

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes

Reorganization Meeting - January 13, 2021

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 7:30 pm.

Present: Dorothy Miele, Danielle Hurst, John Ferguson, Adam Butrico (via phone), Pete Smith (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison)

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Jonathan Walezak and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others:

Absent: Tom Walsh (e), Debra Leporino, Dr. Alice Tempel (environmental specialist)

2. ADOPT BY-LAWS

There were no changes / additions proposed to the by-laws. John Ferguson made a motion to adopt, seconded by Jordan Mandel, and all were in favor of approval.

3. ELECT VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Jordan Mandel nominated John Ferguson, Jonathan Walezak seconded and all were in favor of approval.

4. APPOINT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Chairpeople to remain as is.

The Mayor & Council appointed Pete Smith as Council Liaison. Rich Houghton and Brian Bythell will remain as dual Planning Board liaisons.

5. SET SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The meetings will remain the second Wednesday of each month.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The reorganization meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm.

South Plainfield Environmental Commission
Official Minutes
Regular Meeting - January 13, 2021

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 7:37 pm.

Present: Dorothy Miele, Debra Leporino, Danielle Hurst, John Ferguson, Adam Butrico (via phone), Pete Smith (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison)

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Jonathan Walezak and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. Tempel (environmental specialist) via phone

Absent: Tom Walsh (e)

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The regular minutes for the December 9, 2020 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. Tempel

- O&E (FY2020) (\$2,225) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$577.45. The balance = \$1,647.55. That is the end of FY2020.
- The FY2021 temporary budget = \$1000. Spent \$475 on ANJEC dues of which \$100 paid for the alternates and associates.
- Clean Communities - 2019 grant (\$50,329.53) Since the last meeting we spent:\$2,653.50 on: \$2,178.50 for sign/litter enforcement salary & wages including \$280 on Wednesday parks litter patrol and \$475 on January litter can maintenance. YTD spent = \$44,465. Balance = \$5,864.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. Deposits \$0. The balance = \$595.12.
- Harris Steel Tree Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$33,134.

5. COMMITTEE and LIAISON REPORTS

A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- Pete reported that while working on drafting a ‘running bamboo‘ ordinance, SPEC can compare Mahwah Township’s existing ordinance that John provided with our original draft in order to come up with a final draft proposal. Pete suggested SPEC come up with an ordinance that would be feasible and fair to residents who have existing bamboo and for people who do not want bamboo encroaching onto their property. Dorothy introduced Jonathan Walezak, Architectural Landscape Designer, to Councilman Pete Smith. Jonathan suggested we can strengthen our proposed draft by gleaning from other town’s existing ordinances. Jonathan said he is involved in projects with many municipalities and offered to dig up some existing ordinances to compare. Dr. Tempel mentioned Brick Township. Pete said he will email our current draft to Jonathan.
- Pete said he will be attending a Zoom meeting on Friday to discuss the Woodbrook Road cleanup site.

Mayor Anesh, Dr. Tempel, Paul Rizzo, Glenn Cullen and TRC personnel will also take part in the meeting. Dr. Tempel gave background information on the site. She explained that a more complete cleanup plan was chosen by the EPA. TRC (consultant for Texas Eastern) objected to the more complete plan because they were planning on purchasing the parcel from Texas Eastern and did not need it cleaned up to that level with a more expensive price tag. Our Boro supported that position as we own a small piece of the land, which means the Boro is also responsible for funding part of the cleanup. Dr. Tempel explained that under our outgoing President, the EPA went through radical changes designed to speed up processes and get properties redeveloped. The EPA's current Deputy Administrator is ordering the Region to revisit the decision to order a more complete cleanup based on the fact that the land will never be used recreationally; EPA Region 2 is being ordered to revise the 'Record of Decision' on the Superfund Site. So TRC wants to meet with the Boro to get our support. Dr. Tempel feels that from an environmental perspective, it may be better to leave the site intact since the dumps were closed long ago and the swamp has grown up through it.

- Pete reported that 'Community Solar' has contacted the Boro. Discussed a current program which is expiring on 2/5, to fund solar installations as covered parking. Although there won't be enough time to take advantage of that program, Pete wants to work with the Green Team to find suitable land for future programs. We'll need to look at tax maps to locate properties/parking areas. Pete had suggested the back parking lot behind Boro Hall, as well as behind the Senior Center near Veteran's Park. He said he would like to see the energy derived from solar be distributed to charging stations within the Boro. He would like to see the Boro have a goal of purchasing hybrid or all electric (EV) vehicles the next time they purchase. Pete wants to meet with Community Solar to obtain more information and include the Green Team. He said Community Solar proposed constructing a 'Smart Home' (off the grid) in the Boro. It would be open to residents and designed to display how solar energy and smart technology would save residents money. Pete said he will be looking at whether the Boro has a parcel that is undevelopable.
- Stormwater Management - Dorothy asked Pete exactly what is expected from our commission in terms of an amended ordinance. SPEC does not have the engineering expertise to strengthen our ordinance. Dr. Tempel said the Boro engineer should be the person to amend our existing ordinance to comply with the new State mandated regulations. She stated that the model ordinance that is being provided by the Watershed Institute is essentially the stormwater management ordinance, but with stronger provisions. Dr. Tempel outlined some the provisions and added that ANJEC and The Watershed Institute strongly recommend those stricter guidelines. The guidelines include new builds and redevelopments. Dr. Tempel suggested SPEC go through the model ordinance and decide which provisions are most beneficial for South Plainfield. She asked Pete what the status is on the amended ordinance. DEP is requiring towns to adopt amendments by March 1. Pete replied that he is not aware if this is in the works. Dr. Tempel mentioned that Bob Bucco, via email, offered to write up the amendment; who is to direct him? Pete will speak to Glenn Cullen and Len Miller for direction. Dr. Tempel will review the model to see what might be useful and forward to SPEC members for input/approval.

