

# South Plainfield Environmental Commission

## Official Minutes - February 10, 2021

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Notice having been filed with the Courier News and S.P. Observer, Chairwoman Dorothy Miele called the Environmental Commission meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act at 7:33 pm. This meeting took place at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center.

**Present:** Dorothy Miele, Tom Walsh, Danielle Hurst, John Ferguson, Debra Leporino, Adam Butrico (via phone), Pete Smith (council liaison) and Brian Bythell (planning board liaison)

**Alternate members present:** Jordan Mandel (via phone)

**Associate members present:** Jonathan Walezak and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

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

**Absent:**

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The reorganization and regular minutes of the January 13, 2021 meetings were reviewed and the following change was made: for the reorganization portion of the meeting, Debra Leporino will be marked absent with an excuse. She was present for the regular meeting.

After the change was made, all were in favor of adopting the reorganization and regular minutes.

### 3. INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- There were no members of the public present.

### 4. BUDGET - Dr. A. Tempel

- O&E (FY2021 temporary budget = \$1,000) Since the last meeting we spent \$33.23 on a legal notice in The Observer. YTD spent = \$491.77. Balance = \$508.23.
- Clean Communities - (2019 grant \$50,329.53) Spent from Jan 13-Feb10 = \$3,664 on: \$741 on hand sanitizer promos; \$675 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages; \$2,842 for park litter cans. The 2019 grant is used up.  
(2020 grant \$45,370) (began spending on 1/29) Spent since January 13 = \$5,377 of which \$3,517 was from the 2019 grant. Spent \$1,860 from the 2020 grant on: \$822 for litter cans; \$468 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages and \$475 for litter can maintenance. Balance = \$43,519.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. The balance = \$595.12.
- Harris Steel Tree Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$33,134.

### 5. COMMITTEE and LIAISON REPORTS

#### A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- Storm water - Pete spoke with Len Miller. Len feels that since the Boro does not have a lot of vacant land left to develop, we will adopt the new state regulations for new construction, but we won't go further by applying them to existing projects or redevelopments; not good for the town if it prevents certain projects from moving ahead. There are improvements the DPW wants to do in town that would be affected. Dr. Tempel replied, "Isn't that the point?" Dr. Tempel said projects can be designed to meet new standards. She said it is not an opinion that there will continue to be increased flooding, but rather, scientific & engineering data do exist to support it. Dr. Tempel asked Pete if the Boro is preparing the amendment to our storm water ordinance. Pete is not aware that it is being prepared. Dr. Tempel made another reminder that the Boro needs to amend the ordinance by March, but it first needs to be submitted to the County Planning Department before the Boro can vote on the amendment. Pete said he also spoke with Paul Rizzo, Boro Attorney, who would then submit what the new state amendments require, but only for new developments. Pete will bring SPEC's advise to the Mayor & Council who will either pass or deny. Dr. Tempel explained that mainly what the State is after is to

retain storm water on properties with dry wells and underground storage tanks to recharge (green infrastructure). Jonathan added that there is more re-development taking place versus new development as most towns are already built-out. Dr. Tempel concurred. Pete then said the Boro would require no increases in impervious surface for redevelopment. Dr. Tempel said the Boro would need to include that in the ordinance that we adopt now to amend our existing storm water management ordinance. We can just adopt the new State amendment, which uses 5,000 sq. ft. as the trigger for the new standards. But, if we want to start working on reducing flooding, we should use a lower threshold for requiring storm water management during redevelopment. Pete will call Paul Rizzo to convey SPEC's recommendations to amend our ordinance that re-developments increasing their impervious surface also need to comply to new State standards.

- Bamboo - Jonathan looked at several existing towns' ordinances along with our draft. Jonathan took some ideas from them to come up with a draft proposal for SPEC's review. He will email his draft to Lisa to forward to members for comment/approval. Basically the ordinance would make owners of Bamboo responsible for containing it and therefore keeping it off neighboring properties. Pete added that a registry would be instituted so when a resident sells their home, the new homeowners would be informed the Bamboo has to be maintained per ordinance. Danielle asked if the registry would be added to the property cards in the Building Department. Pete thought that would make sense. Dr. Tempel suggested Pete speak with Derryck White, Economic Development Committee and Dominic Demico, Construction Officer. Pete said both Dominic and Rich Wolff, Zoning Officer, are already being called with residents' complaints on Bamboo.
- Solar - Pete spoke with Mayor Anesh and Councilman White. There are a couple parcels of land that might be suitable for the 'Smart Home' that Community Solar proposed. Pete will continue with solar plans as discussed at last month's meeting.
- Woodbrook Road - There may be discussions between our Boro and the landowner to erect a solar farm on the property. South Plainfield would give over the 30% portion of land they own, but would have rights to the electricity generated at a reduced rate. The EPA will produce revised plans based on their reevaluated level of cleanup that is needed.

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

- Brian said the board has not met recently, therefore there is nothing new to report.

**C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Mandel**

- TFJ South Plainfield (Park Ave. & Boro line) - Jordan and Adam reviewed. Jordan reported the applicant is proposing a four-story, 930 unit, self-storage facility. The property is approximately two acres of forested property. There will be a drastic increase in impervious surface; essentially going from 0% to 64.23%. They propose three underground detention basins. The plan shows 21 shade trees will be planted, but they did not provide a tree removal/replacement plan with required calculations. They provided an LOI from the NJDEP - no wetlands present. Adam would like to walk the property before possible clearing of trees from the site. SPEC will ask for details of a solid waste plan.
- Middlesex Water Company (Park Ave.) - proposing an upgraded water treatment facility including a new building (16,500 sq. ft.). They will be adding a surface infiltration basin. The plans show a 40 ft. diameter, 26 feet tall tank to store backwash waste water to empty into the sanitary sewer at a constant rate. What does the waste water consist of? Dr. Tempel said the MCUA will require those details. We will ask for the MCUA's acceptance letter. They did not provide a landscaping plan or an EIS. SPEC will also ask for a tree removal/replacement plan.
- Dr. Tempel said the application for the multi-unit residential development on New Brunswick Ave. & Tyler Place will be coming through soon. The Boro's Affordable Housing Plan, by COAH, was approved many years ago. The Mayor & Council's decision to rezone the property for Affordable Housing was made to help meet the number of affordable units that COAH specified. Pete added that the amount of proposed units has been reduced because of wetlands. The Boro doesn't know how the reduction will affect our COAH obligation. Will the State allow the applicant to reduce the previously

approved affordable units and also reduce our requirements? If not, the Boro has to find where we would be able to allow the other units. When their plan was previously approved, the building was taller, which cannot be done now for an unknown reason. Pete mentioned that he has expressed issue with the property owner getting a federal farm tax rate because ¼ of the property is now being used for storage. They should be taxed accordingly by the Boro. They are making money and we're losing it. Pete also thinks the EPA should do soil testing on that portion of the property because they are storing steel beams coated with oil.

**D. ERI -**

- Debra said Dr. Tempel is reaching out to Mary Frances, tax assessor, for the most recent list of vacant land. Then she and Dr. Tempel will prepare to update the open space list/map.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported the CCAB met on 1/20. Decided to hold the Spring Volunteer Litter Cleanup on 4/17. It will be along the same lines as the fall cleanup: small groups, outdoor distribution of supplies and no pickup picnic. We will give away promos to volunteers as they pick up supplies; ordered hand sanitizers with the Clean Communities logo. Dr. Tempel sent out a 'Save the Date' press release and posted on digital media sources.
- Clean Campus - received an application from Grant School for two on-line assemblies by Illusion Maker.
- Adopt-a-Spot - Debra reported that there are adopters who have not sent in their renewals. Debra has made several attempts to reach out. She asked SPEC members if they agree with taking down their signs, as notified, so new adopters can be found. SPEC members agreed. Debra mentioned that we are in need of another sign maker because the gentleman retired. Debra wants to keep the business within the town, so if members know of a metal sign printer, let her know.
- Jonathan Walezak applied to adopt Cotton Street Park.
- Debra also mentioned that the sign ordinance came under discussion at the last Business Advisory Group (BAG) meeting. They want to look at the ordinance to see how it can benefit businesses. Dr. Tempel sent the ordinance to Debra who forwarded it Councilman White. Members asked how specifically they want the ordinance to provide more benefit. Debra said she will forward Councilman White's correspondence to Pete, so we know the details of what the BAG is looking for. Dr. Tempel explained that previously there was a proposal made to amend the ordinance to be more specific about temporary signs. Dr. Tempel provided some details. She and Dorothy have also discussed the sign ordinance and drafted their own proposed revisions. Pete said he will speak with Derryck White.

