

## Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, May 16, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: T. Chase, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, E. Pires, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, and P. Walitsky; and T. Kenyon and intern J. Cairns. W. Andrews arrived at 7:03 PM. Absent: R. Suydam (family obligations), Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: he thanked S. Jaracz for participating in an electric vehicle demonstration at Temple Beth-El in Hillsborough, and J. Cairns for his work for the EC this semester.

Minutes: A. Schmidt had some suggested amendments. With these changes the minutes were approved.

Public session: C. Martin of the Trails and Open Space committees said he was there to support the plan for demonstration plantings of native species at Negri-Nepote Grasslands.

Correspondence: one letter was received, concerning a proposed warehouse at 154 Weston Canal Rd.

E-mail and social media: Bob Vornlocker responded to the EC's request for official business cards, saying that the township would not pay for them. S. Jaracz reported attending the grand opening of the Youth Center on May 14; lacking an EC business card, he was unable to identify himself as such to important people he met.

Site plans: P. Walitsky reported on a plan to add to the warehouse at 50 Atrium Drive (previously the Garden State Exhibition Center), decreasing the parking area (and impervious surface) and adding trees. T. Chase reported on a proposed warehouse at 31 School House Rd., replacing an existing small office/warehouse building and another small building and removing some 579 trees at the rear of the property (replacement value 608 trees). They propose to plant 26 trees. They do propose one electric vehicle charging station; the EC should call for making ready two more parking spaces for future charging stations, a bicycle rack, and a sidewalk along School House Rd., and making the roof ready for solar cells.

J. Johnson reported that business cards could be had for \$17 for 100 cards.

New business: Sustainable Jersey: T. Kenyon presented for readoption the pledge supporting sustainable land use. P. Walitsky moved approval of the pledge, to be sent to the Council for adoption. A. Schmidt suggested mentioning charging stations under transportation. S. Jaracz suggested adding "interested advocacy groups" among those to whom the township reaches out. With these additions the pledge was approved.

Next, T. Kenyon presented the pledge supporting the state wildlife management plan. A. Schmidt suggested replacing "wild places" with "wildlife habitat" and "wild spaces" with "open spaces". With these changes the pledge was approved, to be sent to Council.

T. Kenyon presented the plan for re-establishment of a demonstration garden, with native plants, at Negri-Nepote Grasslands Preserve. The original garden, planted in 2013, has been overgrown by other species, many invasive. C. Martin elaborated on this plan, in particular problems with invasive non-native species. Spotted knapweed, invasive in the Midwest since the 19<sup>th</sup> C., is now a problem in New Jersey, specifically at Negri-Nepote. It is deeply rooted, almost impossible to remove by pulling, and sets wind-dispersed seeds, which can germinate up to 8 years after dispersal. Control requires integrated pest management, including mowing and burning. Consistent management will be required to maintain the demonstration gardens with native species which support native pollinators. We hope for funding from the Open Space budget, and maintenance by volunteers.

M. Santiago has contacted the high school environmental club, though she has not been able to meet with their adviser. We would hope to involve them with maintenance of the demonstration garden. T. Kenyon has been in touch with a Boy Scout troop to this end.

C. Martin described business cards, with QR codes, which he prints for the Trails Committee.

Annual reports: W. Andrews has sent some suggestions to T. Chase and T. Kenyon to facilitate completing the 2021 report. This would be followed by the also outstanding 2019 and 2020 reports.

Anti-idling ordinance: a draft by J. Cairns, with suggestions by T. Kenyon and A. Schmidt, is almost ready for transmission to Council. A. Schmidt commented that anti-idling signs should be required on township and Board of Education properties. Residents should be urged to report consistent idling to the county Dept. of Health, which is best prepared to enforce the ordinance.

Committee reports: the Education Committee has prepared a survey to obtain information from township residents (6 or 7 questions). How should this be sent out? (In the past it has been printed in the township newsletter, with poor response.) It should be sent to all persons who have agreed to receive e-mails from the township. But first the EC would like to review this.

Could the EC have its own social media account, while promising to adhere to township guidelines, as is the case in some other municipalities? T. Kenyon asked the IT Dept., who asked her to meet with them. Can we get a Nixle 'button', to send messages to township residents? Can we establish our own e-mail list? Let's try, with everyone who has ever e-mailed the EC on it.

Some updates to the web page have been completed, but others, such as the annual reports, need to be completed.

A. Schmidt and J. Johnson discussed liaison with the Shade Tree Commission concerning 1) widespread tree planting, 2) revision of the Shade Tree ordinance. We should begin collecting suggested sites for tree planting.

T. Kenyon reported that the mayor signed the documents for the Adopt-a-Drain program, to be sent to Hamline University.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 PM.