



FOURTH STREET PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 13, 2026, 2:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall
Regular Meeting
AGENDA

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C.2. Discussion and possible action to approve the US Forest Service Short-Span Timber All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Bridge with pending structural strengthening improvements.	
D. NEW BUSINESS:	
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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85898420050?pwd=SY47m4L5PdL6SdBMS9It9HtG7lwmDd.1>

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Passcode: 471122

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City Hall Council Chambers is located at 114 E. Third St., Lewes DE

Posted: 5/6/2026 Posted By: BJ

Revised 05/06/2026: Updates to Old Business (C.1) and addition to Old Business (C.2) - ASA

City of Lewes
FOURTH STREET PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, April 8, 2026
MINUTES

The Lewes Fourth Street Preserve Subcommittee met on **Wednesday, April 8, 2026 in Council Chambers at Lewes City Hall**, in accordance with proper notification, with the following members present: Chairperson Khalil Saliba, Sally Boswell, and Pam Costanzi. Also in attendance was City Engineer Andrew Lyons .

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Khalil Saliba called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, April 8, 2026. Committee Member Costanzi announced that the Race for Open Space would take place on Saturday, April 25th at 9:00 AM at George H.P. Smith Park. She noted that the event had not yet been added to the city's calendar and requested assistance to manage this. Committee Member Boswell shared her thoughts on education and outreach opportunities related to the Fourth Street Preserve project. She emphasized the potential for community interaction and learning opportunities that residents could implement on their own properties. She discussed the idea with Rodney Robinson and Committee Member Costanzi about creating educational signage or a message board at the preserve site to engage people who pass by but haven't yet become involved with the project. Committee Member Boswell suggested this would be valuable while there isn't much visible activity at the preserve yet. The discussion touched on engaging with local schools, with Chair Saliba asking about potential educational opportunities for middle and elementary schools. Committee Member Costanzi confirmed that the Friends group was already working on school engagement. Committee Member Boswell also suggested regular communication with Cape Gazette reporter Bill Shull to provide updates on preserve activities. Chair Saliba noted previous conversations with Shull and the need for newsworthy developments to generate stories. Chair Saliba asked Committee Member Boswell to take the lead on developing these outreach ideas, and they agreed to make this an agenda item for the May meeting. City Engineer Andrew Lyons reported that he was working with the city to schedule a meeting with Deputy City Manager Janet Reeve to discuss bridge design modifications needed to accommodate the new bobcat equipment budgeted for the project. The current bridge design was rated for 10,000 pounds, but the new equipment weighs approximately 14,000 pounds, requiring structural engineering review and design changes.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Chair Saliba presented two sets of minutes for approval: January 14, 2026, and February 11, 2026. He identified one correction needed in the January 14th minutes, where Mayor Jim Ford was incorrectly identified as a landscape architect when it should have been Mr. Rodney Robinson in section D. Committee Member Costanzi requested changes to the February 11th minutes. In the announcements section, the second sentence of the first paragraph incorrectly identified "Whitman" as leading a group, when it should read "Costanzi will initially lead the group." She also noted that Maria Baer's name was misspelled as "b-a-e-r" instead of the correct spelling.
Motion: Committee Member Costanzi moved to approve both sets of minutes with the stated corrections. Committee Member Boswell seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

C. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Fourth Street Preserve Implementation Plan Update.

Rodney Robinson (203 Canary Drive) presented a comprehensive update on the Fourth

Street Preserve implementation progress, covering seven key areas of development.

Groundwater Study Development Mr. Robinson reported that GMB had been issued the contract to conduct the required groundwater study. This study is mandated by DNREC for any ground disturbance above 5,000 square feet, which includes the planned bridges and gravel paving work. The study will involve installation of piezometers (10-foot deep wells) to monitor groundwater flow and proximity to the surface over an extended period. Nine soil borings will also be conducted to assess soil conditions. Mr. Robinson emphasized the importance of completing this work quickly to obtain necessary permits.

