

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission (virtual) meeting Nov. 16, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, C. MacIvor, D. Pydeski, R. Suydam, A. Schmidt, and P. Walitsky; and Council liaison T. Chase. Absent: R. Razani (bereavement).

Chair's report: township clerk Ann Marie McCarthy has asked for an attendance report, quarterly. He has submitted attendance for the first three quarters of the year. He has also submitted the schedule of meetings for 2021.

R. Razani has indicated that she wishes to resign from the Commission. J. Johnson will contact Maria Santiago, who in September expressed an interest in joining.

The minutes of the meeting of Nov. 2 were approved as submitted (after some corrections). There was some discussion of the lack of a township staff member to set up the Zoom meetings, which other township volunteer committees have.

Web site/e-mail: there was one message from Caitlin Di Cara, Watershed Ambassador with the Watershed Institute, about a rain barrel workshop. W. Andrews will follow up on this.

Plans review: none were seen for November, there seem to be no second meetings of the month for either Board. P. Walitsky reported that there are (on the Boards' web pages) a number of plans for Board meetings at the beginning of December, before the EC's next meeting. Review of these was deferred until S. Jaracz could rejoin the meeting (he had to step away for a bit).

The Commission discussed its desire to participate in development of the new stormwater management ordinance, being written by DPW Director Carl Hauck.

Plastic bag ban bill: does ANJEC have a model educational program that environmental commissions could apply in their communities? W. Andrews thinks there is a state plan for this in the legislation. He will share further information he obtains.

The request to Bob McQueen, Director of Information Technology, for an IT person to explain to the Commission how the web site works was discussed. IT staff would have to be paid overtime to attend an EC meeting, there is no provision in their contract for comp time for attending an evening meeting. T. Chase mentioned that according to Bob Vornlocker the township web page is (and should be) ADA-compliant, with the result that submissions for posting sometimes have to be modified by Krista Hegedus who posts them, to achieve compliance. A. Schmidt and R. Suydam volunteered to meet with her, during the day, to learn about the process. Walter Andrews will join Robin and Arnold on the group. A Schmidt suggested making a list of what the Commission wants. R. Suydam suggested looking at the web pages of other Environmental Commissions for ideas.

At this point site plans were examined. For the Board of Zoning Adjustment, meeting Dec. 3: Pillar of Fire wants a 224 parking lot expansion for its church, using porous pavement, for which the Commission commends them. Stein Assisted Living, 360/370 DeMott Lane, proposes a ground-mounted solar cell array, 1.8 acres. The Commission suggests putting solar cells on roofs, parking lots, open areas, or the part of the property in question with many downed trees, rather than removing the best trees on the property. A. Schmidt will send township resolutions favoring trees. A proposed sign variance was not examined – no environmental aspects.

J. Johnson left the meeting at this point.

For the Planning Board, meeting Dec. 2: a warehouse proposed on Elizabeth Avenue would require cutting down most of the trees on the property. Since the building will require and make impermeable a substantial portion of the lot, a green roof is suggested, to reduce runoff. Is the proposed detention basin big enough for the amount of impervious surface proposed? A subdivision on Churchill Ave. proposes three houses. Again, existing trees will be lost.

At this point the meeting was opened to the public. Only the Franklin Reporter was present, and had no comments. The meeting was closed to the public.

WEARESTILLINIT.org was described by R. Suydam as an organization of businesses, municipalities, churches, etc. working on climate change despite the Trump administration's withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords. She will keep an eye on it, noting what they suggest townships could do, with a view to the township joining it. If the Biden administration rejoins the Paris Accords the organization may change. Six Mile Run Reformed Church belongs.

Old Business: letter to the BPU about undergrounding of utilities – R. Suydam pursued this, eventually talked to an assistant to Upendra Chivukula, asking for a response.

BPU Energy Planning Grant – we need to have a project in mind. S. Jaracz reported that he is volunteering with Sustainable Princeton. They have a collaboration with Princeton University; Princeton students make calculations on CO₂ savings resulting from various actions. Montclair has a similar arrangement with Montclair State University. We could do the same with Rutgers. Ideally, we would have a dedicated township employee who would make the arrangements.

The BPU Energy Planning grants expect the proposal to have a broad community base, involving business, education, etc. A grant could *pay* Rutgers students to make such calculations, for instance on the economics of LED street lights vs. conventional.

Stream cleanup 2021: S, Jaracz contacted both Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and the Watershed Institute, proposed the cleanup for April 10 or 17 (many municipalities will do it April 24, close to Earth Day). Heather Fenyk of LRWP may be out of town those days. April 3 is Easter; March 27 is a possibility. No response yet from the Watershed.

Sustainability Officer: A. Schmidt noted that this position could be combined with a Grants Coordinator, which the township used to have. This might make it more palatable for the township budget.

The meeting was opened to the public again. There were no comments. The meeting was closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.