

FEAB September 8, 2023

FEAB MEETING MINUTES

September 8th, 2023

Fairhope Public Library, Board Room

Member Attendees: Gary Gover, Nigel Temple, Anna Miller, Jim Horner, Ben Frater, Carole Tebay, Jennifer Foutch, Amy Paulson, Steven Scyphers

Members not in attendance:

None

City of Fairhope: Kim Burmeister, Christina LeJeune -Planning and Zoning Department

City Council: None

Honored Guests: Carl Couret (Active participant)

Minutes taken by: Kim Burmeister

Amy called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

FEAB Minutes:

August minutes were approved as amended. Nigel 1st, Anna 2nd; unanimous.

Summary of meeting:

1. Amy recommends actions for common sense water conservation, year around.
2. Amy and Jim recommend actions for wastewater treatment plant effluent analysis.
3. Amy recommends incentives for water reduction techniques and practices.
4. FEAB supports the grant application for watershed restoration of the Big Mouth Gully basin and feels this site has good potential for educational outreach.
5. Upcoming Eagle Scout projects for Fairhope: Oyster Reefs (living reefs) and Chimney Swift Tower
6. FEAB would like to see fish information signs placed at the end of the municipal pier.
7. FEAB has an upcoming meeting with FWES to discuss the outdoor classroom project at the school.
8. FEAB would like city staff to be familiar with and utilize, when possible, watershed management plan directives (Weeks Bay and, when complete, Eastern Shore Watershed)
9. FEAB is helping with ordinance drafts presented by the Joint EAC and Ashely Campbell, to help municipalities around us adopt standardized wetland, red soil & clay, and erosion and sediment control ordinances.
10. FEAB is eager to be a part of the plastic bag reduction campaign Mayor Sullivan is interested in initiating with Jr. Council.

Membership: New membership application received: Amy Bleidorn. She has been encouraged to attend.

Agenda from Amy:

AGENDA

THE CITY OF FAIRHOPE ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD MONTHLY MEETING

SEPTEMBER 8, 2023 / 3-4 PM, LIBRARY

- 1. Housekeeping (< 5 min)**
 - a. Last month minutes – Kim
 - b. Guests (applicant Amy Bleidorn)

- 2. FYI / Completed Items (5 min)**
 - a. FEAB Recommendation/Resolution for Priority Watershed Identification Sign Locations - Kim
 - b. COF Big Mouth Gully Wetlands Restoration Site Visit - Amy, Ben, Nicole
 - c. Eagle Scout Chimney Swift Tower - Amy

- 3. Priority Issues / Action Item Follow up (~35 min)**
 - a. City Council *Water Conservation Strategy Recommendations* - Amy, Anna, Nigel
 - i. (see notes below and “Priority Issues/Water Conservation” file for research and draft Recommendations)
 - b. Review *Baldwin County Draft Ordinances*: Red Soil and Clay, Wetlands, Good Neighbor Stormwater, and Construction - Amy
 - c. FWES Outdoor classrooms - Carole, Sarah, Gary (9/13/23 FWES meeting)
 - d. Education Signs - Steven, Nicole
 - i. Eagle Scout Reef Project - City deploying artificial reefs under some piers.
 - ii. Pier fishing signage – help anglers identify fish and understand release rules.
 - e. Facebook Posts - Nigel, Sarah
 - f. Council Meeting Report - Nigel & Anna
 - g. Butterfly Garden - Ben, Carole (see spp list, next page)
 - h. K-1 Center Redevelopment
 - i. Native habitat planting / site stabilization at St James and Summit - Amy (Rebecca & Jamie)
 - ii. Master Plan clarification