Trail Conditions and Surface Development Mr. Robinson explained that the preserve's trail surface was intended to remain natural, using existing ground and grass. However, spring conditions revealed challenges with water pooling and soft areas on the trails. After the February storm, the project team declined an offer of wood chips for trail surfacing after learning that the state discourages their use because they retain moisture, rot, and are not considered acceptable trail surfaces. Future improvements may include crushed stone covered with mulch or pine needles, and possibly boardwalk sections in problematic areas.

Eagle's Nest Impact Mr. Robinson reported that a bald eagle nest on the property was having a significant impact on virtually all project activities. The nest location requires adherence to federal distance restrictions: 330 feet year-round and 660 feet during nesting season (December through June). A meeting with DNREC's raptor specialist on April 1st provided guidance, but federal Fish and Wildlife Service permits are required for any activities within these zones.

The nest's location near Fourth Street and Mariners Retreat affects approximately 8-10 homes on one side and 6 homes at Mariners Retreat within the restricted zones.

Robinson showed a map illustrating how the 660-foot nesting season radius extends across the preserve and into neighboring properties. The federal permitting process timeline is unknown, and Janet Reeves will handle the permit application when she returns.

Mr. Robinson emphasized the critical nature of the nesting period and the potential for federal fines if the nest fails due to disturbance. The project team is awaiting federal guidance on acceptable activities before proceeding with any work within the restricted zones.

Committee Member Costanzi asked whether residents had nested before Mariners Retreat was built, noting that such timing could have prevented construction during nesting season. Mr. Robinson confirmed that contractors have received stop-work orders for eagle nest proximity in the past.

The eagle nest situation affects City Engineer Lyons' contracted soil boring and piezometer installation work, with some locations falling within the 660-foot restricted zone. No ground disturbance work can proceed until federal permits are obtained.

Bridge Development Mr. Robinson presented the proposed bridge design, which is a federal wildlife bridge design using heavy timber construction originally rated for 10,000 pounds. The design requires modification to accommodate the city's new 14,000-pound (7-ton) bobcat equipment and expansion from 6 feet to 8-8.5 feet in width.

Two of the three planned bridges require handrails due to a 4-foot height from deck to ditch bottom. The proposed handrail design uses mesh that must pass the "4-inch ball test" (preventing a 4-inch ball from passing through, representing a baby's head size). Robinson noted that mesh discourages climbing better than traditional railings and referenced similar successful installations at Cape Henlopen State Park.

Mr. Robinson indicated that two bridges are accessible from Canary Drive and fall outside the 660-foot eagle restriction zone, potentially allowing construction to proceed once designs are finalized.

Spring Planting - Habitat Islands Mr. Robinson announced the beginning of spring planting activities, starting with an experimental approach called "nucleation" - planting trees closely together in fenced areas to create dense growing environments that discourage weed growth. The first habitat island would be planted following this method. The Center for the Inland Bays is donating trees for this pilot project, which will include both bare-root specimens (12-18 inches high) and 70-80 container trees from the State Forest. The project will test a single 5-foot fence, acknowledging that deer could jump it if determined, but treating this as a learning opportunity with limited plant sacrifice. Dogfish Head's Benevolence Day on April 13th will involve approximately a dozen volunteers helping to erect fencing and begin initial plantings. Master naturalists have already placed stakes marking the planting area and prepared the site with herbicide treatments to eliminate aggressive grasses.

Mr. Robinson explained the long-term strategy of mixing fast-growing shade trees with slower-growing canopy species, and using individual tree protection with wire fencing for trees planted outside the habitat islands. The approach emphasizes experimentation and learning, noting this is Delaware's first urban forest project.

Pollinator Drifts Mr. Robinson reported that pollinator drift plantings would be delayed because the specialized plants require ordering a year in advance. These areas, designed for wildflowers and shrubs to support pollinators, are planned near trails for public enjoyment but won't be planted this spring and possibly not this fall.

