

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission virtual meeting Aug. 30, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, and P. Walitsky; and Council liaison T. Chase and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: J. Johnson, R. Suydam (both had informed the EC that they would be absent from this meeting).

Chair's report: he has been working on the EC's presence at Franklin Day. The EC has been approved for space in the township tent. He has no definitive news on the tote bags to be given out to replace plastic bags, and the inserts about the plastic bag ban to be placed in them. He hasn't seen the bags, but understands that they have the township logo.

The minutes of the meeting of August 16 were approved.

S. Jaracz moved to open the meeting to the public. Jim Johnson, 34 Norwich Place, spoke by phone concerning his petition to the Zoning Board about the South Middlebush Road scenic and agricultural corridor. He thanked A. Schmidt for his testimony at the Zoning Board hearing on the Dada Bhagwan Institute proposed temple. A. Schmidt noted that his statements were grounded in positions taken by the Environmental Commission and the Shade Tree Commission. Discussion ensued, in part about the Zoning Board's non-acceptance of petitions.

Sophie Glovier from the Watershed Institute spoke. She will send information about their symposium to be held in November.

Web site/e-mail/social media: J. Johnson not being present, there was no report. She has sent S. Jaracz's report on the clean-up by Rutgers Prep students and the EC resolution on withdrawing investment from fossil fuel companies to IT for posting on the EC web page; we don't know if they have been approved for posting.

Plans: P. Walitsky has not seen anything new among applications posted on the Planning Board and Zoning Board web pages. He has been off line most of the time for the last two weeks while vacationing. He reported that the other two warehouses constructed on Randolph Rd have tenants; he has sent them letters suggesting solar cells on their roofs.

T. Kenyon reported an e-mail from Bob Vornlocker suggesting that the tote bags will be in within the next few days.

W. Andrews asked EC members to be present at Franklin Day, helping to pass out tote bags. P. Walitsky reported having flyers from the Watershed Institute which could also be passed out then. A. Schmidt will be providing materials from the Shade Tree Commission.

Resiliency Planning: T. Kenyon reported that the New Jersey chapter of the American Planning Association is working on a template for resiliency planning. Perhaps Franklin can be involved with this.

W. Andrews asked about the EC resolution petitioning the state pension funds to disinvest from fossil fuel companies. T. Chase stated that he has asked for this to be put on the Council agenda for its next session as a discussion item.

Green infrastructure strategic plan: T. Kenyon summarized what the plan contains, 17 suggested projects. After discussion with Carl Hauck she concluded that the project suggested at the Public Works building would not be effective. She will keep the EC posted on further developments. T. Chase suggested using money the township will get for infrastructure for a major project, since stormwater management is one of the approved project areas.

Plastic bag education subcommittee: M. Santiago reported on opportunities to share information digitally through the school system and the library.

Adopt-a-storm drain project: S. Jaracz reported developing contacts with the national organization.

Sustainable Jersey: T. Kenyon will attend upcoming webinars on the Gold Star for Health program.

Environmental Stewardship awards: A. Schmidt suggested putting on the agenda for the next EC meeting an executive session to discuss named candidates.

Stream clean-up next spring: S. Jaracz is still looking at possible streams.

No Idling signs: an example is in front of the municipal building. The same signs will be installed at parking areas on all municipal properties.

Sustainable landscaping (opposition to noisy gas-powered blowers): nothing new.

Has anyone 'test driven' the EC web page?

The meeting was opened to the public. Sophie Glovier asked what Watershed publications we have. P. Walitsky described three. She has updated materials she can give the EC for distribution at Franklin Day. The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.