

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting October 19, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:05, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, C. MacIvor, D. Pydeski, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, and P. Walitsky. Council liaison T. Chase joined the meeting at 7:16 PM. Absent: R. Razani (bereavement).

Chair's report: he reminded all that all members were registered for the virtual ANJEC Environmental Congress; he looks for good attendance at it. He is working on getting R. Suydam listed as an EC member on the web site, but is waiting for her biographical notes. R. Suydam stated that she had sent them. He will search his e-mail for this, and when he finds it he will send the request for listing to township clerk Ann Marie McCarthy. He urged all to contact the Governor's office, urging him to sign the plastic bag ban bill.

The minutes of the meeting of Sept. 21 were approved. The scheduled meeting of Oct. 5 having been deemed insufficiently noticed and therefore stopped, there are no minutes of it.

E-mail/web site: an e-mail from this year's Watershed Ambassador was received, introducing herself. (She attended this meeting – see below.) received:

A. Schmidt reported that Robin Suydam's name *still* needs to be added to our web site and list of members, with term expiration and biography. There ought to be a link explicitly to resolutions passed, on the left side of the home page, rather than their being hidden under Links and Resources. Many recently approved resolutions are missing, including; Plastics, NESE, Environmental Justice, Electric Vehicles and most recently our Green Roofs resolution. For the next Franklin Times article (and Franklin Reporter) we should emphasize to the public that the EC reviews site plans for environmental concerns; the public is invited to participate, virtually and eventually in person, and add their concerns. (We learned with respect to the Dada Bhagwan Institute application that this is not well known to the public.)

A. Schmidt reported that the day after the Sept. 21 meeting he was contacted by Ray Snyder, of Snyder's Farm next to the site of the proposed Dada Bhagwan Institute temple, which is before the Board of Zoning Adjustment. He then received an e-mail from Mr. Snyder, detailing the problems, as per his perspective, that would be caused by the proposed construction. A. Schmidt and D. Pydeski subsequently walked the site with Mr. Snyder at his invitation. He and other members of the EC worked together to prepare additional comments on the Dada Bhagwan Institute application to be sent to the Board of Zoning Adjustment, based on the site visit, general knowledge of environmental, septic field and stormwater run-off issues, information provided in Mr. Snyder's e-mail and information provided by the chair of the Shade Tree Committee. He moved approval of the additional comments. This was approved unanimously.

P. Walitsky contacted several installers of green roofs, including a supplier. He noted that the Environmental Center has flat and sloping portions of its roof; the sloping portion could hold solar cells. But S.Jaracz pointed out that the slope is toward the northeast, not good for solar cells. Since the building is not used very much, a small solar array would suffice for its needs. I could have a battery and inverter for greater sufficiency. C. MacIvor pointed out that solar cells don't have to be on a roof, can be on the ground. J. Johnson reported a chat message from Ray Snyder (public), how many endangered species would nest on a green roof?

At this point C. MacIvor moved to open the meeting to the public, to allow Ray Snyder to speak. But the Zoom connection did not allow him to speak. He questioned, via chat, how much

ecosystem would be replaced. A. Schmidt responded that the Environmental Center is an existing building, a green roof would be an *addition* of habitat.

A. Schmidt further pointed out that we won't know how much more a green roof would cost until a contractor looks at the Center and gives an estimate. He has identified several contractors, hopes to have more names by tomorrow, for the Open Space Committee meeting. R. Suydam knows Heidi Fichtenburg, former head of the Princeton Environmental Commission, who used to work for the architectural firm Farewell Mills, who should know who the Watershed Institute used for their green roof. A. Schmidt commented that Sophie Glovier (Watershed Institute) asks, to whom should she send a name?

It was moved to close the meeting to the public. Approved.

C. MacIvor pointed out that approval was needed for the green roofs resolution. S. Jaracz pointed out that green roofs and solar cells may be in conflict. A. Schmidt responded that green roofs are a stormwater management tool; the upcoming revision of the stormwater management ordinance provided a reason to act now.

A. Schmidt showed several additions to the proposed resolution. The resolution, with the additions, was approved unanimously.

S. Jaracz reported on the Seeley's Brook clean-up: it was very successful. It was a partnership with the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and a Girl Scout. Over 50 people attended; the site was large enough that social distancing could be maintained. Four truckloads of trash were collected, and there is still more. Many shopping carts were collected. T. Chase nominated the woodland and stream of Naaman Williams Park for the next clean-up.

Old business: stormwater management facilities study: T. Chase has the slides, will send to anyone who wants them. Undergrounding utilities: how long to wait before asking Upendra Chivukula again about having the BPU study the long term economics of such action? Franklin Times – no news as to when it will appear. The EC has several articles in mind, including alerting the public about its web site and attendance at EC [virtual] meetings. P. Walitsky has heard from Philips Electric concerning possible donation of LEDs to the Franklin Food Bank: their Somerset office is closed, no donations are expected in the foreseeable future.

S. Jaracz reported on National Electric Car Week. The Central Jersey Electric Car Association held a virtual symposium. The state has instituted a \$5000 subsidy for buying an electric vehicle (so long as the price is under \$55,000), from the Social Benefits charge on electric bills. Somerset County has 6 electric vehicles, used 7000 to 23,000 miles per year; after how many years is the extra cost of an electric vehicle paid off? 92% of electric trucks on the road are in China, 4% in Europe, 4% in the U.S. They replace diesel trucks which pollute the atmosphere, especially with fine particles. W. Andrews suggested having an electric bus tour the state, stopping where the public will see it.

Energy planning grant: R. Razani cannot work on it now, R. Suydam would like someone else to work on it with her. Green roof letter to Amazon: P. Walitsky, who sent it, was no longer in the meeting. Coyote seminar: it is not known when the DEP will be able to do presentations again. Sustainability officer: Bob Vornlocker thought it was a good idea, but could not be funded at present in this time of budgetary uncertainty (how long will the unemployed continue to pay their property taxes?)

The meeting was opened to the public. Caitlin Di Cara, new Watershed Ambassador for watershed 9, at the Watershed Institute, introduced herself. She participated in the Seeley's Brook

clean-up, met Heather Fenyk of Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and is working with her. W. Andrews brought up having a rain barrel workshop, instructed by her. She responded enthusiastically, the Watershed has been planning how to do this in the time of COVID-19.

R. Suydam expressed concern as to whether Carl Hauck has the Watershed Institute's suggestions for expanding the new stormwater management ordinance. T. Chase assured her that he does.

Ray Snyder spoke on his concerns about the Dada Bhagwan Institute temple application next to his farm, the destruction of many trees, the run-off from the detention basin into his field, the as yet undescribed septic system, and the applicant's assertion that there is a stream to receive water from the detention basin; there isn't. A. Schmidt described the EC's additional comments being sent to the Board of Adjustment. Ray Snyder commented further that green roofs need ongoing maintenance. Buildings left vacant for years have a problem.

The Franklin Reporter chose not to speak. The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.