

## Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, July 18, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Vice Chair W. Andrews, P. Walitsky being delayed. The Sunshine Law notice was read, and the roll called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, E. Pires, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt and R. Suydam; and T. Kenyon. P. Walitsky arrived at 7:25 PM, and E. Potosnak, Council liaison, at 7:43 PM.

The minutes of the meeting of June 29 were approved with minor corrections.

The meeting was opened to the public. Marlin Quant, resident of Canal Walk, asked what site plans are on the agenda, in order to know what to comment on. Debbie Stuart, 2 Barrington Plaza, asked if the EC can recommend a moratorium on warehouse approval. T. Chase and R. Suydam responded. Jan Brandt, 22 Bryant Court, asked how the EC reviews site plans. T. Kenyon and R. Suydam responded. A. Schmidt thanked her for reminding Mark Healey that Mettlers Lane is a scenic corridor. James Solomos, also of Canal Walk, asked about notification of neighbors of proposals for warehouses. The meeting was then closed to the public.

J. Johnson reported that the EC received an e-mail asking if EC meetings can be live streamed. They cannot (at least if in the Large Conference Room); only virtual meetings can be streamed, i.e. by Webex.

Site Plans: P. Walitsky reported on a proposal for a warehouse on a vacant part of the Atrium complex. The lot was a staging ground for construction in 1987, trees on it (which would be removed) have grown up only since then. The project does not provide parking for trucks; A. Schmidt expressed concern that trucks waiting to unload would idle on the road (which is legal on a roadway), as has been the case for the Amazon warehouse. **Pollution from the idling is still a big concern, wherever it occurs. Can a parking area for trucks be included in the plan so the trucks don't have to idle on the road?** General discussion focused on the need for revision of the Tree Protection ordinance. The EC should prepare and submit to the Shade Tree Commission a strong revision.

P. Walitsky also reported on the Janssen Pharmaceutica application for a 40 ft long generator beside their building at 1 Campus Drive, to keep pharmaceutical products refrigerated. Why a diesel generator, the EC asks? Why not solar cells and battery storage of electricity? **Although not as clean as solar, why not natural gas which is cleaner than diesel?**

T. Chase reported on a proposal for a 62,500 sq. ft. warehouse at 545/549 Weston Canal Rd. Notably, it proposes a green roof and partial green walls, though with no details. A. Schmidt expressed concern about 1) sight lines from Summerfields residences and absence of buffering trees, 2) lack of parking for trucks, which could lead to trucks idling on Weston Canal Rd.

New business: the resolution opposing the proposed additional generating plant in Keasbey (Woodbridge Twp), to be sent to Council, was discussed, with the addition of Senators Booker and Menendez as addressees. R. Suydam moved that the cover letter and the resolution (shortened by C. Kratovil, as a result of comments from A. Schmidt) be approved and sent to Council. This was approved.

Community Solar: Yvette Viasus, in an e-mail, replied to a question: they do have peak and off-peak rates for electricity.

Sustainable Jersey: T. Kenyon reported on progress of our application for recertification. We have enough points for approval at the Bronze level, should have enough for Silver level after she supplies some requested data.

E. Potosnak reported on energy aggregation. Council proposes to present to voters a two-tier proposal, with the general tier requiring savings of at least 5% below PSE&G's rates and 10%

more renewable energy, and a second, higher cost tier for 100% renewable energy. They ask for EC help in educating the public. Council expects to introduce this proposal at its August 9 meeting, for final passage on Sept. 13. It would then be on the ballot in November for voter approval.

The Education Committee (report presented by M. Santiago) proposes extensive outreach to the public, particularly about energy aggregation and community solar. **The consensus was that this fall the emphasis should be on energy aggregation, since a question about it is expected to be on the ballot in November.** The EC agrees that a public program on community solar should be presented by someone from ANJEC or Sustainable Jersey, not from one of the companies. The township presumably will make needed information available to all community solar companies.

J. Johnson proposed that the River-Friendly tips on water conservation be passed on to IT for posting on the EC web page, with addition of data on rainfall in the past month collected by S. Jaracz. This was moved and passed.

R. Suydam pointed out that Franklin Days are coming, with township presentations on Sept. 24. The EC should have a table (or part of the township table).

R. Suydam moved to put a blank copy of the Green Checklist, which we now use in reviewing site plan proposals, on our web page for the public to read. This was approved.

R. Suydam brought up the American Forestry Council Tree Equity Score map; T. Kenyon put this up on screen. It offers tree equity scores for groups of census blocks in the township, with targets for tree cover on the basis of economic and social data for the blocks, and temperature. R. Suydam also reported that there are similar maps for heat data, i.e. 'heat islands'; we should try to get these data.

P. Walitsky reported that the Local Health Assessment questionnaire is going out to residents of Canal Walk, Somerset Run, Renaissance and Sterling Pointe.

The meeting was opened again to the public. C. Kratovil, representing Food and Water Watch, thanked the EC for supporting the resolution against the Keasbey power plant. Marlin Quant thanked the EC for its warm welcome to the public. He suggested enforcement of the anti-idling ordinance, and of the weight limit on Mettlers Rd., by cameras. But by state law idling on a roadway is not regulated. Jan Brandt asked about the new stormwater management ordinance, The township has passed the ordinance (as provided by the DEP, stronger in some places), but it may be still being reviewed by Somerset County. She also asked about the Shade Tree trust fund, and about 24 hour warehouse operation.

The meeting was closed to the public and adjourned at 9:20 PM.