

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, September 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, E. Pires, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, E. Vastola. and P. Walitsky; and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: the Board of Zoning Adjustment approved a variance (from the ordinance banning further construction of warehouses) to allow construction of a 50,000 sq. ft warehouse on Cottontail Lane. (The site is heavily wooded, and construction will require removal of almost all trees.) He (P. Walitsky) will attend the ANJEC conference on Sept. 27.

The minutes of the meeting of August 19 were approved, with correction of the spelling of E. Vastola's name.

The meeting was opened to the public. There were no comments. The meeting was closed to the public.

Correspondence: a letter (copy of letter to DEP) was received from Eastern Environmental Associates Inc., on behalf of Montauk Transit, asking for approval of freshwater wetlands boundaries on the Riddering/Kerani tract on Rte. 27 south of Rte. 518. NJ DEP holds a conservation easement on buffer areas around the wetlands. [A sign on the property says Under Contract.]

There was no other correspondence (no email).

New business: the 'Skip the Stuff' proposed ordinance. The draft ordinance based on ANJEC's model ordinance but with editing by S. Jaracz and T. Chase, was discussed, resulting in further editing, notably removal of the distinction between plastic and non-plastic items. The edited draft was approved for transmittal to the manager and Council.

Composting: Torus, a nonprofit composting business based in West Windsor, is expanding its service area in central Jersey. They offer an application to join (five customers within a two mile radius are needed to support pick-up service) and a description of what can be composted. The EC can 1) post a description of their services on our Facebook page, 2) invite them to present to us, 3) have them make a presentation to the public.

S. Jaracz reported that the Education Committee has been discussing holding a composting events, led by our new Commissioner, Ellen Vastola. If we end up working with Torus, Ellen can work with this organization to educate the public.

S. Jaracz announced that the township has (as a result of application to Electric Vehicle Adoption Leadership prepared by him and T. Kenyon; see 8/19 minutes) been awarded gold-level certification for the municipal building and Youth Center, and silver-level certification for the Dept. of Public Works facility.

The Education Committee will be setting up a showing of the film Common Ground, but the 40-minute version we prefer (to allow time for discussion) is not yet ready for presentation, so we cannot yet set a date for showing.

S. Jaracz attended a film on the proposed Green Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, with Maya van Rossum, Delaware Riverkeeper, as speaker. He moved to invite Ms. van Rossum and the film for a public presentation on a Monday not scheduled for an EC meeting, suggesting Oct. 14. This was approved.

M. Santiago would like to set up a program on food waste – but this would go with a presentation from Torus.

The Energy Committee has not met. A meeting needs to be set up to discuss publicizing the PSE&G/Sustainable Jersey energy efficiency campaign on our website.

Franklin Day: T. Kenyon got cards for the PSE&G/Sustainable Jersey energy efficiency campaign, for distribution at our table on Franklin Day. There is also a table game from ANJEC, which P. Walitsky will pick up from ANJEC at the Congress.

S. Jaracz moved approval of sending his article on Save the Mow until Earth Day to Franklin Reporter and (if the timing is right) to the Franklin Times (township newsletter). Approved.

The Micromobility study is complete. R. Suydam reported seeing youth on scooters and a man on a golf cart on Rute 27.

Green infrastructure: the Boy Scout proposing an Eagle Scout project for Naaman Williams Park will present his plans at the Open Space Committee meeting Sept. 17.

T. Kenyon reported that there will be a meeting of the Lower Millstone Working Group (concerned with flooding) on Oct. 16, 4:30 to 6 at the Montgomery municipal building. She will forward the notice to all.

R. Suydam asked where we are on changes to then tree ordinance. T. Kenyon replied that Bob Vornlocker has other changes to be combined with our suggestions.

M. Santiago knows someone who is involved with a Coalition of Green Businesses in Jersey City. Can we find out about this for Franklin?

The meeting was opened to the public. Barbara Martalis commended the Commission for its many actions. She is willing to join a subcommittee on publicizing the PSE&G/Sustainable Jersey energy efficiency campaign.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.