

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - June 14, 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 7:37 pm.

Present: Dorothy Miele (chairwoman) Debra Leporino, John Ferguson, Genevieve Helbo, Melanie Mott (council liaison) and Brian Bythell (planning board liaison).

Alternate members present:

Others: Dr. Alice Tempel (Environmental Specialist)

Absent: Tom Walsh (e), Adam Butrico (e) and Lisa Roseo

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the April 12, 2023 regular meeting were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

There was no meeting in May due to a lack of a quorum, therefore no minutes to approve.

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 \$95 to have fire extinguishers and exit signs at the Nature Center inspected. YTD spent = \$662.71. Balance = \$1,962.29. Dr. Tempel noted our final budget is \$240 less than requested. We did not get funded for advertising or training/seminars. We received \$80 less for printing. Training & seminars can be taken through ANJEC for free.
- Clean Communities – 2022 grant (\$49,621.17) – Spent since the 5/10 meeting = \$3,811 on: \$2,522 on salaries for litter removal/enforcement; \$570 on litter can maintenance; \$620 to have stormwater management flyers printed and \$99 to reimburse Dr. Tempel for the cost of pizza for the cleanup picnic. Total spent = \$50,031 from the 2022 grant. Balance = \$28.35.
- 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 Mott said she had nothing new to report on.

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

- Brian said the Planning Board has not had a meeting in a month; the next meeting has been cancelled also.
- Dorothy mentioned she watched the factory demolition at the corner of So. Clinton & Montrose; interesting to see. Dr. Tempel said she has to get in touch with the engineer on the new warehouse project. He promised to provide the concrete tonnage that is being recycled so we can claim it next year. Dr. Tempel also mentioned the proposed warehouse site on New Market (Harris Steel) has 91,000 tons of petroleum contaminated soil that has been reclaimed was claimed on this year's tonnage report. Brian asked if developers are required to report those statistics to the town. Dr. Tempel said they are supposed to, but don't always. She said that is something she thinks the building department

should include in their permitting process. There ought to be a form telling businesses that do this work, they have to report the tonnage of anything they recycle. On the other hand, if the material is hauled off site to an area concrete recycler, the recycler reports to us.

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

- Dr. Tempel said Adam has a few site plans on hand that she is waiting for his comments on.

D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra said there was nothing new to report.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported on the litter cleanup. Due to inclement weather, volunteers cleaned up throughout the week; some cleaned up on rainy Saturday. We didn't get as many people but picked up over 2 tons of trash. We had enough people come back for pizza to make the PowerPoint presentation by the two high school students reasonable. Dr. Tempel thanked all the volunteers who helped get it done.
- Debra asked John if he had an update for our proposed stormwater educational event in the fall. John said he needs a date and a target audience. Debra said it would be presented to the SPCCA at the Senior Center. She will get back to John after speaking with Tree Olano for a secure date.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra said she still has not been able to obtain a completed duplicate of Keystone's last cleanup agreement as discussed in April. Maryann Williams responded to Debra's email by contacting Dr. Tempel. They only discussed the new requirement of obtaining a signed 'Hold Harmless' agreement instead of a 'Certificate of Insurance'. Dr. Tempel sent Maryann Williams the 'Hold Harmless' certificate to sign. Both signed agreements have yet to be received. Melanie asked for Maryann's contact phone number to call.
- Dr. Tempel reported that she received a complaint on 5/16 from a resident at 1703 Park Avenue about litter from the shopping strip blowing and being carried onto his property. The shopping strip has no litter cans. Dr. Tempel referred this to Rich Wolff, who referred it to John Abbruzzese. John addressed it and there are litter cans there now.
- Bag Up NJ – Jonathan forwarded information from ShopRite about their program to recycle reusable shopping bags. They are only accepting their own bags. Drivers that deliver online orders cannot take the bags back because they are from third-party delivery services, and they are not returning to the store. Dr. Tempel said we have plenty of bags left of our own to give out.

F. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico

- Tree Seedling – Dr. Tempel said the event on 4/15 went very well. We had 8 high school students and 6 senior citizens separating and packaging tree seedlings. The State Nursery only provided four species of Oak to give away this year.
- Genevieve asked if there are developments with the 'Champion Tree' contest SPEC had proposed. Dr. Tempel said we are waiting on Adam's draft proposal. She explained we would need an actual committee to organize, publicize and go on site to verify residents' claims. We have yet to get volunteers.
- Dr. Tempel said the tree replacement for the resident at 117 Fairmount Avenue should be moving forward soon.