- 4. New Items**
 - a. Mayor Sullivan Request for strategy targeting single-use plastic bags - Kim
 - b. Fairhope Airport: *Should the FEAB engage the Fairhope Airport Authority?* - Gary, Ben, Amy
 - i. Management of Waterhole Branch wetlands (possibly operated as wetland mitigation bank but may need new management plan). POCs - Jack Burrell, Atty Josh Myrick)
 - ii. Airport master plan/long-range planning
 - iii. Use of AVGAS at airport
 - iv. Use of adjacent open space.
 - c. Mediation plan for Fairhope's gas utility - Gary
 - d. K1-Center redevelopment / review master plan - Gary

- 5. Wrap up (5 min)**
 - a. Involvement & Education Opportunities:
 - i. *AL Water Watch Monitoring Training* – Fairhope, 10/20 9-3. FREE, Register by 10/1
 - ii. WVAL Environmental Education Series, Alabama Waste Sludge Awareness (9/19)
 - b. October City Council Working Meeting Representatives: Steven and Carole
 - c. October Agenda Items: Formalizing FEAB involvement - discussion / see Gary’s Notes, below
 - d. October FEAB Guest Speakers: None

Amy also presented her draft of Meeting notes. Jim Horner has suggested edits, which are highlighted in yellow:

MEETING REFERENCE

FEAB Vision: *to serve as a trusted scientific resource providing a local environmental perspective to policy decisions to ensure environmental matters are given full consideration in the City's decision-making processes. We strive to positively affect the quality of life for all residents, their connection to our local ecosystems, and the resilience and sustainment of Fairhope as a small, yet world-class, city.*

FEAB Role: *the FEAB is dedicated to increasing awareness of environmental issues, offering recommendations to City administrators, and providing state-of-the-science consultation in the implementation of sustainable solutions.*

FEAB 2023 Priority Initiatives & Action Item List

6. Natural/Native Habitat Solutions
 - a. Native Planting / Invasives Outreach – Carole, Ben, Carl
 - i. Review / suggest revisions to COF approved planting list
 - b. Shorelines, Streambanks, Gullies – Nigel, Stephen
 - i. Interns - Stephen
 - c. Greenspace Establishment and Management – Ben, Carl
7. Resilient and Efficient Buildings / Stretch Goals – Anna, Jennifer
8. Trash and Recycling – Jennifer, County MERF liaison
9. City Planning Efforts
 - a. Eastern Shore Watershed Management Plan – Amy / Kim
 - b. COF Land Use Plan Steering Committee – Ben
 - c. Dyas Triangle Park Steering Committee – Nigel
 - d. Community Resiliency Index – [Nicole]
 - e. Clean Marina – Amy / Steven
10. Outreach: Facebook Posts / COF Website development – Nigel, Sarah, Gary, Nicole
11. City Liaisons
 - a. Mayor – COF staff
 - b. City Council – [biweekly report highlights] / Corey
 - c. City Departments – Kim, Christina, Nicole, Anna
12. Other Boards Liaisons
 - a. Fairhope Committees: Bike and Ped (Carl/Carole/Gary), Harbor Board (Amy/Steven), Parks and Recreation Board (Ben), Recycling Committee (Jennifer), Historic Preservation (Ben), Tree Committee (Carole & Gary)
 - i. Attend monthly meetings to discuss priorities / liaison.
 - b. Local Nonprofits: SALT (Carole), ACF (Gary?), Baldwin County Master Gardeners (Carole), Nature Connect (Carole)
 - c. Baldwin County: Env Advisory Committee (Kim), BC EAB Coalition (Amy/Gary)

MEETING IN-PROCESS NOTES / DRAFTS / READ-AHEADS

Carole's Recommended species for butterfly garden:

- native coral honeysuckle (evergreen, not aggressive, and is enjoyed by hummingbirds).
- native maypop/passionflower vine (the cultivars are quite aggressive; this spp does tend to send up underground runners, but hosts Gulf fritillary
- native yellow passionflower - already available on the site (not showy, dies back in winter, isn't aggressive and we know it's successful in that harsh environment).

