

## **Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting October 18 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, A. Schmidt and P. Walitsky; and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon and Council liaison T. Chase. R. Suydam was in Tucson, AZ for a church conference; she joined the meeting later. M. Santiago and J. Johnson had informed the commission that they would not be able to attend, and E. Pires had not been informed of his appointment.

Chair's report: W. Andrews suggests a census of rain gardens in the township.

Minutes: A. Schmidt had some corrections, including that the Commission had by vote supported his suggestion to Council of broadening the application of the proposed No Idling ordinance. The suggestion was sent as an email from W. Andrews, for the Commission. T. Chase corrected wording concerning groups to participate in the 2022 stream clean-up. With these corrections the minutes were approved, A. Schmidt abstaining because he was not present at the 10/4 meeting.

There was no public present for whom to open the meeting.

Web site/e-mail: J. Johnson not being present, there was no information.

Plans: P. Walitsky presented comments on plans made available just this morning. NJ American Water proposes installation of a large number of solar cells at its site on Randolph Rd. They were careful not to intrude on Randolph Brook. St. Peter's Hospital, which is reoccupying the second floor of its building on Easton Ave., asks to continue the variance for insufficient parking.

W. Andrews commented that Quik-Cheks in Franklin do not have charging stations, but one in North Brunswick does.

T. Kenyon reported on what she told the Public Works Committee about the Adopt-a-drain program. The committee was supportive. She has just gotten the necessary documents from Hamline University for approval by Council. P. Walitsky asked whether drains in Somerset Run, Canal Walk, etc. can be included. T. Kenyon said they can be included. The township chooses what streets to include in the program (e.g. not Easton Ave. because of safety concerns).

T. Kenyon will be meeting with IT's GIS specialist to obtain data on rain gardens in the township.

Environmental Stewardship awards: W. Andrews will present them at the Nov. 23 Council meeting. He should sign in to the Council meeting and be promoted to panelist by Bob McQueen.

Publicizing the plastic bag ban: this needs thought, in the absence of large meetings at which the township bags and information could be distributed.

S. Jaracz reported on a Sustainable Princeton report on the desirability of mulching leaves on lawns rather than raking and removing them. He moved to put this on township social media. (P. Walitsky seconded the motion.) R. Suydam joined the meeting (from Tucson AZ) at this point. A. Schmidt suggested that this recommendation is not appropriate if the leaf cover is heavy, and wanted to obtain more information. R. Suydam expressed support for the article. A. Schmidt then noted that there is a paragraph about collecting leaves if they are very dense. The motion then passed unanimously. S. Jaracz will seek permission from Sustainable Princeton to use the article.

There was no update on the model electric vehicle ordinance.

M. Santiago reported (by e-mail) that she has been in touch with the school system about programs with school environmental clubs.

R. Suydam reported on handing out township reusable bags at the Octoberfest of the township Chamber of Commerce. She got to speak for ten minutes about the EC and the plastic bag ban. She is still waiting to hear from the Interfaith Council about an opportunity to address them.

Stream clean-up: the possibility of cleaning up Cedar Grove Brook by the Imperia was discussed. A. Schmidt opposed cleaning up on private property, saying that it was the property owner's responsibility. What does the township code say about property maintenance of this type? The Commission should read up on this. T. Kenyon will ask Cereza Morales, Zoning Officer, whether she enforces this.

Plans review checklist: T. Kenyon had no opportunity to use this for the last meeting (no new plans) or this (plans only made available this morning).

T. Kenyon looked into heat island mitigation. Her American Planning Association magazine had an article on this, and she did further research. There are many aspects to heat islands, such as increased use of air conditioners (which heat the outside air further) and increasing the temperature of stormwater runoff and thus of the streams receiving the runoff. Coating roofs and pavement with a reflecting material can mitigate the added heating. The EPA and the State of New Jersey have programs for improving the insulation of houses to keep them cooler in summer, warmer in winter. Further discussion of what the EC might do along these lines is needed. A subcommittee might be formed. T. Kenyon will share her notes from her research.

Has anyone looked at the EC website?

S. Jaracz asked whether T. Kenyon has been able to post anything against vehicle idling on township social media. Not yet, she will do this – some material is on the web site.

Environmental stewardship awards: the plaques have been ordered (and mistakes in the wording corrected).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.