

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - September 14, 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, Debra Leporino, John Ferguson, Jonathan Walezak and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison)

Alternate members present:

Associate members present: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent: Tom Walsh (e), Pete Smith and Adam Butrico

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the August 10, 2022 meeting were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

3. Invitation for Public Comment

Walter Kalman and Genevieve Helbo were present. Genevieve Helbo is a South Plainfield resident who is newly retired and may have some time to donate to the commission.

Walter asked, after reading last month's minutes, if there has been much interest by the Boro to promote solar energy. Walter works with a group who handles community solar outreach. Dr. Tempel explained that the Green Team has been working with a community solar group helping them promote their energy to the South Plainfield population, particularly to the underserved community. The Mayor & Council adopted a resolution of support. There are also plans to propose an ordinance, based on a Sustainable NJ sample, that would make it easier for residents to obtain permits to install solar on their homes. Sustainable NJ's formal action also includes protocols to amend a zoning ordinance to remove certain barriers with permitting processes. Dr. Tempel said Councilman Smith is very much in favor of the Boro installing a solar field to provide energy to the High School and future Boro EV vehicles.

4. Budget - Dr. A. Tempel

- O&E (FY2022 = \$2,625) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$551.07. Balance = \$2,073.93.
- Clean Communities - The 2022 grant = \$49,621.17. Spent since August 10 = \$20,544 on: \$1,986 on wages for litter patrol & sign enforcement; \$570 for litter can maintenance; \$276 on tires for the truck; \$402 on gloves for litter cleanup and \$17,310 for street sweeping salaries (salaries for the whole year charged all at once). YTD spent since 8/10 = \$22,628.00. Balance = \$27,563.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. The balance = \$640.12.
- Harris Steel Trust Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$35,433.00.

5. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- There was no report.

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

- Rich said the Planning Board heard the Target application that we commented on. Dr. Tempel said she added comments for curbing the use of reusable bags for curbside pickup. She explained that stores are packing online orders in reusable bags which consumers are accumulating and possibly disposing of in the garbage. She suggested the stores bring the goods out unbagged and let people bring back their own bags to pack up. Rich said Dr. Tempel's comment was not mentioned at the Planning Board meeting.

C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico

- Colonial Oaks (New Brunswick Ave.) – Dorothy said she wrote a letter of inquiry to the NJ Office of Historic Preservation. She asked for clarification/assistance on what to do to follow through for the artifacts of significance found on site. We have not received a response in 4 weeks. Dorothy said she will phone the NJ Office of Historic Preservation. Dr. Tempel added that she has not finished reviewing their compliance review (response letter) because she needs the architectural floor plans that Stephanie Merola hasn't yet provided. Dr. Tempel had made extensive comments on their EIS. Their response letter states that those comments were dealt with in testimony to the Planning Board. Dr. Tempel wants to see the testimony. Rich said he will email Bob Ackerman.

D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra reported she will be speaking with Rich Wolff this Friday. She will report back next month on any updates for the proposed new data base program to replace our paper tax maps/open space index.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel said the Fall Cleanup will be on Saturday 9/17. She publicized the event in all the usual outlets. We do need additional volunteers in the morning to hand out supplies. Genevieve Helbo offered to help, and Walter will try pending his schedule. We have 142 people pre-registered, of which 78 are high school students. Debra said she will be promoting the Adopt-a-Spot program.
- Dr. Tempel said the Labor Day picnic was posted as 'Litter-Free'.
- Enforcement – Luke Melick removed 31 lawn signs and 45 utility pole signs during August.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra reported there are three renewal requests being mailed for the 4th quarter. There is a list of available spots for adoption on the Boro website.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing new to report.

G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico

- Dr. Tempel said we received Columbia Bank's tree donation. DPW planted the Dogwood tree on a front-corner of Boro Hall.
- Lisa mentioned some of the new tree plantings on the Bridgepoint site, New Market Avenue, appear to be dead. Dr. Tempel said she did see that the balled trees were sitting on blacktop for several 100 degree days. She will mention this to Dominic Demico. We won't know if they'll survive until next Spring.

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

- As discussed last month, in speaking with Pete Smith about inviting the Mayor & Council to HAW to see our regenerated ½ acre deer-fenced parcel, Dorothy immediately provided Pete with the bullet-point document he requested. Pete presented the document to the Mayor & Council on Monday 9/19. Pete then emailed Dorothy asking a series of questions that Dorothy answered. She is waiting for a response. In the meantime, she had set a date with Dr. DeVito which she will have to postpone. Dorothy said she provided the Mayor & Council with four different fence size proposals. The maximum and most cost efficient would be to fence two acres @ \$5,000.
- Dr. Tempel said she pruned back the sycamores that were overgrowing the Nature Center parking space closest to the property line. She also sprayed poison ivy along the White trail.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- ** see Site Plan Review
- There was nothing additional to report.

J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- John mentioned there is discussion about the possibility of recycling the reusable bags that are replacing the single-use plastic bags. There is also talk of going back to paper bags. Dr. Tempel said although the legislators were well-intentioned, the State is at fault because the DEP approved these intermediary bags for the supermarkets to use; they should not have. She suggested that eventually patrons would remember to bring their own bags if given no other choice. Walter Kalman mentioned food pantries are accepting reusable bag donations. Dr. Tempel said maybe SPEC can do a promotion that would accept/collect people's overflow of reusable bags and pass them on to our food bank at the Senior Center. We would first need to contact Heather Barry, Director of Social Services. John offered to contact Jennifer Apostol, Director of the Middlesex County REPLENISH food bank. Dr. Tempel said they are in a better position to promote this across their county-wide network.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Jonathan reported the team submitted their revisions to Sustainable NJ last month. We have reviewed our goals for next year. Discussed the results of the Diversity survey; limited data/limited results. Dr. Tempel added the results were not enough to say we have a representative sample. Tom had emailed his report: to add to Jonathan's report - Sustainable NJ will get back to us after reviewing our final action items. The GT will be meeting on 9/22.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported that in August, SPEC's Facebook page carried 5 posts: reached 8,307 people, 1,267 engagements.

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

- John said there is an important CRS/MS4 meeting on 9/30. He will be speaking about the 'Hazard Mitigation Plan' amongst other topics. They will be emphasizing to municipalities that they need to be smarter managing stormwater e.g.- updating zoning ordinances, better building techniques (better networks/bigger pipe sizes) etc.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional 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

- Human Relations Committee – Debra spoke with Councilwoman Faustini who said the Mayor & Council are considering having residents apply for a position on the committee as well as making appointments.

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 12, 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