

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, March 4, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, EZ Pires, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, and P. Walitsky; T. Kenyon, and Rutgers intern A. Vanderhoof. Absent: J. Johnson (ill), R. Suydam (out of town) and Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: he accompanied S. Jaracz at his presentation on electric vehicles at the township Library. S. Jaracz reported that discussion was wide-ranging and lasted almost an hour.

The minutes of the Feb. 26 meeting were approved without changes.

The meeting was opened to the public. Ellen Vastola expressed concern about electric vehicles spontaneously catching fire. S. Jaracz replied that electric vehicles have caught fire much less often than gasoline or diesel powered vehicles, but the latter are not news. T. Chase noted that recent fires in New York City have been caused by E-bikes with secondary market batteries. Further discussion, including where to find information, ensued.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: none. S. Jaracz reported on correspondence with Heather Fenyk about the Seva group (see below) attempt to register for the stream clean-up as a group (waivers of liability must be submitted individually).

There were no site plans for review.

New business: Annabelle Figuerido had delivered to the 2/26 meeting paperwork for applying for a CDBG grant to re-establish the Pine Grove School community garden (application must be made by the Environmental Commission). They are asking for a total of \$9062.63, including a quote for connecting a waterline to the school. Two more quotes must be secured before a purchase order can be submitted. W, Andrews moved that the EC make this application. This was approved unanimously.

There were no reports from subcommittees. Publicity for the March 11 film showing is up on the township web site and social media, and has been emailed to the EC email list. The Franklin High School Environmental Club will participate in the stream clean-up.

Old business: the annual report is *still* waiting for a report from Adopt-a-Drain. Community Energy Plan: T. Kenyon has set up meetings with township staff to explain what will be expected of them. A. Vanderhoof has completed another initiative for the plan.

We are applying for the PSE&G Energy Efficiency Partnership Program from Sustainable Jersey. This would provide flyers, door hangers, table runners, etc. and a video to publicize energy efficiency, and even paying for postage for a direct mail campaign.

Could we get No Mow till Earth Day lawn signs (to explain to neighbors) with Clean Communities money?

Nothing new on green infrastructure at Naaman Williams Park.

W. Andrews asked about the EC-sponsored farmers' market. We haven't had this for several years, due to low participation by vendors and the public, and heavy competition with other markets on Saturdays. Maybe a one-time market on a holiday?

A. Schmidt asked about the status of the anti-idling ordinance. In response to a suggestion from the township counsel that it be addressed in the Land Use ordinance, we sent a proposal to the manager for council consideration last August. Nothing has been heard about it since. The

Commission asked Tara to request an update from the Township Manager. Similarly, we originally put in on Dec. 9, 2022 a request to amend the Tree Ordinance to take into account, in calculating replacement requirements, the removal of trees down to 2.5" in diameter, rather than 4" as at present, and restoring the 25% limit on donations to the Shade Tree Fund in lieu of planting replacement trees. The Shade Tree Committee *has* sent this to Council, with amendments.

Green infrastructure at Naaman Williams Park: nothing new.

T. Kenyon brought up a suggestion from J. Johnson that we have some meetings virtually. We do not have facilities for a hybrid meeting (which must include provision for public participation). We *could* have virtual meetings when expecting a snowstorm, flooding, etc. if we can put out the necessary notification to the public at least 24 hours in advance. A. Schmidt suggested scheduling one virtual meeting in January or February. Participation by telephone was discussed, but agreed to be inferior to in person presence. We can discuss this subject again when preparing the meeting schedule for 2025 in the fall.

The meeting was again opened to the public. Debbie Stuart asked about the anti-idling ordinance. A. Schmidt explained what we propose. Chitra Kuppuswamy, of the local Seva Foundation public service group, spoke about what this group, mainly high school students with some parents, has done, for instance a clean-up of Inman Park. She wants to know about more opportunities for such public service. They have done other projects such as tree planting. T. Kenyon said that we can use their help when we install green infrastructure at Naaman Williams Park.

Ellen Vastola spoke about the negative reaction of her community board to No Mow until Earth Day. Chitra Kuppuswamy asked whether we have a composting program. We have gotten a couple of composting boxes from Somerset County, but the program is theirs.

It was moved and approved to close the public portion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM.