

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, November 7, 2022

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

Chair's report: he noted a rally planned for Nov. 10 against warehouse sprawl.

The minutes of the meeting of October 17 were approved.

The meeting was opened to the public. Terry Thorson, 18 Lebed Lane, spoke. Shirley Tallman, 57 Tallman Lane, spoke of a petition being circulated in Canal Walk; due to age, not all could participate. She spoke of mistakes made by government in allowing warehouses next to residential properties, and called for a moratorium on further approvals, specifically because of traffic and air pollution. Also, she is concerned about landscape workers not wearing ear protection when using mowers, leaf blowers, etc. Only one landscaping company is big enough to contract to maintain the whole of Canal Walk.

A. Schmidt asked whether she had contacted OSHA about the landscape workers. She replied that a Canal Walk board member is pursuing this. She spoke about the board fining people if their grass goes brown during a drought – i.e. ordering the use of water for the lawn.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence was just one e-mail, from a lithium battery company. There were no site plans for review.

New business: R. Suydam thanked everyone who had publicized the energy aggregation proposal on the ballot. Possible posts for the EC web page: the results of the energy aggregation ballot, how to store root vegetables without a root cellar.

M. Santiago reported that she has not yet heard back from the Youth Center what environmental issues the youth would like to hear about. She would like to have an exhibit about solar and offshore wind energy in the Franklin Township library 'museum'. We should plan for another community education public event in the spring.

P. Walitsky reported that Canal Walk has 'adopted' the Youth Center, contributing \$3000 for programs.

R. Suydam spoke about the various technologies available for 'green' use of rooftops (especially of warehouses). The Commission could propose an ordinance requiring builders to install some such technology on the roof of structures they build, allowing flexibility in what to do and how to do it. She has a 2019 report with summaries of various technologies. She, S. Jaracz and P. Walitsky will work on drafting such an ordinance proposal. New York City has a regulation calling for a sustainable roof zone, for 100% of available roof area.

Tree replacement ordinance: T. Kenyon has not yet recruited a working group with Shade Tree Commission members.

T. Kenyon reported on a U.S. Dept. of Agriculture tool to calculate community tree canopy, iTree. We need to be able to compare our present canopy percentage with what it was six years ago, using the same method. The latest survey yielded the same percentage as the survey six years ago, despite losses to new construction in the interim, but different calculation programs were used. She can use old and current data in iTree to get results which can be fairly compared. A.

Schmidt pointed out that these results are only preparation to proposing changes in the tree ordinance.

A. Schmidt reported that the Shade Tree Commission has discussed a moratorium on planting new trees funded by the Shade Tree Fund until the township has a protocol in place for maintaining newly planted trees. He noted that the fee (\$30/tree) currently charged for not planting trees is about 10% of the current actual cost, with labor, of planting a tree. Also, the current ordinance defines a tree as being at least 4" in diameter three feet above the ground; developers face no liability for taking down trees smaller than this (which could grow to larger size). T. Chase noted that increasing the fee for trees not planted should make it possible to pay the DPW for tree maintenance. He suggested an Adopt-a-Tree program for volunteer maintenance of street trees.

The proposed anti-idling ordinance was discussed. A. Schmidt had commented that we need a change in culture concerning police cars on 'outside jobs' protecting roadside work idling for hours to keep their lights flashing, and that it should be discussed and possibly made mandatory that outside contractors not use gas or diesel fueled vehicles for this service, or should use APUs (Auxiliary Power Units) on fossil fueled vehicles. T. Chase suggested a general comment, accompanying the proposed ordinance, that this activity needs to be corrected, most readily by acquiring electric police vehicles. He further commented that the ordinance needs to list, clearly and separately, where anti-idling signs *shall* be installed (township parking areas etc., new commercial construction) and where they *should* be installed (existing private property such as warehouses, convenience stores, multi-family housing, etc.) What to say about Board of Education property is a more difficult question.

Old business: T. Kenyon reported on the adopt-a-drain program (now 91 adopters) and on the Local Health Assessment survey. She will speak on the latter at the League of Municipalities meeting next week.

The meeting was again opened to the public. S. Tallman reported that in the state of Washington there are several successful adopt-a-tree programs. She noted that Amazon is ramping up activity at its Randolph Rd. warehouse in preparation for the holidays, resulting in trucks waiting on Randolph Rd. This problem of trucks queuing on Randolph Rd, waiting to unload at the Amazon warehouse, was discussed. Trucks on public streets, even waiting in a queue with motors idling, are not covered by the state law, as A. Schmidt explained.

The meeting was then closed to the public. The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM.