

# South Plainfield Environmental Commission

## Official Minutes - April 13, 2022

### 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, Tom Walsh, John Ferguson, Debra Leporino, Adam Butrico, Jonathan Walezak and Pete Smith (council liaison)

**Alternate members present:**

**Associate members present:**

**Others:** Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

**Absent:** Planning Board Liaison and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

### 2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the March 9, 2022 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 (FY2022 = \$1,000 temporary budget) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$451.42. Balance = \$548.58
- Clean Communities - The 2021 grant = \$48,287.91. Spent since March 9 = \$4,153 on: \$475 for litter can maintenance; \$1,554 on wages for litter patrol & sign enforcement; \$1,460 for 500 shopping totes; \$66 for blank 'Certificates of Appreciation'; \$150 for Bag Up NJ fliers for outreach and \$255 on two tires for the truck. Total spent = \$39,895. Balance = \$9,909. Dr. Tempel said we have until the end of June to spend the balance. We will likely ask for an extension. We have not received the 2022 grant yet.
- 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 reported the Boro passed a resolution, through Sustainable NJ, to be a 'solar friendly' town. As presented last month by Dr. Tempel, Pete explained residents can receive a discount if they apply for solar energy through a provider. The program is geared toward people who cannot afford or are unable to have solar installed. Pete continues to work with Councilman White on trying to find an area to erect a solar farm. The Boro submitted a grant application, with the help of Ben Ghiano from Assemblyman Karabinchak's office, to help pay to have two EV charging stations installed in the Boro.
- Pete attended, along with Dr. Tempel and Bob Longo, the High School Green Team presentation on animals in our community. He said it was very enlightening. Pete asked the Mayor & Council if the High School Green Team can make their presentation at a Mayor & Council meeting. It is tentatively scheduled for May 16.

- Pete offered to fund a pizza party for Kathleen Benton's environmental class for the work they've done with the 'BagUp NJ' outreach.
- Columbia Bank is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Arbor Day Foundation by donating trees. The Boro is waiting to see if the South Plainfield branch will receive any.
- Pete mentioned that Dorothy and Jonathan met with Councilwoman Faustini at Putnam Park to locate a good planting spot for the 'Salem Oak'. There will be a ceremony when the time comes for planting.
- Adam asked Pete if the Boro has considered erecting solar panels on school rooftops. Pete explained that the school buildings are owned by the BOE. We can ask, but currently we are involved with trying to get the solar powered EV stations up and running. Dr. Tempel said she forwarded info to Kathleen Benton for the schools to apply for 'energy efficiency project' grants. Apparently, they are receiving two substantial grants of at least \$100,000 each.

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

- There was no report.

#### **C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico**

- Robert & Patricia Stilo (3305 Anderson St.) – Adam said the applicant proposes to build a 50 x 100-foot heated building to house salt trucks. The site is currently 100% impervious which will not change post development. They are asking for EIS, traffic study and recycling plan waivers. There is no stormwater management plan provided. SPEC will suggest they consider installing solar and/or a green roof.

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

- Debra said there is nothing new to report. We are still waiting to hear from Rich Wolff about a possible data base program for our open space tax maps.

#### **E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel**

- Dr. Tempel announced the unexpected passing of our Associate member Dave Street. She said Dave gave a good deal of his time and passion to our program impacting a lot of people. Members discussed ways to remember Dave, such as tree planting, street name.
- Kevin Kober put out 50 'BagUp NJ' signs throughout town expeditiously. They will remain through Memorial Day.
- Litter Cleanup – Dr. Tempel sent a big email blast with details and waiver form plus safety rules. She also sent letters to Hometown Heros and Papa Johns for food/refreshment donations. Jonathan and Pete offered to speak to Luigis and Ciccio Pizzerias about discounted pies. Debra will donate two cases of water and Lisa is picking up cases of soda. Tom and Debra will help with registration and distribution the morning of. Dr. Tempel said we also need people to man the Green Team table and operate the prize wheel.
- Tom asked what can be done in terms of litter, at the Conrail yard on Metuchen Road. Truckers tend to pull over there and throw out trash & bottles. John offered to speak to a contact he knows at Conrail. Pete questioned whose property the trucks are on – Conrail or Americold.
- Debra said she asked John Abbruzzese to change the email address for the renamed SPCCA from the former SPCBA. The reason for the change was explained in the recent membership mailing.
- Dr. Tempel had the recycling guys replace two trash can liners and covers that were lost during the Ida flooding. She also asked them to clean Putnam Park prior to the Bunny Hop on 4/2. Dr. Tempel

purchased over-the-shoe boots so they can try to get into the wet area at Baker Avenue and the culvert behind the Franklin School ball fields to get the trash out that is blocking flow.

- Jane Rundella of the Suburban Women's Club called to ask Dr. Tempel to come to their 4/7 meeting to talk about the bag ban. She brought foldable bags and flyers. They were already well versed in the details, but there was good discussion.
- Bag Ban - Dr. Tempel ordered 500 less-expensive bags made of polypropylene which came to \$1,460.
- Education – The 'Illusion Maker' did live virtual programs at Franklin and Kennedy Schools in March.
- On 3/30 Dr. Tempel emailed Amy Bengivenga (Public Celebrations Committee chair) about including announcements and signs in all their events to make them 'litter free' events. She has not answered.
- Debra, Dorothy and Dr. Tempel sent out over 100 invitations, using the old CBA mailing list, asking businesses to re-up their participation and update our list for the newly renamed CCA.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra said there are two renewal invitations that need to be sent out for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.
- Kevin Kober removed 38 lawn signs and 12 utility pole signs during March.

