

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - May 11, 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 7:30 pm.

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

Alternate members present:

Associate members present: Larry Randolph and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent: Jonathan Walezak

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the April 13, 2022 meeting were reviewed and the following correction was made: on page 4, under Stormwater Advisory Committee, the last sentence should be – It has yet to be decided if the state has to contribute 25% in order to qualify. After the correction, 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 \$19.45 for two planters and potting soil for 2 Salem Oak seedlings. YTD spent = \$472.36. Balance = \$527.64
- Clean Communities - The 2021 grant = \$48,287.91. Spent since April 13 = \$2,257.72 on: \$475 for litter can maintenance; \$1,745 on wages for litter patrol & sign enforcement; \$205.44 on refreshments for Pickup Picnic; \$306.19 for litter disposal from the litter cleanup. Total spent = \$44,565. Balance = \$6,944. Dr. Tempel said we have until the end of June to spend the balance.
- 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 said the SP High School Green Team students will be giving a presentation at the Mayor & Council meeting on Monday, 5/17. The topic will be on 'Animals in our Community.'
- Pete thanked the committee of people who put together the Boro-wide litter cleanup. It was a successful day. Pete also thanked Dr. Tempel and the CCAB for sending 'thank yous' to those that donated food/drinks for the pickup picnic.
- As discussed last month, Pete asked John if there was word on Conrail cleaning up the littered area where trucks pull over on Metuchen Road. John left word with his contact but will call him back.
- Pete reported that after Dorothy made him aware that the Boro's common seal has the wrong incorporation date displayed, he brought it to the Mayor & Council's attention. Now there is a draft ordinance, which Pete presented, that will be introduced to correct the date. Pete was told he needs

to present the request under a commission he is a liaison of. Therefore, it will be presented by SPEC's Historical Sites Committee. Changes to associated documents, items, letterheads etc. will be phased in. Pete's goal is to have this completed by the Boro's 100th anniversary in four years. Adam made a motion to approve the draft ordinance, seconded by Debra and all were in favor of approval.

- Pete mentioned the Mayor & Council are working with Anne Daly and John Abbruzzese to assign an email account to each Boro committee/commission chairperson which will be included in the Boro directory and website for 2023.

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

- D. Riccadonna (1804 Woodland Ave.) – Rich said the proposed plan for a subdivision we reviewed some months back was denied.
- Pete asked Rich, as liaison to the Planning Board which handles Boro street names, if he can speak with Chairman Ackerman about adding Dave Street's name to the list of new street names. Rich will email Bob Ackerman.

C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico

- New Image Landscaping (2801 Hamilton Blvd) – applicant proposes to demolish existing house and construct a one-story building and parking lot. Adam said there are no calculations for impervious surface coverage; appears to be a decrease. They will be planting 26 Dark American Arborvitaes. There is no recycling or EIS plan provided.
- Hollywood Ave. LLC (448 Hollywood Ave.) – this is currently a road construction storage, maintenance & repair facility. There is a large yard with approximately 100 pieces of vehicle machinery. Applicant proposes to add a 110 x 40 addition to their one existing structure, plus an awning. There is a small chunk of wetlands in the rear. There are no trees on the site; doesn't appear to be an opportunity to add landscaping. Assuming the canopy is for vehicles to be washed off, SPEC will ask where the wash water will go.
- Bengi Management / B. Bengi (2531 Hamilton Blvd) Dr. Tempel presented two applications that were previously submitted as one that we had reviewed. All four lots are vacant located on both sides of West End Avenue. Dr. Tempel questioned whether the Zoning Board of Adjustment will allow the storage of vehicles and equipment exposed on an open lot. Adam said the description on the application reads: storage/parking of landscape vehicles/trucks and sale of same. He said he will look at the site and report back next month.

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

- Litter Cleanup – Dr. Tempel mentioned Troop 125 had an issue with the waiver the Boro wanted signed by volunteers. They wanted it changed to remove the clause that puts responsibility for any negligence on the volunteer. The waiver wouldn't stand up in a court of law if the Boro failed to provide, for example, safety equipment/vests to volunteers. Dr. Tempel revised the waiver, and it was approved. Dr. Tempel wrote a press release about the cleanup day. It will be published after the remainder of the reports/statistics come in.
- Dr. Tempel ordered 40 safety vests with the Clean Communities logo.

- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra said everyone from the 1st quarter renewed. There are two renewals being sent for the 2nd quarter.
- The email for the SP Clean Communities Association is now officially – SPCCA@southplainfieldnj.com. We received approximately 15-20 responses from the 100+ membership mailings. Debra wants to go forward with planning a membership get together; she will work on it.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel said there was nothing new to report.

