

Village of Ocean Beach Environmental Commission (VOBEC)
Annual Report to the Board of Trustees
31 January, 2025

As required by the by-laws of the Village of Ocean Beach, this Commission is submitting an annual report for the year 2024. This supplements our minutes, which have been forwarded to the Board of Trustees, Mayor Jim Mallot, and Joe DiFrancisco on a regular basis.

The Commission

Commission Members: Mayor Mallott made the following appointments to the commission during 2024:

Camille Guigliano (Chair)
Beth Jacobwitz (Secretary)
Sage Block
Dylan Friedman
David Lipsky
Lisa Lowe
Emily Wicks

Note: Camille Guigliano resigned as Chair on November 17; on January 11 2025, Beth Jacobwitz was appointed as the Chair, with Camille Guigliano appointed as Secretary.

Number of meetings held in 2024: 16

Dates of meetings: Jan. 8, Feb. 7, Mar. 13, Apr. 8 & 29, May 15, June 4 & 25, July 7 & 20, Aug. 3 & 21, Sept. 21, Oct. 6, Nov. 17, Dec. 22.

Minutes of these meetings are filed in the Village Office.

Accomplishments

Communication

In our effort to educate and communicate with the public, we sent out five newsletters on various topics to our mailing list:

- Ocean Beach Plant Swap,
- Water Conservation,
- 2024 Environmental Awareness Day,
- Renewable Energy,
- Community Composting Survey.

We also respond, as needed, when members of the community send us emails with ideas, questions, or issues. A number of our new/ongoing projects have been a consequence of this type of communication.

On Facebook, VOBEC responds as needed to environmental questions posted on the Ocean Beach Bulletin Board, and maintains a “Fauna and Flora” page, whereby members of the community can crowd-source the identification of various fauna and flora observed in Fire Island.

Website Transition

We have also transitioned our website to the Wix platform, which confers a number of advantages:

- allows designated members of VOBEC to make additions/revisions to the website in a timely fashion, rather than waiting for semiannual updates
- eliminates payment for revisions/updates

Community Composting

After a poll conducted by VOBEC last year indicated a very strong interest in community composting, we began pursuing the possibility of bringing it to Ocean Beach. We have consulted with the two Fire Island communities who have successfully implemented it: Point O'Woods and Fair Harbor. We are continuing with our research and currently working with members of the Village regarding placement and various other logistics.

Natural Resources Inventory Map

We are required by section 10-5(C) of the Village code, to "Conduct and maintain an inventory of the natural resources within the Village of Ocean Beach". We have begun the process to accomplish this by using ArcGIS to identify trees, shrubs, and other natural resources on public and private land.

Recycling Bins

We have been collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce and Dawn Hargraves to choose appropriate recycling bins. Viewed as a pilot project, we hope to have these bins placed at strategic points within the business district this spring.

Tree Planting/Plant Swap Event

At a suggestion from the community, we organized a successful tree giveaway/plant swap on Sunday, May 19. We determined that this will be an annual event.

Oyster Shell Recovery

In our third year, VOBEC has continued to be an import liaison between the restaurants and Half Shells for Habitat. After a pilot in 2022, whereby VOBEC engaged one restaurant to collect oyster shells, the program has continued with three restaurants collecting oyster shells daily, storing them, and delivering them weekly via ferry to the mainland, where they are picked up by Half Shells for Habitat. This group then processes these shells and returns them to Long Island's estuarine waters through oyster restoration and other habitat improvement projects. Thanks to Maguires, Matthews, and Castaways for their tireless work with this project.

Eighteenth Annual Environmental Awareness Day

New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (2019) requires that the State achieve 100% emissions-free electricity by 2040, and offshore wind energy will be a critical component. To familiarize the community regarding this, VOBEC arranged for speakers from New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to discuss the State's efforts to responsibly develop offshore wind energy as part of a broad transition to clean sources of electricity. Our guest speakers were Morgan Brunbauer, the Marine Fisheries Manager for Offshore Wind; Sherryll Huber, Senior Project Manager for Offshore Wind; and Janna Herndon, Project Manager for Offshore Wind. They discussed NYS's efforts to responsibly develop this source of energy as part of a broad transition to clean sources of electricity.

Beach Management: Beach Clean-up

We participated in our 38th annual Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Clean-up on 21 September. As in past years, we helped organized the participation of communities from Robbins Rest to Point O'Woods.

Beach Management: Dune Day

In the spring, the Army Corps of Engineers planted dune grass on all possible Ocean Beach dunes as part of their dune replenishment program. Consequently, our third annual volunteer dune planting event was cancelled. We will reinstitute it in 2025.

Goals for 2025

We plan to:

- Maintain and strengthen our relationship with the Village administration, FINS, other Fire Island communities, the OB lifeguards, the Ocean Beach carter, and various community groups.
- Continue and expand our ongoing projects:
 - 19th Annual Environmental Awareness Day
 - 39th International Beach Clean-up, currently planned for 20 September
 - Plant Swap, date to be determined
 - Dune Day currently planned for 01 November
 - Oyster Shell Recovery
 - Collaborate with the Ocean Beach Youth Group
 - Review enforcement of Local Law 6, commonly known as “Tree Legislation”
- Begin new projects:
 - Create an Instagram account to better communicate with the community
 - Develop a comprehensive beach management plan
 - Guide the process of having the Village become a Climate Smart Community
 - Assist the Village in the submission of a various grants from the DEC and other sources
 - Create a Brush Day for yard clean up
- Support the Mayor, Board, our liaison, and the community as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Camille Guigliano
 Emeritus Chair of VOBEC
 Beth Jacobwitz
 Chair of VOBEC