

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting June 15, 2020 (by Webex)

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, A. Schmidt, P. Walitsky; Council liaison T. Chase; and Matt Smith, Food and . R. Suydam joined at approx.. 7:10 PM. Absent, excused: D. Pydeski (school meeting), R. Razani (work deadline). There were also several members of the public attending.

Chair's report: nothing major. Franklin Day is planned for Sept. 12.

The minutes of the June 1 meeting were tabled until the next meeting, as some corrections have been noted.

Matt Smith was introduced; he is New Jersey head of Food & Water Watch.

He presented on Community Choice Aggregation. At present <5% of New Jersey's electricity comes from renewable sources; the rest is split approximately equally between natural gas and nuclear. New Jersey is moving toward 100% renewable, primarily generated by offshore wind; 1100 mW of installations has been approved.

He described community choice aggregation: a community buys electricity in bulk from a third party provider, which results in a lower price. Residential consumers are automatically included, but can opt out, while commercial customers must choose to opt in. PSE&G still distributes the electricity, maintains lines, and handles billing. Food & Water Watch's aim is for 2021 contracts to include 50% renewable-sourced electricity, rising to 100% by 2030. New Jersey currently has the fastest sea level rise in the nation, fastest temperature increase, and worst air pollution (ground level ozone).

New Brunswick was the first community to go to community aggregation; with 50% renewable-sourced electricity, the cost is about \$100 less per year than from PSE&G. An Essex County group of six towns buys 40% renewable, at a cost well less than PSE&G. All aggregating towns (currently 11) are saving money. Contracts have a fixed price for 18 to 24 months, while PSE&G can apply for a rate increase at any time, for instance to subsidize its nuclear plants.

The town hires a consultant, who negotiates bids from providers, is paid by the winning bidder. The consultant prepares an 'energy profile' of the town to give to bidders.

Q (R. Suydam): what is the advantage over individually buying electricity from Clean Energy? A (M. Smith): Lower cost than going individually to a clean energy provider.

Q (P. Walitsky): I have solar cells on my roof, usually meeting all my energy needs. What is the advantage for me? A. You might still have to buy electricity on cloudy days.

Q (W. Andrews): How long would this take to implement? A. As little as 6 to 9 months.

Q. (J. Johnson): Do providers have to meet standards for renewable energy? A. Yes. The contract is written to require Class 1 renewable, i.e. from solar cells, wind, geothermal – not class 2, which typically is burning trash and nuclear.

Q (S. Jaracz): what about residents who already have a third party provider? A. They are excluded in the energy profile, can opt out when aggregation is established.

Michael Bell, from the public, spoke. He stated that 'renewable' providers still buy electricity from the PJM grid. They portray their electricity as renewable by buying SREC certificates from out of state producers, cheaply. The actual electricity is still generated by gas and nuclear

plants. A: Consultants seek providers who generate electricity renewably, buy 'bundled' RECs. Bell: consultant agreements with producers are not transparent.

Q (S. Jaracz): aren't community solar projects better? A: Yes, but New Jersey is still trying them out on a limited basis.

T. Chase: Council considered community aggregation some years ago, but a majority did not wish to adopt it then. Public pressure will be needed to persuade Council now.

Returning to the regular agenda: there were no new e-mails. Kathy Snyder, who had earlier e-mailed us about disposal of prescription drugs, was informed that the EC prefers the township's practice of collecting them at the Public Safety Building for disposal through the Sheriff's Office. S. Jaracz noted that the web site still needs updating. R. Suydam noted that the posted Goals, from 2018, need updating. W. Andrews promised to have updated Goals for the next meeting. Updates must be laid out in detail, i.e. exactly how to fit them into the web site, and sent to Bob McQueen.

Plans review (two). P. Walitsky reviewed the plan for a Verizon cell phone tower, a fake tree, at 122 Laurel Ave., Kingston. It proposes a diesel back-up generator, which is noisy, and must be run once a month to assure its readiness. Could they use propane instead? State regulations (N.J.A.C. 7:29) allows a maximum of **65 dB** noise (7am to 10pm) at the nearest potential receptor/complainant's property line. **50dB** (10pm to 7am). Franklin's Model Noise Ordinance may be more strict in terms of times of day, but not dB. Trap Rock's solar cell array is not available for back-up, it feeds electricity to Trap Rock's operation headquarters.

S. Jaracz reviewed another Verizon cell phone tower proposal, off Cedar Grove Lane (at the Cedar Hill Swim Club). Here a propane back-up generator is proposed. Solar cells with battery back-up could be used instead. The primary concern of the variance to reducing parking, because the D&R Canal Commission notes that some parking was constructed without their permission; reducing the parking, already well below township formula, would simplify their consideration by the Canal Commission. Also, the set-back from the property line is less than the required distance of twice the height of the tower. T. Chase noted that a Grandparents' Park is proposed for the neighboring township-owned property, though not directly adjacent to the tower location.

New Business: Franklin Day is currently planned for Sept. 12. What will the EC do? Firstly, what is the date by which the decision must be made whether Franklin Day can proceed under COVID-19 regulations? S. Jaracz will inquire.

A. Schmidt brought up an inquiry from a friend who walks the wetlands along the pipeline which crosses the Raritan River (and D&R Canal and Easton Ave.) near the South Bound Brook border. He wonders who owns the property and whether there is public access, and is concerned about trash accumulation. This might be a site for a future stream clean-up. A., Schmidt and S. Jaracz will plan a visit to the property. Also, A. Schmidt and R. Suydam will look at Three Mile Run (vicinity of Phillips Concrete along Rte 27) for possible clean-up.

Old Business: the list of past Environmental Stewardship awardees should be completed by addition of John Walker (for his pursuit of ground water contamination in Franklin Park, 2007) and posted on the EC web site.

Storm water basin retrofit program: information was not received from Tara Kenyon.

Ordinance banning single use plastics: J. Johnson suggested a special meeting to consider further edits and finalize the suggested ordinance, with a summary page with bullet points. After noting various personal constraints, the meeting was set for **5:30 PM** Monday, June 29. W.

Andrews will contact Ann Marie McCarthy for necessary notifications, and Bob McQueen for Webex set-up.

Franklin Times articles for next issue: S. Jaracz will inquire when the next deadline is, along with inquiry about decision date for Franklin Day.

Coyote program, originally scheduled for April 6: DEP people will not be doing presentations as long as they are out of their office due to COVID-19.

Underground utilities: it may be normal practice now to place wired utilities underground, but the EC would still prefer to have an ordinance in place. If above-ground utilities are seriously damaged, can the utilities be directed to replace them underground? T. Chase is to contact ANJEC to find out whether other municipalities have such ordinances.

2020 stream clean-up, Seeley's Brook: now scheduled for Sept. 26.

Updating the township stormwater ordinance, as required by the state: Carl Hauck will work on this, consulting with Sophie Glovier of the Watershed Institute.

The meeting was opened to the public, but the previously present public had left the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.