns to draft city/county legislation/rules. The subcommittee also discussed creating a Certified Native Plant Garden Center for retailers. Finally, the subcommittee discussed working with the Conservation Districts within the state to promote storm water and no mow areas as models. The subcommittee plans to meet again in June.

Ms. Cooksey asked if the subcommittee was looking at policies at the state level also or only the local level. Mr. Costello replied that they are working to ID jurisdictions that have regulations already in place that the commission could promote at any level of government.

Education Subcommittee Report

Mr. Downing reported that the subcommittee met March 25th and continued their discussion on a branding tagline. The subcommittee took all the taglines discussed in the March 2019 meeting and narrowed them down to a final four of “Grow DE”, “Grow Wild DE”, “Nurture Nature” and “Keep DE Wild” which the subcommittee would like the commission to vote on. Comments are as follows:

Mr. Thornton- the line needs to be enough to grab their attention to move on to whatever comes next, the line may be forgotten once the person gets into the information.

Ms. Kennedy- the ranking system used to compile the final four shows that “wild” was trending.

Ms. Cooksey- “Grow DE” seems to lean more towards an economy connotation.

Mr. White- “Keep DE Wild” was the strongest of the 4 lines and invokes nature and wildlife.

Mr. Downing- “Keep DE Wild” follows national trends of cities such as “Keep Austin Weird”.

Ms. Truitt- There are some taglines from the March meeting that did not appear on the list. Were they exclude? Can the commission rank those?

After more discussion it was decided that a survey monkey would be initiated with the final four and the previously omitted taglines for the commission to rank. Those finding will be discussed at the next commission meeting.

The subcommittee also discussed the symposium and realized there are many logistics to work through that make the project much bigger than the subcommittee or the commission can handle with its limited volunteer time. It may be necessary to hire a consultant to assist with the planning and coordination. Ms. Athey wondered who the target audience would be as that would

affect the types of displays, vendors and discussions during the symposium. Senator Hansen offered her office as a resource for assistance and mentioned that there are similar events happening through her office that could be used as an example of how to get insurance and find a location to hold the symposium. Senator Hansen also discussed waiting until winter for the symposium because she had spoken with the Department of Education and the Division of the Arts about engaging students in the process and both agencies are on board to create curriculum and possibly hold an art contest to create a graphic for swag bags. Mr. White thought a subcommittee specific to the symposium would be needed and also to add the estimate cost of an event planner to the budget. Mr. White also mentioned that there are a lot of smaller events that already exist- Ag Day and so on, where the commission could have a small display. That would be a start and Mr. Thornton said that going this way- starting at smaller events- would help the commission to tweak and refine the message as the commission moves along to the symposium. Mr. Thornton suggested working with HOAs and private sponsors to talk at meetings with a turnkey exhibit. The associations would pay to have the commission there and that would help with the cost of a small exhibit.

Ms. Athey made a motion, seconded by Ms. Holtz, to create a working group that will guide the commission on creating a winter symposium. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. White, Mr. Downing, Mr. Thornton, Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Cooksey and Senator Hansen voiced their willingness to start a small workgroup to move forward with a small display. This group would be targeting HOAs and residences promoting 5 educational goals- “choose native plants,” “avoid invasive plants,” “use water wisely,” “use chemicals sparingly,” and “reduce lawn size.”

Top Ten List

While not formally on the agenda, the commission discussed the draft legislation, which is part of the top ten list, previously reviewed on March 8, 2019. In particular, the discussion surrounded the list of invasive plant species that is part of the legislation. Ms. Athey felt the process of how species made the list was just as important as being on the list. Ms. Athey mentioned protocols that the Delaware Invasive Species Council (DISC) used. Bill McAvoy, public member, Fish & Wildlife botanist and member of DISC has two additional lists determined as “probably invasive” and “watch list” which are reviewed regularly.

Faith Kuehn, member of the public and DISC recommended that the council use the current DISC list for the legislation while Mr. McAvoy’s other lists are reviewed. This will help move the legislation along. The commission should think about scheduling when reviews of the bill’s species list would be done and also proving funding to agencies for those reviews. Finally, Ms. Kuehn mentioned that the bill should focus on plants that are sold now that are invasive.

Senator Hansen mentioned that the legislation is on hold due to an issue arose that needs to be corrected before moving forward. A member of the Delaware Nursery and Landscape Association had their representative introduce a bill to appoint two representatives from the Association to the commission as there is currently no one representing them. Senator Hansen felt it was not in the best interest of the bill to move forward until someone from the Association was on the commission to discuss it as the bill directly affects Delaware’s nursery and landscapers industry. However, Senator Hansen is proposing to open SB 153, the bill that created

the Native Species Commission, and add three more members, one for each of the defined demographics: by virtue of position, representing an environmental organization or institute of higher education, and representing commercial interests. Adding three positions will allow a member from the Delaware Nursey and Landscape Association a place on the commission. Senator Hansen also discussed removing the requirement that a commission member be a Delaware resident. Instead the commission member is required to part of a Delaware group. Senator Hansen will work on getting that pushed through as soon as possible.

