

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - June 9, 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 7:32 pm. This meeting took place at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center.

Present: Dorothy Miele, Tom Walsh, Debra Leporino, Adam Butrico, John Ferguson, and Brian Bythell (planning board liaison)

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent: Danielle Hurst and Pete Smith (council liaison)

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the May 12, 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. Dr. Tempel will check in Edmunds for final budgeted amount. Dr. Tempel said SPEC can ask the Mayor & Council for funds to install additional deer fencing in HAW. The Green Team has not used the funds that were allotted them in the budget for the last three years (\$2,000).
- Clean Communities - (2020 grant \$45,370) Spent since May 12 = \$1,637.50 on: \$475 on litter can maintenance; \$1,042.50 on litter removal/sign enforcement salary & wages and \$120 for five signs for the parks prohibiting glass containers. YTD spent = \$9,350. Balance = \$36,028.48. We received the 2021 grant for \$48,287.91. It is not active in the budget yet.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. The balance = \$595.12.
- Harris Steel Trust Fund – Since the last report we spent \$3,716.19 – encumbered funds for the library's improvement plan in Willow Park for 7 river birch and a maple. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$35,681.00.

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

- Brian said the Planning Board met last night. Discussed the Tyler Partners site plan on Tyler Place. Currently unoccupied building which will be used by United Rental to store equipment (port-a-johns). There are no site improvements planned. Brian noted at the meeting that the applicant did not provide an EIS. SPEC didn't review and comment on this plan prior to the Planning Board meeting. Brian said the applicant indicated they will be power washing the already pumped-out units on this site. Dr. Tempel asked where the wash water goes. Brian said it looks like the units will be washed outside on stone surface. Even though it is too late to comment, SPEC voiced concerns about the amount of cleaner that might run offsite. Brian said the back of this site faces the proposed Colonial

Oaks multi-housing on New Brunswick Avenue. There is a line of trees on that border that Brian would like the Planning Board to ensure remains.

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

- Tyler Partners – Jordan read his and Adam’s comments and main concerns even though the plan has already been approved. 1) where are the port-a-john units going to be stored. 2) what are the cleaning processes. 3) where is the runoff going and is there containment. 4) what is the volume of units – cumulative runoff. 5) Geoweb shows groundwater CEA (classification exception area) of several known chemicals; not too much of a concern because no site improvements/disturbances are being made to the site. Dr. Tempel asked if it extends onto the proposed Colonial Oaks site. Jordan said the chemicals are coming up from Home Depot across Tyler Place and terminates on this site. Dorothy asked where this site is in relation to the stream that runs into HAW. Adam said that stream is set further in the Colonial Oaks property. Dr. Tempel mentioned there is a drainage along Apgar, which is now the driveway into ‘Tyler Yard’ where the steel beams are laid down. Depending on the topography, anything coming off the United Rental site could possibly enter the drainage swale. We don’t know if drainage/runoff will be retained.
- Penske Trucking (1410 Sage St.) – applicant proposes to demolish existing warehouse and maintain and expand parking area for truck storage. They requested an EIS waiver. Their site plan shows removal of 18 trees and 48 proposed new trees. Jordan said 30 of the new plantings are shrubs. There are trees of large diameter on the property, so their tree replacement plan is not significant enough. Plan shows a lot coverage decrease from 80% to 67%. Adam and Jordan took that as impervious coverage and questioned that figure because the current site’s parking area is mostly gravel and the building will be replaced by ‘heavy-duty’ bituminous concrete paving. They are proposing a small sand-bottom filtration basin that will drain into the town storm sewer. Dr. Tempel said the coverage numbers are likely for building coverage. The Boro does not have an impervious coverage ordinance; entire lots can be paved. Jordan noted there are no buildings proposed on site; the site plan doesn’t specifically mention impervious surface coverage. SPEC will suggest anti-idling signs.
- 1145 Foster Avenue – the former home on Foster Avenue has been demolished. It will be replaced by 2 single-family homes fronting Foster Terrace and 1 on Foster Avenue. The applicant did not provide a formal tree replacement plan. They state they will be planting 5 street trees. Jordan said there are at least 2 dozen trees of significant size on site that will need to be replaced.

D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra said she will be meeting with Dr. Tempel the last week of June to resume work.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Scheduled a CCAB meeting for July 21 @7:00 pm at the HAW Nature Center.
- Dr. Tempel reported Kristina at DPW forwarded a complaint from a resident on Maltby Avenue about tons of trash in the wooded area at Maltby & Tompkins. She wants Recycling to handle this as part of regular litter patrol. The Recycling crew has been busy with excess material at the center. There were volunteers there for the Spring Cleanup, but they did not get deep into the woods. Dorothy suggested it is the wrong time of year to enter such a heavily wooded area. Agreed to address in early spring or winter.