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Grey water References:

<https://casetext.com/regulation/alabama-administrative-code/title-420-alabama-state-board-of-health/chapter-420-3-1-onsite-sewage-treatment-and-disposal/design-and-construction-requirements/section-420-3-1-64-disposal-of-graywater>

EPA's website shows which states are working on new legislation to reuse water.

<https://www.epa.gov/waterreuse/news-water-reuse-regulations-and-guidelines>

The Emerald Coast Utility Authority has a partnership with the power company to use their treated wastewater.

<http://www.northescambia.com/2012/11/gulf-power-recycles-5-billion-gallons-of-ecua-reclaimed-water>

Pensacola Beach uses treated water for City irrigation.

<https://assets.ecua.fl.gov/CPJune2019WEB.pdf?mtime=20190528145708>

FEAB Water Conservation Strategy Recommendations

Whereas...

- the City of Fairhope has experienced extreme summer temperatures (>95 degrees F) for multiple consecutive days in 2023, and
- the City's water supply (groundwater wells and storage) reached emergency minimum levels triggering mandatory water restrictions, and
- the City's water demand is primarily due to excessive draw for residential irrigation, and
- despite upcoming additional groundwater well and storage projects, the City's water supply is projected to remain vulnerable to the compounding effects of climate variability and rapidly increasing regional development.

the FEAB recommends the following actions...

1) The Fairhope Mayor and City Council pass a Resolution to become a water smart city, focused on the identification and implementation of common-sense water conservation methods. This official acknowledgement would have the effect of unifying the Council on a common goal before the People of Fairhope, who would identify that money spent toward this goal was purposeful and intentional for long-term resource planning. Furthermore, this Resolution may improve the City's ability to obtain water-conservation-focused grant money.

2) In the scope of services for the next round of analysis pertaining to City water infrastructure, particularly at the WWTP, the Fairhope Mayor and City Council first and foremost, should require a chemical engineering analysis of the wastewater contamination levels from PFAS's, PFOS's and any other carcinogens that could create hazards and/or legal liabilities. This study should include the potential volumes and sources of safe, reusable and non-reusable grey water. This data should be considered critical to determining the feasibility of any grey water reusability project. include a high-level engineering feasibility analysis for the reuse of treated WWTP effluent. ~~The scope should include the possibility and ROM cost for a City wide greywater irrigation system, the identification of pilot projects, scaled infrastructure, or other options that would help reuse or conserve City water resources.~~

In addition to these end-of-pipe methods and to affect more immediate change in the interim between this study and implementation of its findings:

3) The Fairhope Mayor and City Council explore and implement a spectrum of voluntary and mandatory water demand-reducing tools. Examples of voluntary tools include but are not limited to incentivizing best management practices and stretch goals for developers to choose water conserving practices and fixtures or the development of reuse technology in individual construction projects. Incentives can be relief from a portion of fees or tax burdens but can also take the form of relaxed footprint requirements or expedited permitting response. Examples of mandatory tools include but are not limited to required building construction practices and persistent community irrigation schedules. There is no one single fix that will suffice to ensure long-term reliability of our local water resources, but a combination of several has a good chance of making a difference.

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The FEAB is happy to provide scope language to detail the recommendation outlined in #2 and can likewise provide specific language that has been effective in other states and municipalities pertaining to #3. Please let me know how the FEAB can be of further service to the city on this matter.

Gary's Proposal for "Getting in the Loop"

Attending regular meetings of the County Commission, one becomes aware that the County includes advisory groups in the formal approval process for items put before the Commission. The Metropolitan Planning Organization does this too. I suggest that we recommend this same basic procedure to the Mayor and Council. Many items that have an environmental aspect seem to get to them for approval without our chop. We need to be in the loop to earn our keep.

Let's say that we should be aware of City business that has an environmental aspect, that will require appreciable effort, money or other resources, that is otherwise significant, and will require management attention. Then, we should have information about such ongoing business in order to render advice as warranted.