Community Outreach Mr. Robinson noted that Jim Ford remains in contact with Boy Scout Troop 1, who are eager to begin bridge construction work but need finalized designs for scheduling. The scouts plan to use this as a community effort project rather than an Eagle Scout project.

Committee Member Costanzi confirmed that Friends of the Fourth Street Preserve members would attend the Monday planting event to assist and express gratitude to volunteers.

Mr. Robinson acknowledged the master naturalists' ongoing work, including site clearing and fence post installation after the February storm, as well as their creation of trail borders using fallen branches. He emphasized the project's philosophy of allowing natural deadfall to remain unless it can be repurposed for beneficial uses like benches. Chair Saliba asked about whether Arborist Taryn Davidson had completed his property assessment with city staff. Mr. Robinson confirmed that Ms. Davidson met with Janet Reeves and walked the property perimeter and trails, identifying dangerous trees that had been previously flagged. The city has requested fee proposals for tree removal, but this work is complicated by eagle nesting restrictions that prevent chainsaw and chipper use during the restricted period.

Committee Member Boswell inquired about the availability of Mr. Robinson's report on the city website, which Chair Saliba confirmed was included in the meeting agenda materials.

Jim Ford (910 Savannah Road) provided public comment, noting that two of the three bridges are accessible from Canary Drive and outside the 660-foot eagle restriction radius, allowing potential construction to proceed. He requested inclusion in the upcoming city meeting with City Engineer Lyons about bridge design modifications, particularly regarding footing requirements and structural changes needed for the heavier equipment. Mr. Ford emphasized urgency in finalizing scout involvement, as troops schedule community projects chronologically and delays could result in losing their participation to other projects.

- D. PUBLIC COMMENT:** *No additional public comments were received from attendees or online participants.*

- E. ADJOURNMENT: *Motion:*** *Committee Member Costanzi moved to adjourn the meeting. Committee Member Boswell seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 PM.*

Minutes submitted by: Jeffery Coover, Administration Support Specialist

Minutes generated by HeyGov.ai

Transcripts available by request

Fourth Street Preserve *Restoration Update*



May 13, 2026



First Habitat Island



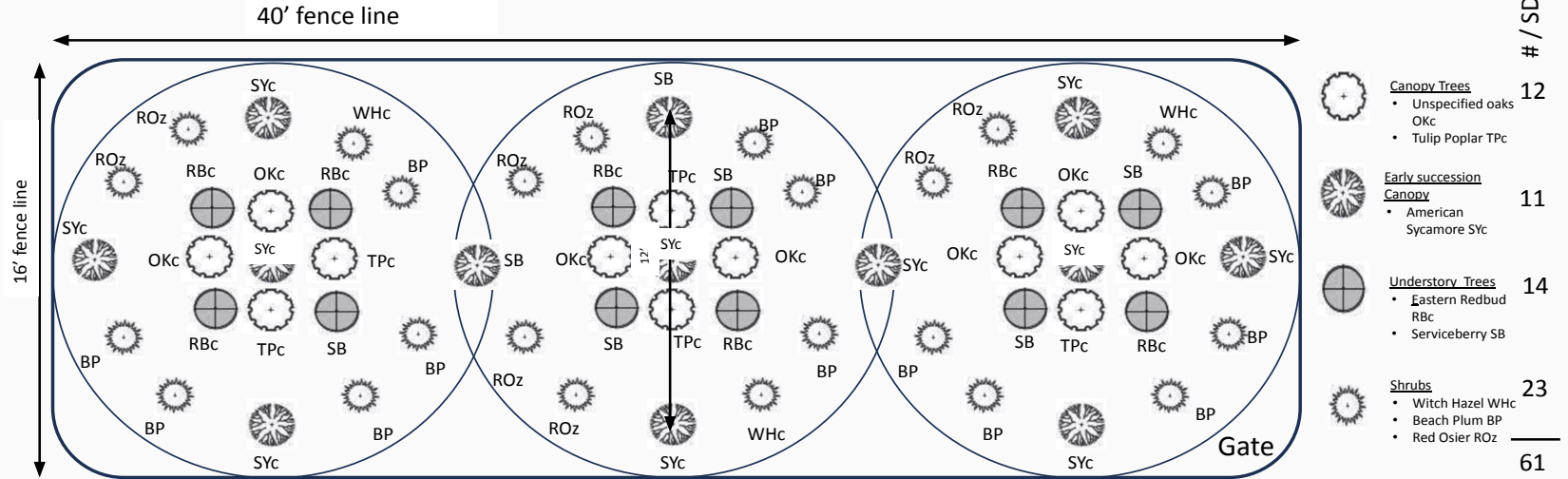
- Native species planted
- Protective fencing completed
- Early establishment phase underway

