

## **Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, August 5, 2024**

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, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, E. Vastola, P. Walitsky, and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. E. Pires arrived at 7:06. Absent: R. Suydam, Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: the Board of Zoning Adjustment held another hearing, on August 1, on the proposal for an apartment building at Rutgers Plaza, mostly on traffic aspects. Council liaison Ed Potosnak submitted a motion to Council to add a youth member to the EC.

The minutes of the meeting of July 15 were approved.

There was no correspondence, either letters or email.

Site plans: T. Chase reported on the Marvel Builders application, to build a two-family house at 5 DeLar Parkway. The site is heavily wooded, but the site plan has nothing about trees to be removed or retained. He will inquire further about requirements for showing tree presence and plans for tree retention. He also reported on the application of Charles DeFilippo to add a two-car garage to his house on Gates Rd, which will require side yard variances, but has no environmental aspects, because the garage would be built on ground presently paved..

T. Kenyon reported on the application of Gregory Booth, to replace the existing garage at 33 Washington Ave. (Griggstown) with a larger garage, but with the same side yard variance (5.7 ft where 25 feet are required).

E. Pires reported on the Odin Dhun proposal to build 14 houses on a 16 acre lot at 295 Cedar Grove Lane, each house on 40,000 sq. ft. (plus a larger lot for a detention basin). The only variance required is for insufficient frontage for the two houses fronting on the cul-de-sac at the inner end of the development. The plan reports that there are 2623 trees on the site, of which 2436 are to be removed; 334 new trees are to be planted, the remaining obligation (1980 trees) will be met by payment to the Shade Tree Fund (\$594,000). The rear of the property is heavily wooded; we recommend that the last two houses not be built, saving a substantial fraction of the tree cover; or at least that the houses be moved eastward (toward Cedar Grove Lane), saving a strip of trees at the rear. More trees should be planted around the detention basin, and the basin itself should be planted with plants appropriate for a rain garden, purifying the water before it drains off.

New Business: S. Jaracz reported on an Electric Vehicle Adoption Leadership certification program. He thinks that Franklin could get this certification for its existing charging stations and electric vehicles, especially if two of the existing stations for township vehicles are made available to township employees to charge while they are at work. He moved that the EC recommend to Council that Franklin apply to this program. The motion was carried unanimously.

Micromobility study: T. Kenyon just (Aug. 2) received the draft report of the micromobility study. She showed a hard copy of the report, and will send to EC members the link to read it on line; she asks for comments by our next meeting, in order to move quickly to final approval and public presentation.

Promotional and educational materials for tabling events: M. Santiago sent a list of recommended items. The township budget, including an increased budget for the EC, has been approved, but the township's printing contract has expired, thus we cannot order printed materials until there is a new contract. E. Vastola suggested getting a QR code linking too the EC web pages. The Trails Committee ordered whistles for use on township trails, and has given all of them away.

Attendance at the ANJEC Congress was discussed. Anyone wishing to attend with the township paying should let Tara know by August 21.

S. Jaracz reported on environmental films for screening. The proposed showing of Common Ground was canceled because only the 1 hour 40 minute version was available, which would not leave time for discussion; a shorter version will be available in the fall. Asbestos City, about Manville and the Johns Manville asbestos plant, was shown at the Princeton Garden Theatre. He is looking into a film on coral. He reported a film recommended by R. Suydam, "Here's the Story: The Green Amendment", which is to be shown at the Monroe Twp. Library on Sept. 13 (Friday) ([https://delawareriverkeeper.org/events/monroe-library-film-screening-and-author-talk/?mc\\_id=13](https://delawareriverkeeper.org/events/monroe-library-film-screening-and-author-talk/?mc_id=13)). T. Kenyon could publicize this to our email network.

M. Santiago reported a link to an e-mobility webinar, and contributed to S. Jaracz's report on films.

A. Schmidt reported on an unapproved tree clearing at 411 Elizabeth Avenue (corner of Pierce St.) The owners claimed that they wished to farm the land, which would exempt them from paying tree removal fees. They planted rye grass on the cleared land, but did not harvest it, simply plowing it under with a brush hog. The property is now for sale, presumably as a site for a warehouse. If they don't sell any crop, did they really farm? What did they agree to in return for not having to pay for removing the trees? The same procedure was used, by the same owner, at 31 Schoolhouse Lane. This matter may have been reported to the township attorney. A. Schmidt read an email he has sent about this matter.

Old business: T. Kenyon showed postcards which the Energy Efficiency grant has supplied. Naaman Williams Park green infrastructure: township Public Works is doing an elevation study for draining runoff from the Matilda Ave. end of the park to the brook which runs through the wooded part of the park.

W. Andrews asked whether the township has ever gotten a gubernatorial Environmental Excellence award. S. Jaracz replied that he had gotten an award for environmental stewardship in 2022; T. Chase thought we had gotten one some 20 years ago, when John Loos was the open space consultant. T. Kenyon will look into our applying.

The meeting was opened to the public. No one spoke. The meeting was closed to the public, and adjourned at 9:02 PM.