

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - January 12, 2022

1. Call to Order

Notice having been filed with the Courier News and S.P. Observer, Chairwoman Dorothy Miele called the Environmental Commission meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act at 7:40 pm.

Present: Dorothy Miele (chairwoman) Tom Walsh, John Ferguson, Debra Leporino, Adam Butrico, Jonathan Walezak, Pete Smith (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison).

Alternate members present:

Associate members present: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent:

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the December 8, 2021 meeting were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

3. Invitation for Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

4. Budget - Dr. A. Tempel

- O&E (FY2021 = \$2,225) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$947.86. Balance = \$1,277.14 Dr. Tempel said we should be asked for our 2022 budget proposal soon. Members should consider any possible projects.
- Clean Communities - 2020 grant of \$45,370 was expended in 12/21. We received the 2021 grant = (\$48,287.91, plus \$3,221 unexplained = \$51,509.) We haven't received the 2022 grant yet. Spent since December 8 = \$8,394 on: \$475 on litter can maintenance; \$1,749 on litter removal/sign enforcement salary & wages; \$885 on replacement parts for litter cans; \$4,844 for shopping totes which is reimbursable by a grant from the County which Dr. Tempel applied for; \$175 on plastic bag ban flyers and \$50 postage meter reimbursement. Total spent = \$28,663 from the 2021 grant. Balance = \$22,876.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. The balance = \$595.12.
- Harris Steel Trust Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$35,981.00.

5. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- Pete mentioned that Jonathan Walezak has been appointed a full member of SPEC.
- The Mayor & Council decided against hanging banners with information on the upcoming 'Plastic Bag Ban'. It was suggested to use lawn signs on town property and resident who are willing to place on their property. They approved having the High School Environmental students do a public presentation at a Council meeting. They need a proposal in writing to put on the docket. Currently there are limitations to the number of people who can be present. Dr. Tempel will supply names of students and others who will accompany Kathleen Benton to the meeting.
- Pete will be meeting soon with Ben Ghiano, Congressman Pallone's Deputy Chief, to talk about solar. Pete will then invite him to a SPEC meeting and talk about options/grants etc. If accomplished, it will

count towards Sustainable NJ action points. Pete is working to establish a Boro mandate for a certain percentage of hybrid vehicles in the Boro's fleet.

- Pete said there was a lot of backlash from residents who saw the future warehouse site on New Market Avenue after the trees were clear cut. The developer's approved plan is supposed to improve water retention on site despite it being in a flood zone. There will be a left-hand turn lane installed. They are spending approximately \$700,000 to widen the road and move telephone poles. Pete credited Mayor Anesh and the Planning Board for asking for those improvements.
- Pete reported that Harris Steel has sold their 88-acre property. Councilman White has met with the new property owner. Their plan is to construct new warehouses. They will be making road improvements on Market Ave. & New Brunswick Avenue. We will ask for road widening at that corner.
- Pete intends to meet with Dr. Tempel and the appropriate Boro officials to discuss implementing a 'Community Forestry Plan'. Come Spring, Pete would also like to use some tree fund money to replace some of the larger trees that are hazards. We could inventory street trees in segments.

B. Planning Board Liaison - Mr. R. Houghton / Mr. B. Bythell

- Rich said the Planning Board hasn't met yet this year. The reorganization meeting is scheduled for 1/25.

C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Mandel

- JMSM (4001-4008 Hadley Rd.) - Adam reported the applicant plans to demolish the three existing office buildings and construct a 120,000 sq. ft. warehouse with 29 loading docks. Adam read their landscaping plan species list. SPEC was pleased with the diverse and ambitious plan. We will ask for a formal tree removal & replacement plan to ensure correct calculations. Tom asked if these mega warehouse sites are required to install stormwater retention systems. The plan indicates three separate above-ground retention basins with sand beds; one currently exists. The plan states 'runoff will be naturally treated to prevent pollutants.' The impervious surface will increase from 70.3% to 82.4%. The applicant waived a recycling plan; we will ask for justification. They did not provide an EIS. Dr. Tempel said if they don't provide an EIS, there is no place for them to address air quality. We can ask they specifically address that issue. It appears they will be filling in a small wetland area in the NW part of the site as the trash enclosure is shown there.
- Durham Plaza (110-136 Durham Ave.) – Currently retail stores. The applicant proposes to install an Event/Assembly Hall. This is a non-permitted use in an OBC-1 zone. The applicant has appealed. Pete mentioned the owner came before the 'Economic Development Committee' to ask the committee's thoughts. The Boro will not rezone the property. They are now proposing to construct apartments; supposed to submit plans.
- Adam asked, similar to limiting the number of billboards, can the Boro put a limit on square footage for warehouses, limit the number within proximity and/or the number of truck bays? This is in an effort to mitigate traffic and environmental concerns. Pete said we would need to review our zoning ordinances which would probably be challenged by developers. Dr. Tempel suggested the zoning ordinances could be changed to limit the amount of impervious surface that would be allowed on a property, thereby limiting the size of the building. Pete said we can run it by Stan Slachetka, Planning Board Planner-T&M Associates. Pete likes the idea. Dr. Tempel also spoke about variances granted in residential zones e.g- a gazebo that exceeds coverage limits. Maybe the Planning Board can make a condition requiring residents to mitigate by planting trees on their property. She mentioned there is woman who resides in a town with flooding problems. She went through records of all residents who received variances and

made calculations by adding all the square footage of decks, gazebos etc. She researched how many inches of rain had fallen during the past year and calculated how many extra gallons of water had run off the properties. It turned out to be a huge volume of water cumulatively. Boards typically do not think along those lines. Both Pete and Rich said that everything is viewed on an individual basis following guidelines provided. Very rarely is the public on hand to comment or complain about the end result. Guidelines need to be revised. Adam offered to look into what guidelines other towns might be using.

