

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting January 13, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, C. MacIvor (arrived 7:25 PM), D. Pydeski, R. Rezwan, R. Suydam, and P. Walitsky; and Council liaison T. Chase. Excused: A. Schmidt (returning from abroad).

Chair's report: he described the state Blue Acres program, which buys out flood-prone homes, and suggested that the EC do a field trip to a Blue Acres site (Manville is close by).

The minutes of Dec. 16, 2019 were accepted unanimously. (C. MacIvor pointed out later that she had informed the chair that she would be out of state for that meeting, and this should be marked as Excused. The minutes will be adjusted to that effect.)

Plans: three, including for a house of worship on the old composting site, South Middlebush Rd, and on the site zoned M-2 between Veronica Ave. and Bennetts Lane, where Jack Morris wanted to put 800 apartments. This proposal involves a detention basin on the neighboring property fronting on Bennetts Lane (zoned R-40). Review was extensive.

J. Johnson brought up the e-mail from the Wyland Foundation to issue a challenge to residents to save water. This is a Mayor's Challenge; T. Chase will take it to the mayor.

R. Suydam brought up the EC web site, which still shows the 2018 Goals and Objectives. This is an example of the continuing difficulty in having the IT department post updates on the EC web site. The EC wishes to invite the Director of IT, Bob McQueen, to a meeting to discuss this.

J. Johnson suggested posting on the web site, monthly or even more frequently, a Best Practice in environmental responsibility. And the EC should review the Goals and Objectives.

W. Andrews asked that member review the last Annual Report, with a view to perhaps simplifying it in writing the report on 2019.

New business: should putting utilities underground in new developments be required? T. Chase reported asking Mark Healey about this. Mark said that it is now routine practice in developments. P. Walitsky pointed out that Canal Walk and Summerfields, the two largest current developments, have utilities underground.

Old business: list of past Environmental Stewardship awardees – T. Chase found a fairly complete list and sent it to all.

Single use plastics: Bob Smith's bill to ban single use plastic bags, polystyrene foam food containers and plastic straws failed to pass the Assembly. T. Chase has therefore prepared a proposed ordinance following closely Smith's bill. This was discussed. J. Johnson suggested looking at the Hoboken ordinance, particularly for its allowing use of paper bags for a year after plastic bags are banned, for a fee. T. Chase will revise his proposed ordinance along this line.

For the next Franklin Times we should put in an article about the April 18 stream clean-up, for which plans are well advanced. W. Andrews will find out the deadline for submission (and for publication; it is useless to publicize the stream clean-up in this issue if it comes out after the clean-up.) S. Jaracz reported on planning for the clean-up.

The EC web site space for comments now has an automatic reply.

The charging station at the Municipal Building states that after Jan. 1 charging will no longer be free. What will be the fee? Has it been put into effect yet? S. Jaracz suggested that all new multi-family housing should install at least the wiring for a charging station. He also suggested a "Right to Charge" ordinance.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM.