

## **Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting: June 17, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt R. Suydam, and P. Walitsky; and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: E. Pires, Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: he presented Ellen Vastola as a candidate for the EC, replacing Jessica Johnson, who has resigned. She should be appointed as Alternate #2, moving R. Suydam to full member and M. Santiago to Alternate #1.

He reported that his suggestion to Somerset County of a solar powered pedestrian sign ,warning drivers approaching the intersection of Weston Canal Rd, Weston Rd and the Manville Causeway, has grown into a full redesign of the intersection. There was a major accident there several months ago, in which a pedestrian was badly injured.

The minutes of the May 20 meeting were approved without modification.

The meeting was opened to the public. Eleanor Ogin asked further about the Weston Canal Rd – Manville Causeway intersection, noting that it is subject to flooding in a major storm. The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: none. Who will succeed J. Johnson in charge of the EC email? We have to obtain the password from her or IT. [Subsequently S. Jaracz obtained the password and shared messages received over the past several months with the rest of the EC.]

Site plans: P. Walitsky reported on a resubmitted proposal for a warehouse on Cottontail Lane just up from Weston Canal Rd, supplementing an existing warehouse next door. This version reduces the size from 65,790 sq. ft. to 50,700 sq. ft. Because the original application was not complete at the time of the EC's first review, the proposal would be barred by Council's subsequent ordinance banning warehouses, and will go to the Board of Zoning Adjustment rather than the Planning Board. The application proposes cutting down some 200 trees and replanting 86 (of 183 required), though they are counting Serviceberry as a tree, the EC considers it a shrub.

T. Chase reported on a proposal by R. Gokhale to replace a small house at 18 Acken Lane, Griggstown, with a larger, one-story house. Variances are required for the lot being slightly under-sized (39,663.5 sq. ft where 40,000 are required) and lot coverage (14.6% where 10% is allowed. Six trees are to be removed, 23 to be planted. The trees could be saved if the house were moved back and to the west.

T. Kenyon reported on an application by Chad Rossbach to resubdivide two lots between First and Second Sts so that an additional house could be built facing Second St.

Sustainable Jersey – PSE&G Partners in Energy Efficiency grant: T. Kenyon reported on the outreach plan to be submitted. We have to specify how what percentage of township households we aim to get involved in energy conservation, somewhere between 2.5% of 20,500 households (in 1 to 4 family structures), which would be 503, and 5% (1026). The EC chose to submit a target of 750 (3.66%).

Micromobility plan (bicycling/walking routes between Franklin Blvd and the municipal complex in Middlebush): T. Kenyon, P. Walitsky and Christopher Gonda of Keep Middlesex Moving met with consultants and learned a lot. In particular, North Jersey TPA can loan out equipment, such as bollards, to test out traffic modification strategies.

Should the EC have a table at the Independence Day festivities (July 3)? It did not seem to be convenient for anyone, we will pass on this. Materials for handing out at tables were discussed.

Commission vacancy: the EC recommends Ellen Vastola be appointed (as alternate #2). The recommendation will be submitted to E. Potosnak for proposal to Council.

Film showing: Efforts to rent the film Asbestos City were unsuccessful; we will try to show Common Ground, if possible a shorter version. [We were later informed that a shorter version will not be available until fall.] S. Jaracz will handle publicity [at this point a postponement].

S. Jaracz attended Global Wind Day at Liberty State Park, and networked with many environmental groups, in particular NJ Environmental Lobby, who have material on clean air. He suggested inviting them for a presentation.

S. Jaracz met with Assemblyman Danielsen about vehicle idling, especially the New York City program whereby citizens can report idling vehicles and share in any fines collected.

Hot topics: A. Schmidt reported that the Township Council passed amendments to the Signage Ordinance to require anti-idling signage in specific circumstances. He emailed the Board of Education about idling vehicles, suggesting that they put up anti-idling signs, especially where school buses wait for children.

R. Suydam brought up ANJEC's Stop the Stuff model ordinance, which would ban automatic inclusion of single use eating utensils with take-out orders, while allowing customers to request them if desired. She will send the draft ordinance to EC members. Other towns have passed this. We can suggest that our Council pass this, and that Somerset County enact it, since enforcement would be by the county health department [as is enforcement of the plastic bag ban].

T. Kenyon brought up a bill before the Legislature requiring protection for workers in hot weather.

The Community Energy Plan is complete, just needs a Council resolution adopting it.

Green infrastructure at Naaman Williams Park: T. Kenyon will be meeting with Carl Hauck tomorrow (June 18) regarding the work to be done.

The meeting was opened to the public. Eleanor Ogin commented on the lack of air conditioning in warehouses.

The meeting was closed to the public, and adjourned at 9:05 PM.