



FOURTH STREET PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 2:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall
Regular Meeting
AGENDA

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D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

E. ADJOURNMENT:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86208559077?pwd=THyBDdj0H54KpUf5HxfHRenArUaTIE.1>

Join via audio:

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Webinar ID: 862 0855 9077

Passcode: 645832

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Posted: 07/01/2026 Posted By: BJ

City of Lewes
FOURTH STREET PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
MINUTES

The Lewes Fourth Street Preserve Subcommittee met on **Wednesday, May 13, 2026 in Council Chambers at Lewes City Hall**, in accordance with proper notification, with the following members present: Chairperson Khalil Saliba and Committee Member Pam Costanzi. Also in attendance were Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves and City Engineer Andrew Lyons.

- A. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL & ANNOUNCEMENTS:** *Chair Saliba called the May 13, 2026 regular meeting of the Fourth Street Preserve Subcommittee to order at 2:00 PM in Council Chambers, City Hall, Lewes, DE.*

Announcements

Committee Member Costanzi offered several announcements on behalf of the Friends of the Fourth Street Preserve. She requested a meeting with a city representative to determine an appropriate location on the east side of the preserve, along Fourth Street, to install a public information kiosk. The Friends have the funds to purchase the kiosk and intend to use it to communicate project progress to residents who may not use social media, as well as to announce events and volunteer opportunities.

Chair Saliba noted that he and Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves would address this matter in a subsequent conversation already scheduled. Deputy City Manager Reeves confirmed she had noted it. Committee Member Costanzi also announced that the "Rocking the Docks" benefit concert is scheduled for June 7, with two bands donating their services and tickets currently on sale. Finally, she reported that the bald eagle fledgling at the preserve had been observed flying with one of its parents over the preceding days, marking a notable milestone for the site. The idea of holding a naming contest for the fledgling was briefly and informally discussed as a potential community engagement opportunity.

- B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

2026 04 08 Fourth Street Preserve Subcommittee Minutes

Motion to approve the April 8, 2026 Fourth Street Preserve Subcommittee minutes was made by Chair Saliba and seconded by Committee Member Costanzi. The motion carried unanimously.

- C. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- 1. Fourth Street Preserve Update Presentation: First Habitat Island, Metrics, Bald Eagle Nest, Watering Sources.**

Chair Saliba introduced Scott Wilkinson, Master Naturalist and Task Force member, and Rodney Robinson, Chair of the Task Force, who jointly delivered the restoration update.

First Habitat Island

Mr. Wilkinson reported that the first habitat island has been completed, with 61 native trees and shrubs planted, fencing installed, and monitoring underway. He emphasized that the achievement was the result of broad community collaboration involving over 50 individuals and at least a dozen community entities, including DNREC, the Center for Inland Bays, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the City, Dogfish Head Brewery volunteers, Master Naturalists, Greater Lewes Foundation, Horizon, and the Friends group. He noted that this collective effort reflects the spirit of the conservation easement — rebuilding habitat through community participation.

The habitat island uses a nucleation approach: plants are concentrated in a tight nucleus to compete and establish, eventually spreading outward over subsequent generations. This is the first of approximately a dozen habitat islands planned over the coming years.

Metrics

Mr. Wilkinson presented a metrics framework developed to track project progress, which coincided with a grant application by Horizon to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requiring measurable outcomes. Three categories were selected:

- *Volunteer Participation*: 28 volunteers across 4 events, averaging over 3 hours per person for a total of 90 volunteer hours.
- *Habitat Restoration*: The first island was completed in April with 61 trees. All 33 container plants are currently surviving; survival rates for bare root plantings remain to be determined. Invasive species removal — including English ivy and autumn olive — is continuing, with the treated areas showing no recurrence. Approximately 0.7 miles of trail have been laid out and mowed, with fallen branches from a winter storm repurposed to line trail edges and create brush pile habitats.
- *Nature-Based Infrastructure*: Trail mileage is being tracked as a metric.

Watering Sources

Mr. Robinson reported that the preserve is experiencing severe drought conditions, making adequate watering of newly planted trees critical during the first year of establishment. He announced that Taryn Davidson of the State Forestry Service has committed to sending a watering truck to the site once per week for the next six weeks at no cost to the city, as the trees represent the State Forestry Service's own investment. Looking further ahead, Mr. Robinson raised the question of whether it would be feasible to tap into a nearby municipal water line and install a frost-proof hydrant at or near the site, to avoid the ongoing cost and logistical difficulty of trucking water during future drought periods. He noted that a similar arrangement has contributed to the success of the community garden at Great Marsh Park. This question was identified as a matter to be taken up with the city.

Bald Eagle Nest

Mr. Robinson reported that work on obtaining a General Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in progress, with Deputy City Manager Reeves leading the application effort. Deputy City Manager Reeves acknowledged that the agency's website has presented significant technical difficulties, causing multiple incomplete submissions and delays. She noted that a help desk request submitted the prior Saturday had not yet received a response, but that she is continuing to pursue completion of the application.

The permit is being sought to establish clear guidance on what activities — including trail use, noisy equipment operation, and other restoration work — are permissible within and around the eagle nesting area. The subcommittee reviewed a map showing the nest location and a 330-foot no-disturbance radius. Mr. Robinson noted that the primary trail approach along the historic Queen Anne railroad bed may fall within this radius, potentially requiring trail relocation to lower, wetter ground that would necessitate more significant construction. No determination has been made pending the Fish and Wildlife review. The subcommittee confirmed that no ground-disturbing activities are planned before July 1, which aligns with the general understanding that the nesting season concludes around June 30. Committee Member Costanzi noted that Fourth Street itself, and neighboring residential properties using power tools and blowers, are in fact closer to the nest than the proposed trail, suggesting that reasonable activity in the preserve

may ultimately be found permissible.

Future Activities

Mr. Robinson outlined several activities planned for after July 1:

- **Groundwater Study:** Drilling of piezometer wells will be required; some proposed locations fall within the no-disturbance zone, making the post-July 1 window critical.
- **Hazardous Tree Removal:** Deputy City Manager Reeves confirmed that she is in the process of obtaining the required three contractor proposals. A site visit with the first contractor was rescheduled due to a family emergency and is now set for May 28, with others to follow. It was noted that the timeline is not urgent given the July 1 restriction.
- **Trail Mowing and Cleanup:** Grasses and forbs are re-establishing along the trail corridor and require mowing. A large pine tree downed in the February storm is blocking the trail; it is planned to be cut into sections, milled, and fabricated into benches for placement along the trail.
- **Pollinator Drifts:** Areas designated for pollinator plantings still require mowing and preparation.

Task Force Member Jim Ford noted that the Arbor Day Foundation's Chair, Dan Lambe, recently visited the Fourth Street Preserve following the city's Arbor Day celebration and expressed exceptional enthusiasm for the site, indicating his intention to promote it as a national example of community-driven habitat restoration.

2. Discussion and possible action to approve the US Forest Service Short-Span Timber All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Bridge with pending structural strengthening improvements.

Mr. Robinson and Mr. Ford presented the proposed bridge design based on the U.S. Forest Service Short-Span Timber All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Bridge. The preserve requires three bridge crossings over existing drainage ditches. Two of the three crossings require railings based on the elevation drop; one, closest to the eagle's nest, can be constructed as a simple deck without railings. A comparable example of this bridge type exists at Cape Henlopen State Park's bike trail and at local school retention pond crossings.

City Engineer Andrew Lyons explained that the existing Forest Service design must be substantially modified — effectively fully redrawn — because the city's new equipment under consideration weighs approximately 14,000 pounds, whereas the standard Forest Service design is rated for 10,000 pounds. The width is also to be increased from five feet to eight feet. This structural redesign is estimated to cost approximately \$3,500 in engineering fees and would take approximately two and a half weeks to complete. While the structural elements will change, the overall visual appearance of the bridge is not expected to differ significantly from the presented design.

The subcommittee discussed railing design. The preference expressed by the task force and confirmed by city Building Official, Jon Ward, is to use a wire mesh infill between posts rather than horizontal rails (which could function as a ladder for children) or vertical spindles (which would increase cost and produce a more residential aesthetic). Deputy City Manager Reeves confirmed that Jon Ward indicated the mesh design is code compliant. There was agreement that the top rail should incorporate a 30-degree angled

surface to discourage people from sitting on it — a common design detail seen in comparable installations.

The question was raised as to whether the subcommittee has authority to approve the bridge design or whether the matter must be elevated to Mayor and City Council for approval, given that it involves city property. Chair Saliba noted that he had reached out to City Solicitor Alex Burns that morning. Deputy City Manager Reeves indicated she would follow up to have a definitive answer by the next meeting.

In the interim, the consensus of the subcommittee was that the presented design direction — the Forest Service timber trail bridge aesthetic, widened and structurally strengthened — is appropriate for the preserve and should move forward to the engineering redesign phase without waiting for that procedural clarification, as no materials can be ordered until the redesign is complete regardless.

Mr. Ford noted that the goal is to have structural drawings in hand by approximately the end of May, so that the project can move forward promptly after July 1. The task force's intention is to involve Boy Scout volunteers in the assembly and fabrication on-site, with the possibility of engaging a contractor for any work requiring heavy equipment. Mr. Ford also noted that the State Forestry Service's milling connections may be available to assist with processing the downed pine tree into bench lumber.