#### F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel received an inquiry about wetlands from Melanie Mott representing her real estate client, about 308 Oak Tree Avenue (old WERA radio). Dr. Tempel cited the wetlands map in our ERI as the only source to show wetlands there. Our ERI is only based on NJDEP data generated basically by analyzing aerial photos. But her client had a delineation done, and she says the only buildable area on the lot is the footprint of the existing house.

#### G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico

- Adam will be picking up the tree seedlings and the Salem Oak sapling on 4/21. The tree seedling distribution will be from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.
- Dr. Tempel received an email from Alec McCartney (NJ State Nursery) offering tubelings. The tree tubelings are being sold in boxes of 30 @ \$3 a tube = \$90. Dr. Tempel said these trees can be used only for forestation/conservation projects or youth education/conservation programs. This should be an ongoing offer if we ever want to participate.
- DPW is going to take down a dead cherry tree behind borough hall and the rotting maple near the mailbox. Dr. Tempel asked if the commission was in favor of replacements using the tree fund. All members were in favor. Tom suggested Little Leaf Lindens.

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

- Dorothy said there has been a significant increase of visitors to the Nature & History Center. The center is open on the first Saturday of each month from 11:00 am to 1:00pm. On 4/2, we had had 20 visitors come to the center who were celebrating their 1970 class reunion.

#### I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

#### J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- Adam said the amount of trash in the stream on Baker Avenue is not too bad. Dr. Tempel explained the nearby neighbor is concerned about her driveway flooding when the trash accumulates by the culvert

behind the Franklin School ballfields. The trash rack does not get maintained. Adam will look at that end of the stream. Dr. Tempel is having the Recycling Center litter crew clean there asap.

- John reported the EPA is pushing to have cleaner drinking water. They are working on developing methods to handle the various PFOA's and TCE's – chlorinated and fluorinated substances. They don't want to set limits, but rather help develop ways to wash it out because they think it comes from pollution vs. natural occurrence.

#### **K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh**

- Tom said the next meeting is 5/26 @7:00 pm. The team met on 4/24 and discussed community solar and creative arts team projects. Dr. Tempel said Pete and Bob Longo's efforts got the Mayor & Council to pass the 'Solar Friendly' town resolution. She added we need to do publicity/outreach to encourage people to sign up for solar energy.
- Tom submitted a notice for grass recycling to the usual social media sites, Boro website, TapInto and The Observer.
- Jonathan reported we officially had our 'kickoff' meeting for the Creative Arts Team. We've assembled a very creative team consisting of educators & artists to come up with ways to incorporate public art into the community. The team came up with a set of goals & objectives. We will work on Sustainable NJ actions that we want to accomplish. We will also be posting a community assets survey asking what art the Boro currently has and wants to see. Jonathan said, and Pete agreed, SPEC needs to form a 'Creative Arts' subcommittee of the Green Team. Pete explained that forming this subcommittee helps the GT earn points for Sustainable NJ. The subcommittee has to be approved by SPEC. Adam made a motion to have SPEC allow the Green Team to form a 'Creative Arts Team' subcommittee, seconded by John and all were in favor of approval. Jumping ahead, Dr. Tempel shared her thoughts /experiences of ensuring the finished projects are maintained. Jonathan said content and placement of the art will be carefully considered by the team.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported in March SPEC's Facebook page carried 9 posts: reached 6,724 people, 347 engagements, 148 reactions. The GT Facebook page had 2 posts which reached 25 people with 1 reaction. Idle Free SP reached 4 people.
- The boosted post about the BagUp webinar reached 3,578 people with 431 engagements. Middlesex County sponsored the webinar. It was directed at the business community.

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

- John said the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan is all set. All 25 municipalities are participating. The plan is posted on the county website – middlesexcountynj.gov.
- There will be another CRS/MS4 meeting on 4/14.
- Waiting to see what project dollars will be available from the Ida storm.
- Green Brook Flood Control Project – the project is due to receive \$492 million of federal money. It has yet to be decided if the state has to contribute 25% in order to qualify.

### **6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence**

- A list of correspondence is attached.

## 7. Old Business

- Pete mentioned the Boro has finally submitted the metes & bounds for the Dismal Swamp area. We can obtain that information from Councilman Bengivenga who is on the 'Peter J. Barnes Wildlife Preservation Commission'.
- Debra reported the Diversity Committee is currently in disarray; the council is aware.

## 8. New Business

- Dorothy spoke about the Borough Seal – Vision, Family & Industry created by former Mayor Baldwin in the late 1950's/early 1960's. Dorothy knew him personally. She described the logo's symbols and noted an error. Since 2001, when she started reading and researching the town's history, she has since informed the sitting Mayors that the date of incorporation is incorrect. It is not March 12, it is March 10. Is there anything that can be done to correct this? Dorothy sent a copy of the incorporation papers to Ann Daley. Pete asked Dorothy to send him a copy or photo so he can investigate and ask why it has not been corrected.

## 9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 11, 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
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
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
SPCCA	-South Plainfield Clean Communities Association
SPEC	-South Plainfield Environmental Commission
USACE	-United States Army Corp of Engineers