- Dr. Tempel said as far as she knows, the MCIA has not done anything about cleaning litter on their portion of Coolidge Street. However, some High School students took the initiative to do some additional litter cleanup there.
- Dr. Tempel got a call from Saira Torres on Pitt Street about a constant rain of litter coming from people who walk down to the end of the street and cross the railroad tracks. Dr. Tempel emailed Chief Parker asking if that access can be blocked off and he contacted Ms. Torres.
- Lisa has typed 'Certificates of Appreciation' for spring cleanup volunteers that need to be printed. Currently having an issue with the photocopier/printer. Dr. Tempel will call the company tomorrow.
- Dr. Tempel has sent 'thank you' cards to several smaller groups and families/individuals who participated in the cleanup. Debra asked if it would be easier to have certificates on hand at cleanups to distribute; this can be discussed at the CCAB meeting.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra said there was one 2nd quarter renewal. She sent a press release to TapInTo, The Observer and Courier News. She will ask Anne Daly to put the release on the Boro website and Facebook page. Dr. Tempel mentioned we received an inquiry from a pharmacy on Oak Tree Rd.
- Dr. Tempel attended the NJCCC's annual conference which focused on the single-use bag ban. Dr. Tempel mentioned there were reps from WaWa and Wakefern who have already been dealing with the ban in other states. We will need to spend time at the upcoming CCAB meeting to discuss public education strategies. The NJCCC is participating in a coalition of organizations at the State level to deal with various aspects of educating the public about the bag ban. Customers need to be prepared in order to avoid frustrations/confrontations at stores.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Sansone Group is applying to NJDEP for a freshwater wetlands LOI at 800 Montrose Avenue (Valid) at the corner of South Clinton. According to the survey, there is a detention basin hidden in the wooded section that takes runoff from the developed portion. Also, there is a drainage swale and a stream with associated wetlands; also a 1/3 acre isolated wetlands between the parking lot and the drainage swale. These join before flowing north toward the nature reserve. Dr. Tempel doesn't know what they are planning to do on the parcel. She is interested to know if the wetlands are in fact isolated. She asked Adam & Jordan if they can look at the site.

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

- Adam said he wants to post a press release about bacterial leaf scorch that seems to mainly affect mature Pin Oaks. The trees are ecologically valuable because they are mature. It usually only affects patches of the tree. Homeowners might think their tree is dying when in fact they can purchase a \$200 treatment.
- Dr. Tempel reported Lee Stanford & Company planted the Red Oak in the dog park on 5/19. Dr. Tempel took photos and sent press releases.

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

- Dorothy said we did not get the ANJEC grant for additional deer fencing. If we want to pursue, we can ask the Mayor & Council for money, plus use SPEC/FOW funds. Materials are approximately \$1,500.
- Dorothy said she noticed two doors at the Nature Center that are rusted/bubbled that need repair.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

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

- John reported the State Police and SEC (state emergency response council) are being sued. The State did not ensure that a particular company located in Union County had an ERCP (emergency response contingency plan) in place. He explained that most of the chemical plants in NJ don't file an ERCP. Also, each municipality that has chemical companies needs to have a LEPC (local emergency planning council) to plan for emergencies. Historically, this hasn't been enforced on the federal level. It is to be determined if all companies will be required to submit an ERCP. MCOEM has 50 facilities listed in South Plainfield alone.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel reported the GT submitted their application to Sustainable NJ and now we wait for their comments. There is still plenty to do on several Actions. Tom said he completed the fleet inventory. Kristina, DPW, gave Tom 481 pages to review; she broke the info down by vehicle. Tom went through some of stats as there was quite a lot involved. Some of the vehicles' gas mileage is very low. SPEC would like to see the Boro buy hybrid vehicles, where possible, the next time they purchase; Councilman Pete Smith previously suggested that also. Dr. Tempel said it would be a good idea to take this report and make a formal recommendation to the Mayor & Council. The point of these Actions is to be able to make data-based recommendations to governing bodies.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported SPEC's Facebook page carried 3 posts: reached 2,935 people, 399 engagements and 9 shares. Dr. Tempel posted to 'Idle Free' on the Boro Facebook page. John's article on pet waste on stormwater was also posted on the Boro website, SPEC Facebook page and TapInto.

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

- John said he attended a webinar hosted by T&M Associates. They spoke about different permeable surfaces available to use. A lot of great ideas, but unfortunately, very expensive. John gave some details.
- John said he plans to write another article explaining what 'groundwater' is exactly and why we need to make it cleaner etc.
- Green Brook Flood Control Project - John printed out color-coded maps of the USACE project features and layout plans for Middlesex, Somerset and Union Counties.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

- Dorothy mentioned an article she read about a lawsuit being brought by approximately 400 neighbors in the South Randolphville Road area in Piscataway. It is an historic area that Jack Morris wants to build a very large warehouse on. It is near Randolph Elementary School and borders Halpern's Farm. The current owners of the property want to rezone to allow a trucking depot. The article states the lawsuit calls for 'environmental justice' as Piscataway's population is $\frac{3}{4}$ non-white.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- Dr. Tempel noted memos that were sent to department heads and board chairs, reminding them that the Mayor & Council signed several Sustainable NJ pledges last year as part of our certification:

Planning Board to take into account sustainable land use; a plan to deal with companion animals/responsible pet ownership. The memo is intended to remind people to keep these pledges-to-action in mind when they perform their official functions.

7. Old Business

- Debra said the next Human Relations Committee meeting is 6/17.

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 14, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m. 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
CBA	-Clean Business 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
SPBA	-South Plainfield Business Association
SPEC	-South Plainfield Environmental Commission
USACE	-United States Army Corp of Engineers