

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - November 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 7:30 pm. This meeting took place at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center.

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

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

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

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent: Adam Butrico (e)

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the October 13, 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 = \$2,225) Since the last meeting we spent \$-67.96 because the Green Team table cover cost less; \$140 registration for Green Team members for Sustainable NJ awards luncheon: net expenditures = \$72.04. YTD spent = \$947.86. Balance = \$1,227.14
- Clean Communities - (2020 grant \$45,370) We received the 2021 grant = \$48,287.91. Spent since October 13 = \$40,796 on: \$475 on litter can maintenance; \$1,078 on litter removal/sign enforcement salary & wages; and \$38,218 for street sweeping wages & disposal for both 2020 and 2021 grants; \$1,000 for clean communities' assemblies at Riley School; \$25 for Adopt-a-Spot sponsor sign at Putnam Park for the Jones Family. YTD spent = \$42,735 from the 2020 grant, \$17,134 from the 2021 grant plus \$5,865 from the 2019 grant = \$65,760. Balance = \$36,349.
- 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. Dorothy asked if the \$73,500 check from the Park Ave. storage facility was found. Dr. Tempel said it has not been located yet. She will ask Glenn Cullen. Pete will inquire at the next council meeting.

5. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- Pete said he met with Dr. Tempel and Kevin Kober to discuss the signage ordinance. Kevin is writing up a proposed amendment to the zoning ordinance section that specifies rules for signage. It would amend the section to specify how far back from the curb signs need to be. Pete will await Kevin's writeup.
- Plastic Bag Ban – Dorothy and Dr. Tempel submitted a written proposal, via email, to Pete. It proposes placing pole banners up throughout the Boro with a picture of 'BagupNJ' logo and campaign information as well. Pete said he will discuss the idea at Monday night's council meeting.

- Lisa conveyed a question from Adam Butrico: has Adam's suggestion of an annual tax/fee to businesses with truck loading docks to be used to mitigate pollution, road damage etc. been discussed with the Mayor & Council? Pete did bring it up to the M&C. Paul Rizzo said it can't be done, but they will investigate other means to pursue. Any solution would require the Boro to reach out to every business in town.

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

- Rich said the 'Colonial Oaks' plan on New Brunswick Avenue was approved, subject to a few details the applicant will work on with their planner and the Boro.

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

- There were no new site plans.
- Jordan said he looked through Dr. Tempel's comments for the 1 Cragwood Rd. site plan. He asked Dr. Tempel about her tree removal/replacement plan calculations. Dr. Tempel explained the calculations were based on how the replacement should be viewed; some of our tree ordinance is ambiguous. She didn't think it was appropriate to count the land that is already cleared; calculated off the unprotected lands minus the wetlands.

D. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra said she and Dr. Tempel will coordinate a meeting for December. The worksheets are in order. Will continue work on the updated Open Space list/map.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Plastic Bag Ban – Discussed further. Dr. Tempel said we may ask Kathleen Benton's students, who put together the PowerPoint presentation on the evils of plastic pollution, to make a presentation to the Mayor & Council in January to kick off the 'anti-plastic bag' campaign. Debra suggested putting a message on the electronic board in front of the library as well. Dr. Tempel said we need to design an ad by 11/15 for 'The Observer'. Debra said we can send a couple different flyer designs to Susan, Art Director, who can put a design together. A half-page color ad = \$655. John made a motion to purchase the ad, seconded by Debra, and all were in favor of approval. We did post a NJDEP PSA video hosted by the commissioner on the subject of reusable shopping bags.
- Adopt-a-Spot - Debra reported on 4th quarter renewal (Midco/Republic Svcs.). Also, Keystone is renewing their agreement for Front Street. Debra said she will provide a year-to-date report on all participants at next month's meeting.
- Dr. Tempel said a resident came in to talk to her about Kevin Kober. He suggested Kevin is 'stealing Boro time' by using the Clean Communities truck for his personal business. He has seen the truck in Kevin's driveway and the grocery store. Dr. Tempel spoke with Kevin. She believes that his explanation was reasonable and what she assumed it would be. Glenn Cullen also agreed that what Kevin is doing seems reasonable.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Rich Wolff succeeded in evicting the paving company that was illegally using the property next to Randazzo's on South Clinton Avenue. Rich has the property owner in court.

