

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, November 21, 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, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, and P. Walitsky, and Sustainability Coordinator T. Kenyon. Council liaison E. Potosnak arrived at 7:05 PM. Absent: E. Pires.

Chair's report: has everyone whose term is expiring responded to Ann Marie that they wish to be reappointed? Can any regular members ask to not be reappointed as regular member so that alternates (M. Santiago, R. Suydam) can move up to full member?

Canal Walk has a Solar Committee, will have constructed a solar cell canopy over the parking lot next to the clubhouse.

The minutes of the 11/7 meeting were amended as suggested by R. Suydam and A. Schmidt; also, the number of drain adopters is 91, not 81. With these amendments the minutes were approved.

T. Kenyon spoke on her talk about our Local Health Assessment at the League of Municipalities. It went well; Woodbridge and Piscataway asked questions.

The meeting was opened to the public. Jan Brandt, 22 Bryant Court, asked what citizens can do to influence the Council, specifically about health effects of diesel exhaust (2.5 μm particulate material). R. Suydam suggested that she look for relevant ordinances of other municipalities. T. Kenyon suggested that the DEP conducts air quality surveys.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: no e-mails, two letters. One was from PSE&G about moving transmission lines out of flood hazard areas. R. Suydam reported that she understands that PSE&G will be either replacing the lattice-type transmission line towers on Suydam Farms with monopoles or adding monopoles – not clear which. In the other letter, Pillar of Fire wrote about oil tank removals they are undertaking.

P. Walitsky reported on one site plan he reviewed: the Wilf Campus for Senior Living (DeMott Lane) proposes to erect 11 new homes and 7.4 acres of solar cells, removing ≈ 3000 trees for the latter. The EC suggests that instead of removing so many trees the applicant erect solar cell canopies over its parking lots, and put solar cells on the roofs of the new and existing buildings.

New business: the Commission must recommend to Council who should be the chair for the next year. P. Walitsky is willing to continue serving, and was recommended.

The EC has not yet recommended any person or organization for Environmental Stewardship awards. The Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, who join with us in collecting trash along Mile Run, was suggested by E.Potosnak. S. Jaracz moved approval of this nomination. Approved.

The meeting schedule for 2023 was then discussed. The first and third Mondays of January are both holidays; instead meetings will be scheduled for Jan. 9 and 23. In February only a single meeting, Feb. 6, will be scheduled. Meetings in June will be June 5 and June 26 (June 19 now being a federal holiday, Juneteenth), in July on July 10 and 24, in September only Sept. 18. Three meetings will be scheduled for October, Oct. 2, 16 and 30; Nov. 6, 20, and Dec. 4 and 18. Other months the meetings will be the usual first and third Mondays. It is always easier to cancel a scheduled meeting than to schedule an additional meeting. This schedule was approved.

Council will commend the Environmental Commission at its Nov. 22 meeting, primarily because of the Silver recertification by Sustainable Jersey.

The Communications Committee reported that new posts are needed. The EC gave its consensus that a post regarding sustainable packaging would be a good idea. A follow-up piece on energy aggregation, once we know next steps, is in order. Also the committee agreed that it needs to meet in the very near future to do more work on the EC website.

S. Jaracz will write a follow-up on energy aggregation, the voters having approved going ahead with this initiative. E. Potosnak reported that Council's Administration Committee will consider the next move at its Nov. 23 meeting.

Education Committee: in January they will show an environmental movie in the library, probably on Jan. 11. This should be publicized after Christmas. In April they will have a display on renewable energy in the library. It would be desirable to have a display connected to the January movie. T. Kenyon noted that if we have at least three movies during the year it is a series and wins points from Sustainable Jersey.

Youth at the Youth Center would like programs on electric vehicles, sustainable fashion/architecture, and water pollution. R. Suydam agreed to explore sustainable fashion with some contacts of hers.

Solar/green roofs: P. Walitsky has the Denver ordinance. R. Suydam has looked at others. Many cities and towns have such ordinances. Does the U.S. Green Building Council have a data base of such ordinances? For warehouses, which are now a conditional use, the township can add such conditions. The subcommittee will come up with some parameters that we would like to see incorporated into an ordinance, and, at E. Potosnak's suggestion, we can turn that information over to the township attorney to fashion it into actual ordinance language.

The annual holiday dinner set up by the Open Space Committee will be Dec. 20.

On the tree replacement ordinance: T. Kenyon will speak to Sara Malone, who will recruit members of the Shade Tree Commission for a joint committee. Probable members are Sara Malone and Steve Gilooly. Mary Lauko, former member of the EC, is the new Shade Tree Commission representative on the Open Space Committee.

Sara Malone used the iTree tool, which uses aerial photos to determine whether canopy exists at 1000 randomly selected points in the township, to determine tree canopy percentage in both 2016 (39.78%) and 2022 (37.7%), a net loss expected from warehouse construction. However, the 2022 survey included shrubs as well as trees, so the percentages are not strictly comparable.

S. Jaracz proposed that developers be required to propose a location for planting trees to make up for trees they remove and do not replace on their site.

Goals for 2023: first, let us review what goals for 2022 were achieved. The EC will plan to adopt new goals at the first or second meeting of 2023, preferably in line with Township Council goals. E. Potosnak will work with the Council to find out what their goals are for 2023, so that the EC can try to support them.

T. Kenyon will prepare a draft of the annual report for 2022. EC members should look at the 2021 report as a guide.

Old business: revisions of the anti-idling ordinance are almost finished. T. Kenyon will finish this in the next couple of days. Local Health Assessment focus groups are almost finished. The steering committee for this program will propose projects for the township.

The meeting was opened to the public. Terry Thorson expressed support for the reports on not mowing lawns in the spring and not raking leaves in the fall. She felt that planting trees with

Shade Tree funds would not be workable. Eleanor Ogin asked about requirements for planting replacement trees. Jan Brandt spoke about tree planting by developers and noise pollution/hours of operation. A. Schmidt replied about county enforcement of the township noise pollution ordinance.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.