

# +South Plainfield Environmental Commission

## Official Minutes - July 12, 2023

### 1. Call to Order

Notice having been filed with the S.P. Observer and TapInto SP, 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 (chairwoman) Debra Leporino, John Ferguson, Adam Butrico, Genevieve Helbo, Melanie Mott (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison).

**Alternate members present:**

**Others:** Dr. Alice Tempel (Environmental Specialist) and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

**Absent:** Tom Walsh (e)

### 2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the June 14, 2023 regular 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 (FY2023 budget = \$2,625) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$662.71. Balance = \$1,962.29.
- Clean Communities – 2023 grant (\$55,655.96) – Dr. Tempel noted that the Boro has received the 2023 check and it should be in our budget soon. Meanwhile the budget went below \$0. She believes ‘salaries’ were paid from another Boro account. Subsequently, on 6/30 we received and appropriated \$4,883 from a MCDSWM recycling enhancement grant. That amount was used last year to buy BagUpNJ bags out of the 2022 grant. Now it is back in the balance. Spent since the 6/14 meeting = \$2,496 on: \$1,636 on salaries for litter removal/enforcement; \$570 on litter can maintenance and \$291 for disposal of spring cleanup trash. Total spent = \$5,279 from the 2023 grant. Balance = \$2,415.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. Deposited \$500. The balance = \$1,140.12.
- Harris Steel Trust Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$35,283.

### 5. Committee and Liaison Reports

#### A. Council Liaison - Ms. M. Mott

- Melanie said at the last Mayor & Council meeting, they passed the resolutions to insert the Clean Communities grant and tonnage grant (\$86,108.43) into the budget.
- Melanie reported there were activists from around the area at a Mayor & Council meeting protesting the proposed energy plant in Keasbey, NJ. Melanie had forwarded the info they left to Dr. Tempel. What they want is for local municipalities to adopt a resolution of support to oppose the powerplant. Melanie had read that Governor Murphy suggested that anybody opposed should go directly to the NJDEP. Does SPEC want to write a letter of opposition? The proposal is to build another plant next to an existing one and sell the energy to out-of-state customers. Meanwhile, New Jersey will be left to deal with the emissions. Dr. Tempel said the activist group did a lot of research. Their information is heavily footnoted with references on what pollutants will be released. Dot mentioned that in May, Dr. Tempel spoke with an activist that came to the Boro to address our cancelled May meeting. He left information which Dr. Tempel forwarded to Dorothy. Dorothy said the group the gentleman is

associated with is seeking approval from SPEC in order for us to write a letter to our Mayor & Council stating we support the group's resolution. The project only needs two more approvals from the NJDEP and Woodbridge Twp. has already approved the project. Dorothy feels we should not take a stand if our Mayor & Council does not. Members agreed. Dr. Tempel added the NJDEP is very focused these days on 'environmental justice'. One of the arguments in the resolution is that the energy plant is being sited in an overburdened community/area. Dr. Tempel explained we don't need to focus heavily on confirming the data provided. We can go to the NJDEP website and look at their permit application; do the projected levels of emissions fall within the DEP's permitted levels? We do know that at a minimum, the plant is going to emit carbon dioxide and probably methane. We are already experiencing record temperatures. We can question why we should host the power plant if we don't derive any benefit. Melanie said she is pretty certain the Mayor & Council are not interested in passing a resolution. But that should not stop SPEC from responding. SPEC discussed further, took a vote and decided to refrain from writing a letter of opposition to the NJDEP.

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

- Rich said the Planning Board has not met in about two months or so. The board will be discussing the warehouse at Montrose Ave./So. Clinton Ave. at the 7/25 meeting.

#### **C. Site Plan Review / Land Use- Mr. A. Butrico / Dr. A. Tempel**

- TransAmerica Trucking (115 Skyline Dr.) – Adam reported there is an illegal structure on site; seeking approval to legalize four shipping containers on asphalt. There is no purpose stated for the containers. SPEC will inquire.
- JSM (3301 So. Clinton Ave.) – Existing warehouse. Proposing to add additional sidewalk and parking changes. Adam suggested we ask for a re-worked landscaping plan to exclude American Ash and replace with trees that have proper dimensions and planting space. We will question their recycling plan.
- Vincent Chin, LLC (304 Pulaski St.) – Applicant needs approval to repave the site to use for equipment rental. Adam said there is known contamination on site from a leaking underground 12,000-gallon oil tank. The Cornell-Dubilier plume goes underneath as well. Adam believes testing is done twice a year to ensure the plume stays on site. They did not include a landscaping plan. SPEC will question.