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

- Rich said the Planning Board met last night. They preliminary approved the Hawkeye Development plan. The developer will be consulting with Dr. Tempel on their tree replacement and stormwater plans. Otherwise, they have agreed to everything that was presented to them. e.g.- installing drywells, replacing trees. Rich mentioned they are looking for some relief in the amount of required replacement trees. The stormwater overflow will be directed to the drainage sewers via ground pitch.

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

- Jordan and Adam will review two site plans that came in recently and discuss at the next meeting.

D. ERI -

- Debra and Dr. Tempel will continue updating the open space index. Need to get the most recent tax list from our assessor to locate vacant land.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel said we need to plan the Spring Volunteer Litter Cleanup. Set a CCAB meeting for 1/20 @ 7:00 pm.
- Dr. Tempel sent a letter to JoAnn Gemenden, new Executive Director of the NJCCC (New Jersey Clean Communities Council) concerning the 2019 grant extension for \$5,514. Dr. Tempel will need to file the 2020 Statistical Report first.
- Adopt-a-Spot - Debra said the letters for the 4th quarter renewal were mailed out. They were sent to the adopters who did not renew in 2020. No 3rd quarter renewal agreements were returned. Debra is making follow-up phone calls. Jonathan asked for a list of available Adopt-a-Spots sites. Dr. Tempel will email the list to Jonathan.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing new to report.

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

- There was nothing new to report.

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

- Dorothy reported that she, Dr. Tempel, Dr. DeVito and folks from the Sourland Mountains Conservancy & Mercer County Parks met to show them the deer enclosure that was erected five years ago as a demonstration project. FOW obtained an ANJEC grant to construct the fence around an acre of property to renew undergrowth that had been devastated by the deer. Dr. DeVito has been patrolling and maintaining the fence. Dorothy said wildflowers have re-established.
- Dorothy said Bob Spiegel, EWA, contacted Dr. Tempel to follow-up on some of the grant money that his group funneled to FOW via a federal grant; asking how the money was spent. We received \$5,000 in 2008/09 and \$10,000 in 20210. Some of the \$5k was used on the Walnut Street Park Restoration Project. \$10k went to install the surveillance system, computers and education materials for the Nature Center. Dorothy will provide Bob with a written report after he files an OPRA request.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing new to report.

J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico / Ms. D. Hurst

- Adam mentioned that in 2018 the Oyster Creek Nuclear plant was shut down in New Jersey. The company that decommissioned the site has made a deal with the Department of Energy to build a small modular reactor on that site. If approved, the reactor will be about a ¼ of the original size. In addition, there won't be any CO2 or N2O emissions. There will be cost savings by using one of the two existing cooling towers and other approved standing structures.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel said there was no meeting last month. Hopefully, at the next meeting the team will make progress towards documenting our actions for Sustainable NJ.

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

- Dr. Tempel said Facebook's report showed we reached 2,784 people with 198 engagements.

M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel mentioned that at the last Middlesex County Water Resources Authority meeting, they voted on three plan amendments to include additional areas for sewer service: warehouse in Franklin Twp., residential subdivision in Old Bridge and a brownfield development in Carteret.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

- Dorothy had nothing to report.

6. INCOMING / OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

- A list of correspondences is attached.

7. OLD BUSINESS

- John reported on the 'Hazard Mitigation Project'. Rutgers has completed all the hazard assessments on 25 municipalities. Plan on submitting the updated assessment to the State/FEMA by the end of February.
- John also said Covid19 testing continues. The county is currently working on vaccinating First Responders. The public can pre-register for the vaccination on the county website to be notified when eligible. There is a huge waiting list.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- Human Relations Committee - Debra said SPEC has to formally appoint a member to the committee each year. Danielle made a motion, seconded by John, and all were in favor of reappointing Debra. Dorothy will email Councilwoman Faustini.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2021 at 7:30 pm at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center - 115 Sylvania Place.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Roseo
Environmental Commission Secretary

ACRONYMS

- ANJEC - Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
BOA - Board of Adjustment
CAG - Community Advisory Group
CBA - Clean Business Association

CCAB - Clean Communities Advisory Board
CFMP - Community Forestry Management Plan
DOT - Department of Transportation
DPW - Department of Public Works
EIS - Environmental Impact Study
EPA - Environmental Protection Agency
ERI - Environmental Resources Inventory
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 - The Lead in Energy and Environmental Design
MCDSWM - Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management
MCUFAC - Middlesex County Urban Forestry Advisory Committee
NJCF - New Jersey Conservation Foundation
NJDEP - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NOV - Notice of Violation
OEM - Office of Emergency Management
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