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

- Dorothy reported the deer fencing project got underway Sunday morning on 6/11. Dr. DeVito, Tom Walsh, Adam Butrico, Walter Stochel, a scout and his mother and ten High School Environmental Science Club members all participated. Half the work was completed in 3.5 hours. Work will resume this Saturday @ 8:30 am to complete the project. Dorothy suggested visiting the HAW Facebook page to look at photos showing the stark difference in the understory between the acre that has been fenced for the past 10 years and the portion being fenced. It does make a huge difference. Dr. Tempel noted that both sites are upland sites, but the newly fenced area seems to be sandier and dryer and more barren historically.
- Dorothy mentioned her daughter Sarah was able to get some Black Gum (Tupelo) tree from a colleague. Dr. Tempel and Dr. DeVito planted them within the deer fencing. The trees produce berries that are good for birds, particularly for migrants because they are rich in oils that ripen in August.

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

- Dorothy said there is nothing new to report.

I. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- Cornell-Dubilier – Dr. Tempel reported that we have not received a recent update from Diego Garcia. They are currently laying piping to divert the stream before they can start dredging. Dr. Tempel said the engineering on the project is quite amazing.

J. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel said the GT has been meeting. We have narrowed down the actions we think we can document. We have not made too much progress uploading documentation to the Sustainable NJ site yet. The actions where we need to initiate the new programs haven't really been initiated yet. Bob Longo sent two resolutions to Melanie to be re-adopted. Melanie forwarded them to Mayor Anesh and Councilman Bengivenga. Dr. Tempel said when the Mayor & Council re-adopt the resolutions, the GT needs to send a memo to all departments explaining the resolutions and instructing the departments that they need to do whatever is relevant to them to support those resolutions.
- The GT is intending to do a rain barrel workshop; Bob Longo has a barrel in his possession. Dr. Tempel spoke with Tree Olano, Senior Center, about installing the barrel at the corner of the building by their garden. Tree was delighted. Bob will make a video at the Senior Center on constructing and installing a rain barrel. We will make the video available on YouTube for the community. We will do publicity. Dr. Tempel said she would like to arrange for some physical audience to be there during the process.
- Dorothy said Tom had reported the Boro has purchased two hybrid vehicles. Dr. Tempel said this is partly due to the information from the fleet inventory Tom completed two years ago which showed the gas mileage the Boro fleet was getting was abysmal. Also, there is a state law requiring the changeover. The Police Department received the two vehicles.

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

- Dr. Tempel's report: in April, SPEC's Facebook page carried 4 posts – reached 2,473 people, 88 engagements, 10 shares and 5 comments. In May, 3 posts reached 3,022 people, 4 shares and 30 comments.

L. Stormwater Advisory Committee - Mr. J. Ferguson

- John passed out information he obtained from Woodbridge Township's website. It contains details on preventing stormwater pollution and other useful information. If we decide, John can ask for a hard copy that we can upload to our website, pages etc.
- MS4/CRS – The group found out the State is giving out additional money for Resilient NJ projects. John will be a part of that project. He said it is critical for towns to take advantage of the additional money because of a new ruling for flood hazard areas that are 'non tidal'. A new rule states that new construction has to ensure the base elevation is two feet above the 100-year flood line. The State is trying to push it through quickly. It will come before a vote in July to become part of the State code.
- GBFCC – There was a virtual meeting on 6/1. The General Reevaluation Report on the upper basin is underway. Having eliminated the possibility of detention basins in Berkley Heights, the alternatives under consideration are 'non-structural', e.g. – raising buildings, enclosing buildings in individual floodwalls with no levees or floodwalls along the streams, and a detention basin in the New Providence Road gorge. That would mean permanently rerouting New Providence Road, which would be a huge endeavor. Dr. Tempel noted this is of interest to us because some of the water coming down from the Watchung Mountains during heavy rains comes over land and empties into the Cedarbrook. We need to be prepared to make decisions for South Plainfield before the project gets too close; levees are planned in Spring Lake Park and HAW.
- Water Resources Association – Dr. Tempel reported on a presentation at their recent meeting regarding monitoring water quality in the Raritan. Middlesex County Health Dept. monitors pathogens in the ocean along County beaches but does not do this at recreation water contact points along the Raritan River. They are looking for volunteers to sample water for E. coli and fecal matter. The results are published so people can judge their risk level. Dr. Tempel can provide the contact info if anyone is interested. Melanie said she would like the information to pass on.

M. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

- Dorothy mentioned 'Christmas in July' and 'National Night Out' are approaching. We will need volunteers for those events. Debra said she will definitely be available for Christmas in July as she will be promoting our 'Adopt-a-Spot' program. There is also other information we will be providing/promoting.
- On 5/6 Walter Stochel brought his Eco Tours of Edison to view the deer enclosure.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- A list of correspondence was provided.
- Received several notices of application for freshwater wetlands and flood hazard area permits. Dr. Tempel said many of the site plans we've been reviewing for the past year are coming to fruition in the form of freshwater wetlands permits. The plans were contingent upon getting permits from the State to fill in wetlands and flood hazard.

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 12, 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