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

- Green Brook Flood Control Project - John reported the project received 30 million in federal funding plus 8 million from the state. John said the USACE NY Chapter wants to keep the Stony Brook in the flood protection plans. Dr. Tempel added that the Army Corp Headquarters want to drop the Stony Brook from the project because it's not cost effective. The cost/benefit ratio is no longer high enough to justify it. However, the GBFCC believes they are not taking into account the potential loss of life such as what happened in the flood of 1973.

**G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Schmidt**

- Dr. Tempel reported the State is holding the tree seedling distribution again. Does SPEC want to participate? Dorothy said Kathleen Benton and students are on board to help distribute. Adam volunteered to pick up the seedlings. Dr. Tempel will finalize the details before the 2/25 deadline.
- Dr. Tempel said Nick Lemmo, Carco Auto World, said that the land was not his where the trees were taken down on Durham Avenue. The tax map shows it is part of the Highlands apartment complex. Nick Lemmo will replace the six trees he did remove when he demolished the first house.

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

- Dorothy heard from Rich Veit who has been involved with Boy Scout Troop 309 and Jeff Pauls. The

troop asked if they can do a service project. They will be organizing a trail maintenance project when the weather improves.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported that the EPA will be performing an archaeological survey of the Bound Brook prior to implementing the cleanup plan. Larry Randolph has stated that the Native American artifacts lie not so much in the flood plain, but along the terraces on either side of the Bound Brook. An archaeological investigation was performed on the site at the beginning of the Cornell-Dublier Superfund Site remediation. Dorothy mentioned also there is Lehigh Valley Railroad remnants from the 1800's.

**J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico / Ms. D. Hurst**

- Dr. Tempel reported that before the EPA starts cleanup of the Bound Brook, they are re-laying a water main along Spicer Avenue that once cut across the Cornell-Dublier site. They will also be digging up some contaminated soil upstream of the main site; not sure if that is completed yet. They will replant the trees they took down and then start dredging the Bound Brook.

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

- Tom said he was at the last Green Team meeting, but had to leave early. The team is still working on the recertification process. Tom said he will discuss with members about meeting virtually for the next meeting or two.

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

- Dr. Tempel said there was nothing urgent to post this past month.

**M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh**

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

- Dr. Tempel said she met with Casianne Guastella, Middle School science teacher. She is developing the Courtyard as a WWF Certified Wildlife habitat and needed some help with some concepts. While talking with her, Dr. Tempel mentioned Councilwoman Faustini's tree planting proposal as a memorial to those South Plainfield residents who succumbed to Covid-19. Casianne said she will consider the same.
- Dr. Tempel met with Councilwoman Faustini, Mayor Anesh, Glenn Cullen, Elizabeth Yarus and Girl Scout Troop 6502 to discuss their proposal to plant a weeping cherry in Willow Park. Dr. Tempel suggested Arbor Day for the memorial tree planting. Pete suggested we try and solicit Boro groups to sponsor tree plantings in each of the Boro parks. Dr. Tempel asked SPEC members if they approve of using our tree fund to fund the plantings. Of course, someone would have to spearhead Pete's idea of coordinating a larger tree planting project.

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

- Dorothy mentioned the SP Cultural Arts Committee is sponsoring a 'message of hope' quilt. They are asking groups/residents to take an 11x14 canvas and create an artistic message of hope using paint, collage etc. Dorothy entered our commission after consulting with Dr. Tempel. She created artwork focused around planting a tree. She will bring the artwork to our next meeting.

**6. INCOMING / OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE**

- A list of correspondences is attached

**7. OLD BUSINESS**

- Debra reported that the first meeting for 2021 of the Human Relations Committee will be on 2/18.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2021 @ 7:30 pm in the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center - 115 Sylvania Place.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Roseo  
Environmental Commission Secretary

### ACRONYMS

ANJEC	- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
BOA	- Board of Adjustment
CAG	- Community Advisory Group
CBA	- Clean Business Association
CCAB	- Clean Communities Advisory Board
CFMP	- Community Forestry Management Plan
DOT	- Department of Transportation
DPW	- Department of Public Works
EIS	- Environmental Impact Study
EPA	- Environmental Protection Agency
ERI	- Environmental Resources Inventory
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	- The Lead in Energy and Environmental Design
LOI	- Letter of Interpretation
MCDSWM	- Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management
MCUFAC	- Middlesex County Urban Forestry Advisory Committee
NJCF	- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
NJDEP	- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NOV	- Notice of Violation
OEM	- Office of Emergency Mgmt.
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