D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra said she spoke with John Abbruzzese about a data base program to replace the Boro's paper tax maps. He referred her and Dr. Tempel to Rich Wolff. Rich has been looking at software programs. A program would provide for a host of information to be attached to every block & lot and accessible by all departments. We would be able to update our ERI. Pete said he will reach out to Councilman White on the subject.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel attended a Clean Communities webinar. It was helpful in updating what the latest grant guidelines are. They are allowing grant money to be used for other projects.
- Dr. Tempel said Debra is getting ready to do a CBA membership mailing to approximately 130 members. As previously discussed, Debra has changed the name from 'Clean Business Association' to 'Clean Communities Association'.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra is preparing to send 7 first quarter renewals to expiring agreements. Dorothy asked if the Boy Scouts have presented their 'Certificate of Insurance' to adopt HAW. We have not received it.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel reported that JSM (Edgewood Properties) wants to clear a lot on West End Avenue that is adjacent to their big commercial/industrial development on Hamilton Blvd. They are demolishing a house and want to remove the 14 existing trees and grade the lot to prepare it as a buildable lot, although there are no current plans. There may be wetlands there. Dr. Tempel asked them to check that before proceeding with the tree permit application. Dr. Tempel is questioning why the need to remove all the trees now if there are no immediate plans to build. Since it is commercial vacant, she explained that in order to grant the tree removal permit, they have to show there will not be negative impact to the property from erosion and no interference with the remaining growth of trees. However, there will be no remaining trees. They will conform with Freehold Soil Conservation rules for stabilizing the soil. Because of that, Dr. Tempel doesn't believe we'll be able to deny the permit to remove the 14 trees and there will be no replacement requirement because of the way our ordinance is written. Pete said he is willing to submit any changes/improvements to an ordinance to Paul Rizzo, our Boro Attorney.

G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Schmidt

- There was nothing new to report.

H. Highland Avenue Woods / Public Education - Mrs. D. Miele

- There was nothing new to report.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- There was nothing new to report.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom said members are reviewing Sustainable NJ the action points they want to pursue. We are planning to submit for certification again in November. Tom said Kathleen Benton is getting involved. Dr. Tempel explained Kathleen offered to have students, High School Green Team, put together a presentation on a project to improve relations with animals, focusing on Spring Lake Park. That would be worth action points, for both Green Teams, toward the 'Companion Animal Management Plan'.

L. Public Information & Technology - Dr. A. Tempel / Mr. C. Cioffi

- Dr. Tempel reported in December, SPEC's Facebook page carried 5 posts: reached 1,660 people, 111 engagements, 3 shares and 2 comments. The GT Facebook page had 0 posts.

M. Stormwater Advisory Committee - Mr. J. Ferguson / Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom reported the High School greenhouse might incorporate rain barrels in their outside irrigation plan. Dr. Tempel said that would count toward Stormwater Management education. She said Bob Longo can run a rain barrel workshop. We'll talk about plans involving High School students in March (early Spring).
- John reported the CRS/MS4 meeting has been postponed.
- There will be a virtual meeting on 1/20 for the 'Resilient NJ' project that Middlesex County is working on with the seven communities along the Raritan River & Bay communities – 'How to Reduce Flood Risk'. John will forward the web address to share with SPEC members.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

O. Chairwoman's Report - Mrs. D. Miele

- There was nothing to report.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- A list of correspondence was provided.
- We received notice for the 2022 ANJEC dues. It remains \$375 for full commission members and \$25 per person for associate members. Dr. Tempel went through the list. Pete Smith and Lisa Roseo will receive as associate members. We will expend \$425. Adam made a motion, seconded by Jonathan and all were favor.

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2022 @ 7:30 p.m. in the Borough Hall Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Roseo
Environmental Commission Secretary

Acronyms

ANJEC	-Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
BOA	-Board of Adjustment
CBA	-Clean Business Association
CCAB	-Clean Communities Advisory Board
DOT	-Department of Transportation
DPW	-Department of Public Works
EIS	-Environmental Impact Study
EPA	-Environmental Protection Agency
EWA	-Edison Wetlands Association
FEMA	-Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOW	-Friends of the Woods
GBFCP	-Green Brook Flood Control Project
HAW	-Highland Avenue Woods
KCS	-Known Contaminated Sites
LEEDS	-Lead in Energy and Environmental Design
LOI	-Letter of Interpretation
MCDSWM	-Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management
MCOEM	-Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management
MCUFAC	-Middlesex County Urban Forestry Advisory Committee
NJCF	-New Jersey Conservation Foundation
NJDEP	-New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NOV	-Notice of Violation
OTOSP	-Oak Tree Open Space Parcel
PRP'S	-Potentially Responsible Parties
ROSI	-Recreation and Open Space Inventory
ROW	-Right of Way
SPBA	-South Plainfield Business Association
SPEC	-South Plainfield Environmental Commission
USACE	-United States Army Corp of Engineers