

Minutes of the meeting of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission, March 14, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Vice Chair W. Andrews, chair P. Walitsky being on vacation out of state. The Sunshine Law notice was read, and the roll called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, E. Pires, A. Schmidt, and R. Suydam; and Sustainability Coordinator T. Kenyon. Council liaison E. Potosnak joined at 7:08 PM, left at 8:00. Absent: M. Santiago, P. Walitsky. Rutgers intern J. Cairns joined at some point.

Vice Chair Andrews reported that meetings will be in person in April. The Franklin Womens' Club will help distribute reusable shopping bags. Franklin High School students are having an event at which the EC could have a table. He had expected to receive a chair's report from P. Walitsky, but did not.

The minutes of the Feb. 7 were approved, A. Schmidt abstaining. He reported having had an e-mail to E. Pires bounce back; others have had no problems in communicating with him.

T. Kenyon is e-mailing Bob Vornlocker about making the township reusable bags available to the Franklin Womens' Club and others.

The meeting was opened to the public. Sophie Glovier of the Watershed Institute spoke about the threat to municipalities' ability to adopt stronger stormwater management regulations than the minimum provided by the state. The EC adopted the ANJEC resolution on this at its last meeting, and P. Walitsky sent it to the clerk; but it has not appeared on the Council's agenda to date. E. Potosnak will look into this. The meeting was then closed to the public.

Web site/email/social media: Bob Vornlocker forwarded an email which came to the township, but it does not concern the EC. J. Johnson spoke about an article on 'soil blocking' – soil oxygenation, for starting seeds indoors. She moved that the EC post this on its web page. Approved. R. Suydam noted that the stream clean-up is not on the EC's web page calendar. Flyers have been created by the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership; T. Kenyon will post them on the EC web page. R. Suydam suggested that an EC member take charge of getting articles written for the township newsletter (Franklin Times). She volunteered to do this. T. Kenyon gets the notices soliciting articles, will transmit articles to Saffie Kallon.

A. Schmidt left the meeting at this time for another meeting.

Site plan reviews: T. Kenyon showed site plans. Cedar Hill Prep School is asking for a use variance to permit running a summer camp at its existing facility; no construction is proposed. An earlier version of this request suggested construction of a soccer field and running track; these are not in this application. They are lessening traffic by providing a van service to collect some campers. The EC suggested that they have bike racks and anti-idling signs.

Franklin Storage, 297-305 Davidson Ave., proposes a storage facility, 120,000 sq. ft. They ask for only 6 parking spaces, on the grounds that there will be only a single employee on site and users will visit only sporadically. They would be developing only the front 3 acres of a much larger lot (there is a stream corridor). For green infrastructure they propose porous pavement, connected by underground drainage to a small bioretention basin. They propose planting 40 trees (the required number would be 100). They should have one charging station. T. Chase commented that they could plant more trees in the forested portion, forest regeneration being difficult because of the overpopulation of deer.

Cires Realty proposes a warehouse on Rte. 27 just south of Bennetts Lane. A use variance is required for at least the R-40 portion of the site (~57% is in the G-B zone, ~43% in the R-40 zone).

They propose removing 643 trees; this would require planting over 1000 new trees, they propose planting only 10 and donating to the Shade Tree Fund in lieu of the remainder. They propose pervious pavement for their parking spaces. The EC can note the requirement for charging stations (10) and ask for bike racks. R. Suydam noted that since there is no traffic light at the site, trucks leaving it are likely to turn right and attempt to use Skillman Lane (weight limit 4 tons) in returning to I-287. Zoning variance requests include the phrase "the benefits outweigh the detriments" -*what* benefits, asked S. Jaracz.

S, Jaracz brought up the appointment of E. Pires as full member instead of moving R. Suydam from alternate, which he feels diminishes respect for the EC. T. Chase will bring this up via Ed Potosnak, but says it would require that E. Pires resign as full member and be reappointed as alternate. He has indicated willingness to do so, but R. Suydam has not wanted to push this.

R. Suydam moved that all remaining items on the agenda other than the Community Energy Plan application be postponed until the next meeting. This motion was approved.

After a brief technical problem, T. Kenyon presented the final draft of the Community Energy Plan proposal, showing what initiatives the township will focus on (and what has already been done). S. Jaracz noted that a member of the Central Jersey Electric Vehicle Association, who is trained to train, can train township staff concerning electric vehicles and charging stations.

T. Kenyon led the Commission in reviewing all opportunities listed in the application. We propose responding to most of them. She also informed the Commission about the township's application for a Local Health Assessment grant, which would provide technical assistance.

The meeting was again opened to the public. There were no questions from the public, and the meeting was closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 PM.