The Baldwin County government's advisory groups are asked by staff to look into any issues that the Commission would like information on. They meet, discuss, and, as applicable, prepare a letter, report, or other product for the Commission.

The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization (ESMPO) is highly structured by Federal requirements. It is documented on its website, Eastern Shore MPO – Eastern Shore MPO. It consists of a board supported by three advisory committees: technical, citizens, and bicycle & pedestrian. Quarterly, the committees each meet to advise, by vote, on the full list of agenda items that the board will one week later vote up or down. The committees, regardless of specialty, consider all the ESMPO business. That this succeeds is due to the work and skill of ESMPO staffers.

For us to follow the administrative models of the county government and the ESMPO, we might modify our organizing (chartering) statements as follows:

- Mission: To provide policy and operating advice to the City Council, Mayor, and City Departments regarding environmental matters that concern the City of Fairhope.
- Vision: to serve as a trusted, scientific resource providing a local environmental perspective to policy decisions to ensure environmental matters are given full consideration in the City's decision-making processes. We strive to positively affect the quality of life for all residents, their connection to our local ecosystems, and the resilience and sustainability of Fairhope as a small, world-class city.
- Role: the FEAB is dedicated to increasing awareness of environmental issues, offering recommendations to City administrators, and providing state-of-the-science consultation in the implementation of sustainable solutions.

The Environmental Advisory Board may review and make recommendations to the City Council, Mayor, and City Departments on environmental issues as follows:

1. Proposed ordinances, regulations, and information of an environmental nature.
2. Proposed changes to existing environmental ordinances and codes.
3. Other environmental matters affecting the City as referred to the Board by the City Council, Mayor, City Departments, and public citizen stakeholders.
4. Relevant partnerships with other City Boards, Committees, Commissions, or other advisory and volunteer functions.
5. Other environmental matters affecting the City that are initiated by the Board.

We can strengthen our engagement with other entities and actors for improving communication, especially to have staff seek our input into issues that require management attention.

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We can eventually propose a policy that calls for our chop on city business.

Watershed Signs, location task by FEAB: *complete*

Sign location preferences by FEAB and staff have been presented to the Mayor and Ashley Campbell with Baldwin County for consideration.

Big Mouth Gully basin, potential wetland restoration project:

Amy, Ben, Richard Johnson, Nicole Love, Kim Burmeister, Christina LeJeune and Gena Todia (wetland expert) recently met on site in the city owned basin, Bayou and North Section Street. Nicole is working on a grant which would fund wetland restoration and invasive species removal in the basin. This could be complemented with use as an outdoor classroom (platform, watershed information, etc.) since it is next to the Fairhope Middle School on North Section Street and the gully parcel runs behind the Nix Center. All agreed the site has a lot of potential for both wetland restoration and educational outreach/classroom. RJ reminded the group that the basin would have to retain its function as a stormwater conveyance area. Carol is concerned about the native species in the basin. Nigel would like to know if RJ has reached out to Jessie Patterson regarding the basin. Kim will check with RJ. Steven said the gully basin area is already being used by the school for recess, perfect area for educational outreach. Nicole while on site said the grant she is working on may not provide for educational outreach components. FST may be interested in assisting with funding for educational outreach and the outdoor classroom concept, per RJ.

Gary gave history of basin: prior property from BCBOE and was deeded to the City of Fairhope a few years ago to serve as a critical drainage basin for the Big Mouth Gully watershed.

Eagle Scout Projects:

1. *Chimney Swift Tower* – is projected to be built downtown as an upcoming Eagle Scout project. This will replace one that was destroyed in a nearby location.
2. *Oyster Reef Project* – complete and the city will be deploying some reefs under piers, hoping to incorporate educational signs as well. There were some suggestions that these may function and should be referred to more as living reefs than oyster reefs, since the survival of oysters in the Fairhope municipal area is unknown. There is an upcoming meeting between the Mayor, South Alabama and Steven at the municipal pier on 9/18 to discuss this project, including related signage.