G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico

- Adam mentioned the competitive prices offered by Gasko’s Family Farm & Greenhouse. Dr. Tempel said the Boro has purchased trees for projects through the contractors. Adam asked if there are upcoming plantings. Dr. Tempel wants to continue working on Jonathan’s planting plan for Franklin Avenue but heard the Boro will be tearing up the sidewalks. Pete said he will find out when. Pete mentioned we will receive a tree donation, Dogwood, from Columbia Bank as previously reported. It was to be delivered to DPW; Pete will check. The Dogwood tree will be planted in front of Boro Hall.
- Tree Seedling Distribution – Dr. Tempel said the event went fine. Distributed over 400 seedlings. Tom and Kathleen were there to assist. There were trees leftover which were given away at the cleanup and at the Boro.
- Dr. Tempel met Councilwoman Faustini and leaders of a girl scout troop at Putnam Park. The troop wants to donate a cherry tree as a memorial and wanted advice for placement. The tree will be planted behind the sign at the corner of Oak Tree and Park Avenue.
- Tree Permits – 4111 South Clinton Ave. – As discussed previously, PSE&G wants to do some sub-soil investigation for contamination on the property. It is owned by JH Berg. The want to take out 27 Eastern Red Cedars and Crabapples on the 100 x 100 lot. Dr. Tempel wants to clarify with PSE&G if they plan on clear-cutting the lot to do their sampling as it is a dense low-canopy woodland. How will they move around without clear-cutting?

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

- Dorothy said the Nature & History Center was visited by a group of four Boy Scouts from Wolf Den Pack 224 and their parents. These scouts had come for a walk in March and found an old horseshoe from a Draft horse, possibly over 100 years old. They came back on Saturday to present it to the Historical Society. There will be an article in ‘The Observer.’
- Dorothy said FOW may have an upcoming opportunity to have projects done by Eagle Scout candidates from Troop 307, e.g., bridge repairs, trail maintenance, boardwalk repairs.
- Dorothy said she was shocked by the wall of bamboo on the piece of open space on New Market Ave. backing to HAW. It is worse than ever. Now that the Boro has an ordinance, is there anything that can be done? Dr. Tempel did send an email to Rich Wolff and John Abbruzzese; no response yet.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- Larry reported seeing an archaeological group working on the proposed ‘Colonial Oaks’ apartments on New Brunswick Avenue/Tyler Place. Larry assumes the developer may have applied for a permit of sorts and some federal agency got involved. The crew spent 2+ weeks on site. Larry’s sources indicated they found archaeological remains from a pre-historic and historic nature. Reports are being written and will be sent to the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO), where they will rule on

what will happen next. SPEC discussed what may have triggered the investigation. Larry explained that when he was SPEC Chairman, the Cornell-Dublier contaminated site came to be addressed and from that Larry took the site's history to the SHPO. Archaeologists and historians worked on the property for 6+ years. Reports were generated, two forthcoming, involving the USACE, Smithsonian, National Park Service and SHPO. There are important photos of the factory on display at the Nature Center. Larry feels the Boro failed to recognize and take advantage of the town's history. The Boro has and opportunity, once again, to get something good out of the Harris Steel site. The developer will not obtain their building permits until they negotiate with the Boro after the findings. That would be the time to ensure that whatever heritage is found, remains in the Boro's possession, rather than in a drawer somewhere in a NJ State Museum. South Plainfield, if imagined, could use the findings to create interest, via displays, events etc. Larry also explained that the law is on the town's side on this matter. There are provisions for public education e.g., invite an archaeologist to speak at schools, presentation at our public library etc. Other professionals could be on hand such as the County Cultural & Heritage Commission, Archaeological Society of NJ, Society for Industrial Archaeology, to name a few. Dr. Tempel questioned why there was no official notification letter of the investigation provided to the Boro. SPEC will look into who the principal parties are in order to obtain the info and consult. Rich said he will look at the site plan. Larry mentioned Richard Grubb & Associates, contractor for the archaeological dig through the SHPO.

- Cornell-Dublier – Dorothy asked Larry if the study has been completed on the Bound Brook. Last Larry spoke with the USACE, they were still putting together the proposal and budget. Eventually the EPA will dredge the entire brook, New Market Pond and beyond.

J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- John gave Lisa an EPA guidance press release for improving methods to detect PFAS in water as we previously discussed. She will include it with the minutes.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom reported the Boro hosted a 'Drug Take-back' initiative on 4/30. 53 pounds were returned by 36 people. We will host another in October.
- The next GT meeting is 5/26. The team will be reviewing action items. Dr. Tempel said the deadline for submitting documentation for the actions we want points for is 5/22. We unfortunately haven't made enough progress on most of the actions to be in a position to upload the documentation. Bob Longo will be going on the Sustainable NJ site and indicate we are applying for credit on our actions. We have made progress, we just have to find the time to produce documentation. We really need more Green Team members.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported that in April, SPEC's Facebook page carried 5 posts: reached 7,418 people, 495 engagements, 23 comments and 13 shares.
- The GT Facebook page had 0 posts. Does anyone with an interest in Facebook want to take over the Green Team page and do posting to attract visibility?

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

- John reported on three areas the County is working on: Resilient NJ public zoom meeting, looking at flood prevention in the southern part of Middlesex County that floods and working with NJDOT on major upgrades to our transportation plans – evacuation routes & roadway signage.

- Dr. Tempel wrote up the annual stormwater education program/activities. She doesn't think we satisfied the Tier A permit requirements for education. We need more 'hands-on' activities - workshops etc. We are planning to hold a rain barrel workshop that Bob Longo will be leading. We'd like to get the High School videography department to film the HS Environmental Club learning how to make rain barrels. We would then share that on various outlets around town.
- Water Resources Association – there was approval to extend sewer service to a portion of the proposed warehouse at 800 Montrose Avenue. A portion of the warehouse will be in wetlands which is currently treed and undeveloped.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing to report.

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

- There was nothing new to report.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- A list of correspondence is attached.

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 8, 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