Environmental Advisory Committee
4:00pm, Thursday, October 8, 2026
City Hall
Council Chambers
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

Public Comment:
All citizens who wish to speak during the meeting must email their first and last name, address, and topic to Nicole DeNeane at nicoled@isleofpalms.gov no later than **3:00 p.m. the business day before the meeting.** Citizens may also provide public comment here: https://www.isleofpalms.gov/public-comment-form

Agenda

1. **Call to Order** and acknowledgement that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.
2. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes – September 10, 2026**
3. **Citizen's Comments**
4. **Presentation – none**
5. **Old Business**

a. Discussion of revision to Palm Path Brochure and next steps (10 minutes)

b. Discussion of revised draft and next steps for Tree Reimbursement Grant Program (15 minutes)

c. Protocol for publication of articles on public sites (10 minutes)

6. **New Business**

a. Final IOP Rec Center Farmer's Market 10/15 4-7p - help with EAC table (5 minutes)

b. Discussion of Christmas Tree Recycling for Dune Restoration

7. **Miscellaneous**

Next meeting: Thursday, November 12, 2026, 4:00pm

8. **Adjournment**

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4:00pm, Thursday, September 10, 2026
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC
and broadcasted live on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms

MINUTES

1. **Call to order**

Present: Laura Lovins, Sean Popson, Britton Foy, Charlotte Webster, Susan Smith, Eric Cicora

Staff Present: Administrator Kerr, Council Member Miars (via Zoom)

Absent: Cindy Marrs, Todd Murphy

2. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes**

MOTION: Ms. Popson made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2026 meeting, and Ms. Smith seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

3. **Citizen's Comments -- none**

4. **Presentation – Resilience 101 Training with the South Carolina Office of Resilience**

Members of the South Carolina Office of Resilience, including Catherine Minn, Amelia Guerry, and Bradley Craig, provided resiliency training to the members of the Environmental Advisory Committee as well as some members of the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals. Molly Caggiano, Charleston County's Resilience Officer, also provided information to the attendees related to the County's resilience efforts.

Topics included the definition of the concept of resilience, a review of state and regional resilience activities, examples of local resilience-building activities, and resources to build resilience. Attendees were asked to consider what the future will require and what can be done about it now throughout the training.

5. **Old Business – none**

6. **New Business – none**

7. **Miscellaneous**

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee will be Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 4pm.

DRAFT

8. **Adjournment**

Ms. Smith made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Popson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk

Isle of Palms Tree Reimbursement Program

1. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Semi-Annual Application Windows:

Window	Submission Deadline	Review Period	Award Notification
March/April Planting	January 15th	Late January	Early February
Oct/Nov Planting	July 15th	Late July	Early August

- Applications may be submitted year-round and will be reviewed during the two annual cycles – Spring & Fall planting
- Approved tree planting must be completed within the planting window, listed above

2. REIMBURSEMENT

The City of Isle of Palms will reimburse a resident, community group/civic club or other groups 50% of their costs for the planting of trees, once the project is completed, up to $1000 per project. There could be "phased projects" submitted for additional tree plantings, which would also be 50% of the cost for the planting, once the project is completed, up to $1000 for the additional project (s).

3. ELIGIBILITY MATRIX

Criteria	Requirement
Property Inside IOP City Limits	Required
Owner Occupied Residence, or Isle of Palms City Owned Common Area	Required
Owner Authorization	Required
Native Species Only	Required
Tree Cost Documented	Required
Planting Cost Documented	Required
Minimum Container Size	15-gallon minimum
Application, Approved by EAC	Required
Survival Agreement, Executed	24 months

4. APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- Phase One: Before Planting
  - Property Specifications
    - > Owner Name
    - > Address
    - > Parcel ID
    - > Site Sketch
    - > Photos
  - Tree Specifications
    - > Species
    - > Size
    - > Quantity
- Phase Two: After Planting
  - Cost Documentation
    - > Tree Cost, receipt
    - > Labor Costs, invoice
    - > Other
    - > Photos
  - Survival Agreement, executed

5. RECOMMENDED VENDORS

- City-maintained list of approved arborists, nurseries, and installers.

6. APPLICATION REVIEW & APPROVAL PROCESS

- Subjective review by the Isle of Palms Environmental Advisory Committee
- Focus on canopy need, utility compatibility, visibility, stormwater benefit, species suitability, planting space feasibility, replacement value, "Right Tree, Right Place", and available program capital.

7. ELIGIBLE (PREFERRED) SPECIES LIST

- Southern Live Oak(*Quercus virginiana*), Tulip Poplar/Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera), White Oak (Quercus alba), Loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda)*, Other native tree species may be considered, with approval.