Educational Signs:

Steven pointed out the need for fishing educational signage at the end of the pier to address fishing size limits on protected species. QR codes might be a consideration as well and may not be as expensive as other signs. Grand Hotel is working with Alabama Coastal Foundation on educational signage along the bay, which will use QR codes.

Outdoor Classrooms:

Carol has a meeting with FWES on 9/13 but is not sure yet what it will entail. Ben will also attend.

Wastewater Reuse:

Amy has had recent discussions with Councilman Corey Martin. He is very interested in having FEAB research wastewater reuse options for Fairhope. The city is currently under a Voluntary Water

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Conservation Plan, and it is essential we investigate better management of water resources for the future. Nigel asked if water conservation was mentioned in the upcoming comp plan? If so, this can be used as a catalyst to open discussions. Water needs to be always recognized as a limited resource.

Watershed Management Plans:

Amy asked Kim to recirculate the Eastern Shore Watershed Management Plan draft to FEAB. Comment period may be over, but FEAB is still encouraged to communicate changes to Christian Miller, Mobile Bay NEP:

mobilebaynep.com/assets/uploads/main/Eastern-Shore-WMP_DRAFT-reduced.pdf

Gary mentioned the Weeks Bay Watershed Plan, which was formalized a few years ago, could be used for planning and educational information resources. A good portion of its watershed is located in Fairhope.

mobilebaynep.com/assets/pdf/Weeks_Bay_WMP_Main_Report_Final.pdf

Water Quality, Fly Creek:

Amy said Nicole is working on a grant for a water quality study for Fly Creek, to locate areas of high pathogens, and ultimately to determine and address the source. This will be contracted out and will supplement any sampling the City of Fairhope does through the AWW program. Steven mentioned the benefits of ARCO's for real time water quality tracking (sonde type device). Kim said three staff have signed up for the upcoming pathogen sampling class @ Weeks Bay (Kim, Nicole, Christina) and Nigel has signed up as well. Information on pathogen (bacteriological) sampling and chemistry sampling classes can be found on-line (there are still openings for the upcoming Orange Beach class):

<https://aes.auburn.edu/alabamawaterwatch/events/>

Joint EAC:

Standardized ordinances were recently presented at the quarterly meeting, drafted by Ashley Campbell. Ordinances are geared to be used by municipalities who have none in place for Wetlands, Red Soil & Clay and Erosion and Sediment Control. She shared draft ordinances with everyone and asked for review comments no later than 9/18/2023. Gary said Alabama has a handbook which may be used as reference but was unsure of exact name of the handbook. Ben said small buffers are ineffective (5' buffer mentioned in the draft wetland ordinance, for example). He feels draft ordinance should include all expertise available and should not be shortened for simplicity; Amy agrees.

Plastic Bag reduction program:

Mayor is interested in putting together a campaign to reduce single use plastics, specifically plastic bags, and has suggested staff work with the Jr. Council. FEAB has had this as a bucket list item in the past. FEAB is encouraged to brainstorm to offer input. Paige Crawford and Courtney Harville are key city staff involved with coordination with Jr. Council. Courtney will mention the desire for a plastic bag reduction program to Jr. Council the week of 9/12. Amy would like to extend an invitation for Jr. Council or a representative thereof to attend the October FEAB meeting, or FEAB will gladly attend an off-site meeting with Jr. Council and staff. Kim will email Courtney and Paige to communicate this. Creation of a slogan would be a good start, and it is suggested the CBD be the test area to start with, possibly including the downtown merchant association (Alex Robinson) at some point. Jim mentioned areas outside of the CBD that would be key contacts for plastic bag reductions, such as chain stores.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.

Next meeting: Friday, October 13th @ Fairhope Municipal Library, 3 p.m.

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FEAB CONTACT INFORMATION:

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