

South Plainfield Environmental Commission
Official Minutes - March 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 7:31 pm. This meeting took place at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center.

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

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent:

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the February 10, 2021 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 (FY2021 temporary budget = \$1,000) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$491.77. Balance = \$508.23.
- Clean Communities - (2020 grant \$45,370) Spent since February 10 = \$2,777 on: \$1,066 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages; \$475 for litter can maintenance; \$1,000 on two assembly programs at Grant School and \$196 for Walezak Family Adopt-a-Spot signs for Cotton Street Park. YTD spent = \$4,597. Balance = \$40,780.
- 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

- Pete gave thanks to Jonathan Walezak for revising a draft bamboo ordinance. When SPEC approves the draft, it will go on the Mayor & Council's agenda for the first April meeting. SPEC members received the draft in an email prior to this meeting. Dorothy asked members if they have further concerns/comments on the draft. Jonathan did send a revised version today based on comments exchanged through email. Tom made a motion to approve the ordinance, seconded by Debra, and all were in favor of approval. Pete will present it to Paul Rizzo.

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

- Rich said the board met for 15 minutes last night to finalize the Hawkeye Development resolution.

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

- Colonial Oaks (New Brunswick Ave.) - applicant is proposing 21 buildings with 569 apartments. Jordan and Adam previously met with Dr. Tempel to preview the application. They plan on visiting the site to check on the applicants tree plan estimates. They plan on removing approximately 951 trees from the 86.67 acre site. Their replacement plan is based on two plot estimates of 50x50 and 100x100. They plan on replanting 941 trees. The site will be divided into four subdivisions of 10, 16, 6 & 53 acres. Pete wonders whether the State will reduce our COAH requirement now that the number of units has been reduced from the previous approval because of the wetlands on site. 800 units were previously approved. Pete said the State requires towns to meet a specific number of affordable units per 'round' based on how many homes/units in total are built within a rounds time period. Dr. Tempel mentioned

some towns have met their COAH obligation by putting up buildings that are all affordable and not depending on builder's remedy. By doing that, towns manage to retain some of their open space. Jordan and Adam said they plan on adding a bio-retention basin on the northern portion of the property and a wet pond on the southern portion. They estimate 80% of total suspended solids to be removed. The retention basin overflow will tie into the existing stream on site which runs through HAW. Jordan wants to clarify if the Boro looks at percentage of impervious surface based on lot-by-lot or the site as a whole. Because if it is the former, lots 1 & 2 are probably well over the allowed limit. And lot 3 is probably 100% impervious. Dr. Tempel said there is no maximum impervious surface standard in South Plainfield; maximum coverage refers to the building coverage only. Lots can be paved 100% and not be in violation. Site plan shows 1,188 parking spaces. SPEC will ask for soil testing on the portion of the 'Tyler Yard' where steel beams are being stored. SPEC also has concerns over possible hydrocarbons running into the HAW stream from 1,188 cars. Dr. Tempel said their EIS states no significant impacts on wildlife and no long-term effects on soil are anticipated. It also states that there is not much potential for a healthy/diverse wildlife ecosystem because the parcel is surrounded by industry and busy roadways. Dr. Tempel questions that statement. However, their report lists many bird varieties, green frogs, mammals, monarch butterflies, deer; all in one days assessment. It is safe to assume there are other species not listed. In addition, the Boro's last wildlife ERI update showed a thriving ecosystem. Dr. Tempel will hold off on our comment letter until Adam and Jordan inspect the site.

D. ERI -

- Debra said she and Dr. Tempel received the current tax list of vacant and publicly owned land for the next Open Space Index update from Mary Frances.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Litter Cleanup - On 2/24, Dr. Tempel sent out a 'Save the Date' email blast to about 150 volunteers. 40 people have pre-registered so far. She will send out another email blast. She asked commission members for help in handing out equipment on April 17. The Walezak Family is canvassing local businesses for food coupons to give to volunteers.
- Adopt-a-Spot - Dr. Tempel ordered two signs for the Walezak's spot in Cotton Street Park. One from Butler and one from Elevation. There were four renewals: First Baptist Church, Kober Family, Bourbeau Family and Lions Club.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing new to report.

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

- Adam mentioned that federal officials declared a 130 mile stretch of road in the New Jersey Pine Barrens as a 'National Scenic Byway'. This will enhance efforts to preserve by increasing awareness. The Pinelands Commission will have access to federal funding.
- Dr. Tempel filed our application to the NJDEP for the upcoming Arbor Day Tree Recovery program seedling distribution. We will be picking up 400 seedlings which will be enough for 80 packets to distribute on 4/24. Kathleen Benton is asking for permission to use the high school parking lot once again.

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

- Dorothy received an email from ANJEC announcing their 2021 grants for Open Space Stewardship projects; applications are due by 4/19. Dorothy read the list of eligible projects. She suggested we could use the \$1,500 grant to add to the deer enclosure fence in HAW. It has been very effective in helping to re-establish some native plants. Dorothy asked Lisa to forward the email to members who might come up with another suitable project to consider.
- As mentioned last month, Dorothy entered SPEC into the South Plainfield Cultural Arts Commission quilt project.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was no report.

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

- There was nothing new to report.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom reported the Green Team met on 2/24. They discussed what needs to be done to submit our application to Sustainable NJ by 6/6. Revisions can be submitted until 9/10 and the final deadline is 11/21. Dr. Tempel said Danielle has already started to upload some documentation. Pete asked if anyone spoke with Dominic Demico about permits for solar panels. Dr. Tempel did. Dominic said the fee structure is calculated by wattage, which we already do. There are other components such as permits for electrical and possibly building. We need to see if we can streamline the permitting process for Sustainable NJ. Tom asked Pete if the Mayor & Council voted on the state's new storm water management regulations. Pete said it was voted on and submitted to the county. The Green Team also discussed the bamboo ordinance.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported the SPEC Facebook page for February had 4 posts about recycling which reached 5,558 people, 804 engagements plus 10 shares. The spring cleanup post reached 1,245 people, 57 engagements plus 2 shares.
- Dr. Tempel mentioned the Association of New Jersey Recyclers will be making a big educational push on how to safely handle lithium batteries due to the recent fire at a Class A recycling facility.

M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom will be submitting another grass recycling article.
- Dr. Tempel reported that towns might have to adopt more amendments to their new storm water management ordinance as the County reviews them. Pete said Bob Bucco sent ours to the County for a preview.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

- There was nothing additional to report.

6. INCOMING / OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

- A list of correspondences is attached

7. OLD BUSINESS

- Debra reported that the Human Relations Committee met last month and elected the committee chair people. The committee will be meeting bi-monthly. Debra asked Dr. Tempel to forward her the 'Save the Date' email about the litter cleanup. She will then send it to Human Relations Committee members to forward to their respective groups/committees.
- Dr. Tempel reported the EWA requested receipts from our grant project in HAW ten years or so ago. She asked Lisa to sort through the paperwork and scan into PDF files.

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 14, 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