Deputy City Manager Reeves noted that assistance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife permit application had been offered through a contact with knowledge of federal applications. Chair Saliba also noted that he would reach out to Representative Sarah McBride's office — whose state director, Bryon Short, has offered assistance — to explore whether that office could help expedite the permitting process.

Regarding mowing of the public-facing strip between the curb and sidewalk along the preserve boundary, Deputy City Manager Reeves confirmed that this has already been added to the city's contractor schedule, with mowing occurring every two weeks, with flexibility to reduce frequency during severe drought conditions.

D. NEW BUSINESS:

No new business was brought before the subcommittee.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment was received from those present in chambers or attending remotely.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Chair Saliba adjourned the meeting at 2:45 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Jeffery Coover, Administrative Support Specialist

Minutes generated by HeyGov.ai

Transcripts available upon request

Fourth Street Preserve

Restoration Update



July 8, 2026



Ditch Crossing

Bridges vs. Culverts



Evaluating Crossing Options

Current Progress

- Engineering review continues.
- Culverts are being evaluated as a lower-impact alternative to large bridges.
- Ten Bears Environmental under contract.

Next Steps

- Determine whether crossings require permits from:
 - Army Corps of Engineers
 - DNREC
 - Final crossing design will be completed by City engineers.



Why it Matters

Culverts may reduce visual impact while maintaining safe public access and protecting sensitive wet areas.

Trail Development

Preparing for Public Access



Seasonal mowing
has resumed.



Select tree clearing improves trail safety
while preserving the forest canopy.



Downed trees continue to be evaluated for
habitat value vs. trail access.

*The goal remains a natural woodland
trail, not a manicured park.*



Future Planting

Planning for Fall Restoration

Current Progress

- Visited local native nursery.
- Submitted Pollinator Drift planting list.
- Preparing Fall tree planting list.
- Master Naturalists continue removing invasive species.



Looking Ahead

This fall's restoration efforts will focus on increasing native habitat, supporting pollinators, and improving long-term forest resilience.

Eagles

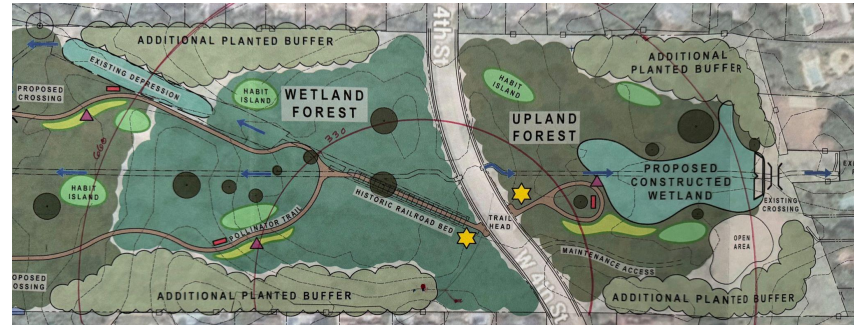
Protecting Nesting Habitat

Current Status

- Registration efforts with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service continue.
- Restoration planning continues to incorporate recommended disturbance buffers around the nest.
- All improvements are being reviewed with protection of nesting habitat as the highest priority.



Protecting the nesting eagles remains one of the project's guiding principles.



Public Outreach

Keeping the Community Informed

Recent Updates

- Installed a new project information board.
- Visitors can learn about restoration progress and upcoming activities while visiting the Preserve.
- Additional educational materials continue to be developed.



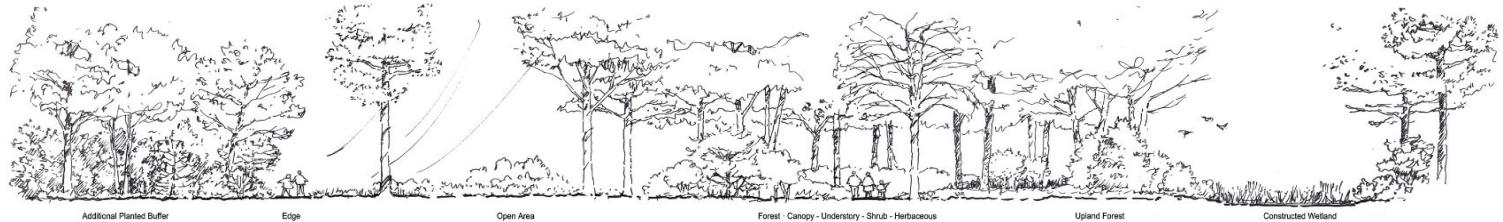
Transparency and community engagement remain central to the restoration effort.



Questions

Thank you for your continued interest and support
of the Fourth Street Preserve.

Master Plan



ILLUSTRATIVE TRANSECT (not to scale)