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

- Dr. Tempel and Pete discussed developing a plan to inventory existing trees to determine where big trees that are lifting sidewalks should be replaced with smaller trees. Finding and depositing the \$73,500 check to the tree fund would be useful for performing a street tree inventory.
- Dr. Tempel said she looked at Panzarella's 3-lot subdivision for a tree permit @ 965 Lewis Avenue. He had not planned on removing any trees on site; however, there was a dogwood that was removed. After a few trips to the site, Dr. Tempel recommended he remove the Tree of Heaven and the Boro would not require replacement trees, because it is a public service to get rid of the Spotted Lanternfly host. Panzarella said he and tree service people he had spoken with had not heard of the quarantine. Dr. Tempel emailed the Dept. of Agriculture; verified that builders are responsible for complying, which involves getting a permit to move material. Dr. Tempel also informed Dominic Demico, recommending that the Building Dept. should notify all the builders who come in for permits about this. Dr. Tempel was disturbed by the fact that the tree service companies were not informed of the quarantine in Middlesex County. Dr. Tempel believes Panzarella will have the trees chipped and left on site.

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

- Dr. Tempel received an inquiry from Joe Glowacki of the Ponytail Association. He is thinking of expanding the ballfields at Pitt Street Park. According to the ROSI, two lots are part of the park and two lots are part of HAW. Dr. Tempel told Joe Glowacki they would need to get a survey done to determine the property lines and get permission from the Recreation Commission.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico

- Middlesex Water Company announced its South Plainfield treatment plant has PFOA's (perfluorooctanoic acid) at levels exceeding NJDEP's standards. John said the presence of PFOA's has been there, but the acceptable level was lowered from 40 to 14. Is the NJDEP being alarmist? Is 40 really safe? Dr. Tempel said the EPA has their level at 70 ppt.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom reported the GT was awarded Bronze Level recertification. The Boro will be recognized at the Sustainable NJ luncheon at the League of Municipalities convention on 11/16.
- Tom met with an irrigation company and High School teachers at the High School greenhouse. The greenhouse will become more of a classroom atmosphere, as well as engaging special needs students.
- Tom received the info from the 'National Drug Takeback'. 37 residents dropped off 155 lbs. of prescription drugs. The next GT meeting is 12/9.
- Debra asked for clarification on the 'survey' that Bob Longo emailed Roberto Sayers, business group rep, of the Human Relations Committee. Debbie Boyle made a presentation at their last meeting which left Debra under the impression there was urgency to get the survey done. Dr. Tempel explained the GT is interested in performing 'Diversity on Boards & Commissions' action for points, but not for the current certification application, so there is no urgency. By doing so, it gives us a framework to determine if the town's Board & Commission members are representative of our demographics. The first step is for all the boards/commissions to survey themselves e.g., income levels, cultural heritage etc. Then compare that to the census data factors. If the Boro is interested in participating, the GT will

pursue. More info on the action is needed. Tom said Bob Longo's intent was to get the Human Relations Committee to spearhead the survey.

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

- Dr. Tempel reported in October, SPEC's Facebook page carried 5 posts: reached 3,006 people, 98 engagements. The GT Facebook page had 4 posts, reaching 320 people. Idle Free SP had one post: seeking input for on-the-ground surveys of idling hot spots. No one responded to volunteer. Dorothy asked if the County could put 'No Idling' signs in Spring Lake Park. John offered to call Rick Lear, MC Parks Director.

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

- At the next NJDEP meeting for the CRS-MS4 plan, they will be encouraging municipalities to participate. If towns participate, with the right number of points earned for stormwater/flood mitigation, resident's flood insurance rates would be lowered. Dr. Tempel asked if South Plainfield is involved; John said no. Dr. Tempel would like to encourage the Boro official that is listed to attend, to do so. John will forward that name to Dr. Tempel. Dr. Tempel asked John if our town had a 'stormwater utility' to charge a fee based on the amount of impervious surface on properties; would that count towards a flood reduction action? John replied yes.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.
- Dr. Tempel asked members if they have ideas to inform residents about the upcoming plastic bag ban. Tom suggested asking stores to inform their customers. Dr. Tempel said the NJCCC has a website Bagupnj.com with useful information/resources to use for an outreach campaign. How do we reach our business community to provide them the information? We will reach out to Councilman White and the SPBA. Debra said Darlene Pinto (TapInto) and Nancy Grennier (Observer) said they will help us with press releases. Debra said also there is a list of groups that will help spread the word when we come up with a flyer. Dr. Tempel suggested that if we had a physical flyer, volunteers could go from store-to-store. She will come up with an informational handout. Dorothy suggested putting out a PSA on the Boro's local video channel. Pete said we should concentrate on informing residents that they won't be getting plastic bags, because the businesses should already know. The businesses probably won't be able to purchase the bags and will be fined if they offer them. Pete will ask some small business owners if they've been informed of the ban by the State.

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

- There was nothing to report.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- A list of correspondence was provided.

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2021 @ 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
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