8. FUNDING CAPS

- 50% of cost of an individual tree plus installation – with a $1000 cap
- 50% of additional trees per property, annually- with a $2500 cap (this would be a "phased" tree planting plan)
- 50% of trees per common area, annually- with a $5000 cap (this would be a "phased" tree planting plan)

9. INSPECTION PROTOCOL

Phase One Inspection

Category	Review Standard
Utility Conflicts	Clear of overhead/underground utilities
Setback from Structures	Adequate mature canopy/root distance from home, driveway, pool, etc.
Property Lines	Avoid foreseeable encroachment issues
Drainage Conditions	Site suitable for species moisture tolerance

Salt/wind exposure	Species appropriate for coastal conditions
Visibility Safety	No obstruction of intersections, driveways, or pedestrian visibility
Root Conflict Risk	Avoid sewer lines, water lines, septic drain fields
Canopy Spacing	Enough room for mature spread without overcrowding

- Post-Planting Inspection within 60 days of Receiving Complete Reimbursement Request & Executed Survival Agreement
- 24-month Survival Verification

To be placed on City of Isle of Palms letterhead:

Tree Survival and Maintenance Agreement

As a condition of receiving reimbursement under the Isle of Palms Tree Bank Grant Program, the Applicant agrees to maintain the approved tree(s) for a minimum of twenty-four (24) months following installation.

Applicant understands that the establishment period is critical to the long-term health and survival of the tree and agrees to provide reasonable care, including watering, mulching, and general maintenance consistent with accepted horticultural practices.

The City of Isle of Palms and/or its designated representatives may conduct periodic inspections during the 24-month establishment period to assess tree health and program success.

In the event of tree loss, the Environmental Advisory Committee may review the circumstances and, at its discretion, provide guidance on replacement opportunities or future program participation.

Tree loss resulting from storms, flooding, disease, pests, or other circumstances beyond the Applicant's reasonable control shall not negatively impact the Applicant's standing in the program.

The purpose of this Agreement is to promote successful tree establishment and long-term canopy growth for the benefit of the Isle of Palms community.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

From: Rusty Streetman
To: Tracey Marks
Cc: Douglas Kerr; Sean Kuester
Subject: Re: Christmas Tree Recycling for Dune Restoration
Date: Thursday, October 1, 2026 11:40:25 AM

Hi Tracey,

Thank you for the email, and I will definitely make it a point to follow up on this.
You are correct that many residents, including myself , placed our discarded trees in the dunes after Christmas.
I don't see anything specifically forbidding the practice in our City codes or ordinances, but I will definitely research further.
I do believe at some point , SCDHEC discouraged placement of trees on beaches because of sea turtle hatchling concerns.
Although it's not a state law, it appears to be discouraged by the state.
However, there are other states, like North Carolina, that do allow the practice under strict guidelines.
I do believe this is something that should be discussed , possibly in the Environmental Advisory Committee, to get their perspective and feedback.
Thanks again for bringing this idea forward.

Regards,

Rusty

Sent from my iPad

> On Oct 1, 2026, at 9:10 AM, Tracey Marks <iopflygirl@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> Good morning Mayor Pounds, City Council Members, and Mr. Kerr,
>
> I'm writing to ask whether the City would consider establishing a program that would allow residents to recycle their live Christmas trees by using them to help build and strengthen our dunes.
>
> I have a memory of Christmas trees being used in the dunes on Isle of Palms years ago, possibly following Hurricane Hugo, although I'm not sure whether this was ever an official City program. I recently came across an article about other coastal communities using discarded Christmas trees for dune restoration, and it made me wonder whether this could be beneficial for Isle of Palms as well.
>
> The trees can help trap windblown sand and encourage sand accumulation, eventually becoming buried as the dune builds. With the significant investment our City is currently making in beach renourishment and dune restoration, it seems like a great time to explore whether a program like this could complement

those efforts.

It could also be a wonderful community initiative—giving residents an environmentally beneficial way to dispose of their live Christmas trees while contributing to the protection of our island. Perhaps the City could establish designated collection locations after Christmas and, where appropriate and permitted, use the trees in areas identified by our coastal engineers as beneficial for dune building.

I realize there may be environmental, permitting, wildlife, or logistical considerations that would need to be evaluated, but I would love to see the City explore whether this could be a viable option for Isle of Palms.

Here is the article that inspired me:

https://thefloodhub.co.uk/blog/recycle-your-christmas-tree-to-regenerate-dune-environments/

Thank you for considering it!