Volunteer Efforts



Dogfish Head Benevolence Day Volunteers

Nucleation Planting



Deer Fence 5' high with 14-gauge wire, 4' post spacing

- Plus an herbaceous layer of native pollinators TBD
- 'c' indicates a container plant. Otherwise bare root.

Metrics

Three categories of metrics aligned with USFWS grant requirements



1. Volunteer Participation

- a. 28 volunteers for four events related to first habitat island and invasive removal
- b. 90 volunteer hours from Master Naturalists, Dogfish Brewery and Friends

2. Habitat Restoration

- a. First Habitat Island planting complete in April, 2026
- b. 61 total trees and shrubs in compact 40'x16' Mini Forest rectangle
- c. Initial survival rate: Container 33/33, bare root 29/29 (many not yet leafed out)
- d. Invasive removal continues with English Ivy. Autumn Olive removal commenced

3. Nature Based infrastructure

- a. .7 miles trails laid out and mowed
- b. Fallen branches from snow storm cut and lined along front sections of trail
- c. 112' of welded wire deer fencing installed



Future Watering



First Year Critical



Drought Conditions







Is City water available?



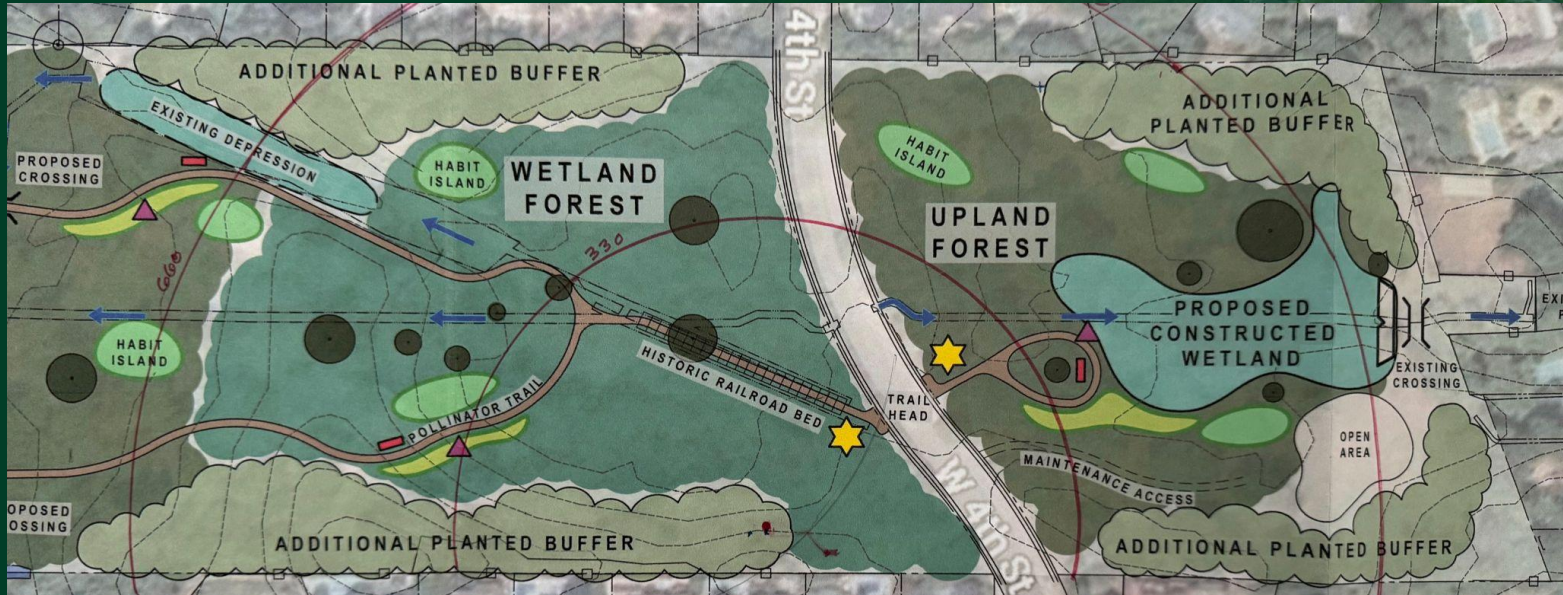
Nesting Eagles



-  Fledgling sighted on the nest
-  General permit application underway
-  Alter trail alignment
-  No disturbance before July 1st

Possible Trail Relocation

Fish and Wildlife Review



Future Activities



Begin Groundwater Study



Begin Hazard Tree Removal



Begin Mowing & Site Cleanup



Finalize Bridge Design

Motion to Approve Bridge Design



Motion: to approve US Forest Service Short-Span Timber All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Bridge with pending structural strengthening improvements by GMB.

[Link to proposed bridge design sent on 5/6/26](#)



THANK YOU!



Sign up for the newsletter to follow the restoration progress and Spring volunteer opportunities.



Subscribe to the Fourth Street Preserve e-Newsletter!

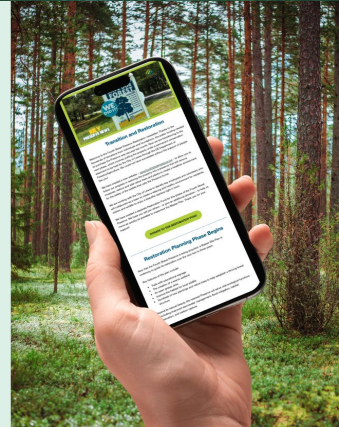
Sign up for our e-newsletter for news & updates on the restoration phase.

First Name *

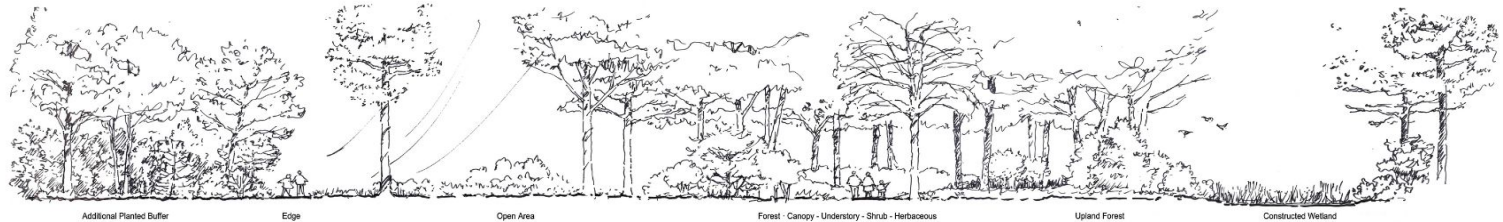
Last Name *

Email *

Subscribe



Master Plan



ILLUSTRATIVE TRANSECT (not to scale)