#### **D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino**

- Debra said there was nothing new to report.

#### **E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel / Ms. D. Leporino**

- CCAB – Discussed and scheduled a meeting for 7/26 @7:00 pm at Dot's Art Studio. Need to make plans for Christmas in July, the SPCCA rollout and Fall Litter Cleanup.
- Bag Up NJ - Dr. Tempel said the Community Food Bank of NJ's website includes an interactive map of food bank locations that need reusable bags. SPEC posted the map once before on our Facebook page. Their website has other information/statistics, e.g. - 650,000 NJ residents are food insecure. Dr. Tempel asked members if we should post the information again. Members said yes.
- Dr. Tempel learned the State has purchased the Clean Communities version of 'Recycle Coach'. We will have the opportunity to use it. One of its functions will be the ability to post our cleanup events and have volunteers register through the App. It should be available by September.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra reported that Melanie spoke to Maryann Williams at Keystone. Melanie said Maryann did sign the 'Hold Harmless' agreement and stated she would email it that day; it has not been

received yet. They each missed recontacting one another. Melanie said she will continue to reach out. Cedarcroft Bible Chapel is not renewing their shared adopt-a-spot on Cedarbrook Avenue.

#### F. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico

- Champion Tree – Adam suggested, at this time of year, our first experimental post should be how to identify a Black Cherry tree. He will include instructions on how to identify the tree by looking at the bark, fruit, leaves etc. and how to take measurements. Adam will re-measure the top three submissions. The NJ Forest Service will confirm. Adam has set up an email address for submissions. SPEC will post on our Facebook page, The Observer and TapInto.
- Dr. Tempel said she has received phone calls from upset residents about the trees coming down on Norwood Avenue and side streets. The larger Oak trees are heaving the sidewalks. Melanie explained the ‘community block grant’ has ADA specifications to comply with for the sidewalks. The Boro is supposed to replace the trees. Len Miller had asked SPEC for planting recommendations; we have not heard back from Len. There is plenty of money in the Tree Fund. SPEC isn’t sure we made a formal recommendation for an appropriate species to replant. Dr. Tempel will contact Len Miller on the status.

#### G. Highland Avenue Woods / Public Education - Mrs. D. Miele

- Dorothy reported the deer fencing project came off on 6/11 and 6/17. There was good volunteer turnout.

#### H. Historical Sites Preservation - Mrs. D. Miele / Mr. L. Randolph

- Dorothy said there is nothing new to report.

#### I. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- There was nothing new to report.

#### J. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel said the GT met in June. There is progress being made on uploading documentation to Sustainable NJ. The Boro is buying two hybrid vehicles for the Police Dept. , which we can claim was a result of the Fleet inventory Tom completed. The Boro is receiving a large grant towards installing a new Boro fueling station that will have EV charging stations.
- Dr. Tempel expounded on the ‘Community Solar Program’ we have discussed at prior meetings.
- We will be holding a rain barrel workshop/installation at the Senior Center; date to be determined. Kathleen Benton’s high school students will be helping Bob Longo. The students will get together on 7/17 to paint the barrel for decorative purposes.

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

- Dr. Tempel’s report: in June, SPEC’s Facebook page carried 8 posts – reached 1,694 people, 247 engagements, 34 reactions, 3 shares and 2 comments.

#### L. Stormwater Advisory Committee - Mr. J. Ferguson

- John said EOM was notified today that the NJDEP received more money from Superstorm Sandy (Community Block Grant) of \$1.1 million for our Raritan Bay Projects. Our contractor will be able to look at the three projects developed and decide which will be the first one to move forward with.
- FEMA is implementing a new form to submit for homeowners who want to raise their properties.
- Dr. Tempel said she printed up ‘stormwater management’ fliers to be included with the latest tax bill. Members commented that the flier was not received in their bill.

**M. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel**

- Dr. Tempel mentioned that Casianne Guastella, science teacher at the Middle School, invited her to participate in a summer workshop run by CoLab Arts. Heather Fenyk from the Lower Raritan Watershed partnership will be leading the class. Casianne wants Dr. Tempel to provide a local perspective on South Plainfield's waterways.

**N. Chairwoman's Report - Mrs. D. Miele**

- Dorothy said there was nothing additional to report.

**6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence**

- A list of correspondence was provided.

**7. Old Business**

**8. New Business**

**9. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 9, 2023 @ 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
CCA	-Clean Communities 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
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