Best,
Tracey Marks

EAC MARSH HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS FOR COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON GRADUATE INTERN HELP

Based on feedback from Lucy Davis, program coordinator for the College of Charleston Graduate program in Environmental & Sustainability Studies, Britton Foy and Laura Lovins went into research articles provided by SAMSI (South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative) to better define specific “marsh health” topics that could be tackled with the help of one or more of their graduate interns. The topics that were sent back to Ms. Davis were:

1. Is the marsh keeping pace with sea level rise?

This is the central health question.

Is the marsh surface near Isle of Palms gaining elevation (through sediment and root growth) as fast as local sea level is rising?

Are low-marsh areas flooded longer each tide than they were a decade ago?

How could our marsh health change from 1 meter of sea level rise (SLR) to 2 meters or more of SLR?

2. How fast are marsh edges eroding along the ICW, and are boat wakes responsible?

Do marsh edges along the Waterway retreat faster than edges along sheltered creeks behind the island.

Does wake size or frequency (counted by boat surveys or measured with a pressure sensor) predict edge loss at specific sites?

3. Is the vegetation healthy, or is it showing early signs of dieback?

How do Spartina height, stem density, and percent cover change across the growing season and from year to year at fixed plots?

Is belowground root biomass (sampled with soil cores) declining even where the grass looks healthy?

Do satellite greenness (NDVI) trends over Isle of Palms marshes match what you see in the field?

4. Is water flowing freely into and out of the marsh?

Where do culverts, causeways, or roads (including the Isle of Palms Connector) restrict tidal flow?

Do marsh areas upstream of those restrictions differ in vegetation, salinity, or elevation from freely flushed areas?

5. How does nearby development affect marsh health?

Do marshes next to stormwater outfalls, lawns, or bulkheaded lots show different water quality (nutrients, bacteria, salinity, turbidity) or vegetation condition than marshes with natural vegetated buffers? This would also include the dog waste question/concern.

6. Does the marsh have room to migrate?

What share of the IOP marsh-upland boundary is hardened (bulkheads, fill, roads) versus natural?

Under NOAA sea level rise scenarios, where could the marsh move inland, and where is it blocked?

7. Could dredged sediment help the marsh?

Would a thin layer of dredged sediment on low-lying or degraded marsh near the island raise it enough to keep up with sea level without smothering the grass?

8. How are the animals doing?

Are fiddler crab burrow densities, periwinkle snail grazing, or oyster reef condition at the marsh edge good early indicators of marsh health? Would fish populations be relevant?

Once we hear back from Ms. Davis as to which topic(s) would be best to pursue, we will then get the scope of how many interns could do the project, what would be their projected hours and cost for doing the project – we will then report back to the EAC at a future committee meeting for discussion.

UPDATE ON MATRIX NATIVE PLANT INITIATIVES FOR EAC WORK 10.6.26

A subcommittee of the IOP EAC, comprised of Eric Cicora, Susan Hill Smith, and Laura Lovins, are doing a Zoom call with Tony Bertauski, Program Coordinator for Horticulture at Trident Tech, on Friday, 10/9 to discuss the possibility of one, or more, of his Horticulture students, as interns, to assist the EAC with a native plant initiative specific to suggestions in our community matrix.

Tony helped out as judge for the recent IOP Native Garden contest that Susan Hill Smith created and coordinated. There were 5 winners from the contest that were announced last Thursday, 9/30, after the ribbon cutting ceremony for the interpretive sign installation at the IOP dock.

The subcommittee will provide updates and feedback on this project.

UPDATE ON NATIVE TREE GUIDE 10.6.2026

The Native Tree Guide subcommittee comprised of Britton Foy, Susan Hill Smith, and Laura Lovins, met on Thursday, 9/30/26 to work on more items related to consideration of possible revisions to the existing IOP Tree Ordinances in order to be able to incorporate correct, up-to-date information into the IOP Native Tree Guide project.

The sub-committee had gone through the existing IOP tree ordinances, provided questions to Douglas Kerr regarding several of them, and also consulted with Jerry Benoit – Arborist for Mount Pleasant and consultant Arborist for IOP.

The sub-committee is currently working towards a Group by Policy Perspective to consider any revisions to the current tree ordinances that would then be given to the Planning Commission for consideration.

The “Groups” are:

Historic – Native/Non-Native

Significant – Native/Non-Native

Non-Regulated (Other)

Exceptions

As the sub-committee completes more work on the project, there will be additional updates, and potential agenda discussion items for EAC committee meetings.