Goals for 2019

Budget

The commission discussed what line items would be on the budget (mileage reimbursement, operational costs, funding for event planners, media specialists, displays, volunteer corp manager, marketing specialist, the symposium, future symposiums and so on) and what would be a good asking amount. Mr. Thornton asked if there was a ceiling, a limit, the commission could ask for and Senator Hansen mentioned to start around \$10,000 to gauge the response. There are ways to generate funding in the future, such as agency buy-ins (the commission provides a service for a fee) and of course getting a symposium and information out to the public could also generate funding. Ms. Cooksey inquired where would the budget money be held and Senator Hansen replied that since DNREC is charged as the administrative support of the commission, the money would be housed with DNREC. Mr. White will create a line budget to send around to the commission for edits and suggestions before sending the Senator Hansen.

Symposium

Much discussion regarding the symposium occurred prior to its time on the agenda. However, the following discussions were had at this time.

The commission needs to get started with educating the public ahead of any legislation so that the commission can craft the conversations. The commission needs to start bringing people to the table and get people mobilized. Mt. Cuba is having an event at the end of the month and Mr. Downing mentioned that he will put something small together to display that the event to get started. Amy Highland from Mt. Cuba remarked that communication efforts between conservationists and plant people need to be improved and that Mt. Cuba will be working on ways to make this happen. There are a lot of different groups with overlapping interests that need to be brought into the conversation- cooperative extensions, education groups, conservation groups, Dr. Tallamy. Dr. Tallamy is giving free talks on Arden on Monday, April 22 and will be a TriState Bird Resuce's Open House on May 5th. Senator Hansen presents her PowerPoint sometimes three times a month and that has been gaining interest. Ms. Childears will make the current version of the PowerPoint available online at the commission's website.

Ms. Cooksey asked about issuing a press release regarding the commission. Currently DNREC issues a press release before each meeting but there has not been a press release specifically about the commission. Ms. Cooksey will draft one for review. Mr. Downing mentioned that Mt. Cuba has a standing portion of the News Journal when needed and he would use the space for the press release. Mr. White mentioned he is in contact with Maddy Lauria also with the News Journal. Mr. Thornton said he would pay for a release in several trade journals.

Other Business

FOIA and posting regular and subcommittee meeting notices

Ms. Childears reminded commission members that per FOIA rules, all meeting notices, including subcommittees, are to be posted to the state wide calendar 7 days in advance.

Public Comment

Valann Budischak- If the legislation to ban sales of invasive species becomes law, how do we make sure that the government offices are following the law? Mr. Costello replied that Government leading by example is one of the commission's tasks and Mr. White mentioned that Legislative Hall and New Castle County are making strides in removing invasive species and planting native species. Ms. Surlles mentioned that there are several areas throughout New Castle County that have creative native species areas and are putting up signs to inform the public.

Helen- The commission is meeting for the next decade, has it considered other species? Mr. White replied that the commission will expand its focus to other species but that the ban on invasive plant species was part of the commission's goals for 2019.

Faith Kuehn- While displaying at smaller events (before the symposium) create a small survey that people can answer to gather information on what the public wants to know so that the commission can cater to that. Senator Hansen mentioned that Master Gardeners is one group that is ready to help get the word out about the commission.

Beverley- Legislation should include plants to promote and define weeds we are protecting as some weeds are not invasive but the education is not there. Mr. White mentioned that there has been discussion of weed control ordinances being more on the negative side.

Ms. Truitt mentioned the importance of government offices setting examples of native species. The public can learn by seeing. A full list of government offices throughout Delaware that are displaying native species should be developed. We need to show the public how it is done. Mr. White mentioned publicizing the places that are going it well and Ms. Cooksey volunteered to start a list. Flavia Rutkosky suggested having kiosks with take away information for the public. Barbara mentioned involving school children in planting over the summer into the fall. Ms. Truitt also mentioned utilizing 4H and FFA groups to encourage schools to plant native species and then map out the places where it's been done so public can go and see.

Ms. Budischak mentioned that there are several good publications available. Original Plants for Livable Delaware is no longer in print but some other publications are. If there was money available, they could print more. Senator Hansen requested that commission members bring in various publications to see what could be reprinted with funding. Mr. Downing and Ms. Athey mentioned that there is a list available and Mr. Thornton mentioned perhaps printing a few on his own. There is a link on the commission's website to a list of educational materials put together by Mt. Cuba.

Barbara- discussed her difficulties in purchasing native species that were not treated with chemicals and she hoped that the commission would encourage people to buy local but also need

to look at not spraying or creating hybrids of native species. Mr. McCulley mentioned that the native species are out there but when people go to the store to get the plants, the retailer will be out or not have it and then sell something else to them. Ms. Truitt mentioned as the education increases, the supply and demand will help get the native species in stores. Mr. White suggested identifying suppliers and Senator Hansen mentioned a study that was done that showed there was a lot of non-native, sprayed species in the stores. Linda Newsome remarked that the York County Master Gardeners group has great resources available, Barbara also mentioned that what plants attract in terms of wildlife would also be helpful. Mr. Downing mentioned that Mt. Cuba works with an Environmental Psychologist that works with neighborhoods to identify cues that move people to improve their landscapes.

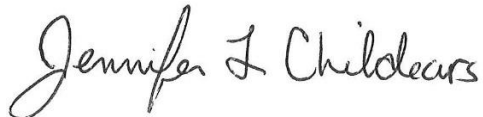
Next Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting is scheduled for June 19, 2019 in Room 221. Ms. Truitt made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooksey to move the start time back to 10:00 am. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business, meeting adjourned at 10:55 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer I. Childears". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Jennifer Childears, Administrative Specialist III
DNREC, Division of Fish & Wildlife