

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, September 30, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: T. Chase, S. Jaracz, A. Schmidt, E. Vastola, P. Walitsky and T. Kenyon. E. Pires arrived at 7:04 PM. Absent: W. Andrews, M. Santiago, R. Suydam., Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: he, T. Chase and E. Vastola attended the ANJEC Congress at Rowan University Burlington campus. One interesting topic was DEP's inland stormwater regulations, promulgated last year (the REAL regulations, aimed primarily at shore communities, are still subject to public comment). Taking into account expected results of global warming, they are requiring that new construction be located at least 3 feet above current FEMA flood hazard maps or 2 ft above the DEP's slightly more conservative maps. Another interesting session was on remediation of underground contamination, with some new innovations concerning perfluorinated acids (PFAs). There was interest in our Adopt-a-Drain program.

Franklin Day, while rainy, still brought out over 1000 attendees. Due to limited space, he could not display all of the materials we had planned to offer. Nevertheless, some interested visitors stopped by.

Stan's article on No Mow Till Earth Day was published in the Franklin Reporter.

Minutes of the Sept. 16 meeting: S. Jaracz had mentioned that the Education Committee was planning a meeting on composting food waste, with E. Vastola presenting results of her research. This could be combined with an appearance from Torus, the West Windsor-based nonprofit business collecting food waste for composting. [The 9/16 minutes have now been supplemented with this mention.] With this addition, the minutes were approved.

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

There were no site plans for consideration.

New business: T. Kenyon reported on her outreach to Torus for more information. They would like eventually to have a township-wide contract, are willing to start with at least five households within a two mile radius. The service would initially be free, for an undetermined period, while they establish what their costs are. They are not able to come to us for a presentation (too few staff). They deliver food waste to Trenton Renewables, a business which carries out the industrial composting (apparently anaerobic, it is stated that they produce biogas [= methane, with an equal quantity of CO₂]). The EC could promote this business on our Facebook page, etc. (if the township permits us to publicize a nonprofit business). S. Jaracz moved that we do this. E. Pires pointed out that the township would at minimum want to vet their program. T. Chase suggested language "that we investigate promoting the program". They could present their program to homeowners' associations. For the township it could be a pilot program. In general, more investigation is needed. Canal Walk has an environmental committee, which might undertake a pilot program there.

The state mandates that when municipalities update their Master Plans, they include a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability assessment. Sustainable Jersey offers free technical assistance for this assessment (applications due Dec. 20th). It might be better for the Planning Board, which is responsible for the Master Plan revision, to apply for this. T. Kenyon has registered for a Dec. 3 webinar on this program, and will consult with Mark Healey concerning applying for this grant.

Promotional and educational events for tabling events: since we had to share limited space under the township tent, only some of the material provided by ANJEC could be displayed.

Jenny Kafas sent draft designs for a banner for EC events, with bullets about EC activities. Some editing is needed (consistent capitalization). The design for an EC business card was also shown. P. Walitsky moved that we have the banner and business cards printed. A. Schmidt commented that we should learn the exact price before committing. Formally, we would get a quote and then approve having them printed.

Committee reports: S. Jaracz reported on dates for showing the film on the Green Amendment. Nov. 14 is a date acceptable for the venue (Board of Education space at the former Conso-lata Fathers building) and Maya van Rossum. We will try to get Sen. Bob Smith to join the panel of discussants, and perhaps someone from ANJEC. S. Jaracz has received the link for the shorter version of Common Ground; but Oct. 14 is now too close for adequate publicity for a showing then.

S. Jaracz was contacted by Kathy Lynch of the Montgomery EC: they are showing a film on plastic waste, especially microplastics, on Wed. Dec. 4, 6:30-7:30 PM at the new Montgomery municipal building. They welcome attendees from Franklin Township.

Our draft of a "Skip the Stuff" ordinance has been transmitted to the manager and Council.

T. Kenyon and S. Jaracz went to the ceremony awarding the Electric Vehicle Adoption Leadership awards. We (Franklin Township) were one of eight awardees.

The Sustainable Jersey/PSE&G Partners in Energy Efficiency grant activities are moving along.

The Boy Scout green infrastructure project (presented at the Open Space Committee meeting) will proceed Oct. 19-20 if all necessary approvals are received by then.

The meeting was opened to the public. There were no comments. The meeting was then closed to the public, and adjourned at 8:35 PM.