

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - November 13, 2019

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 8:07 pm.

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

Alternate members present: Adam Butrico and Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Kathleen Benton and Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others: Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

Absent: Jon Dean

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 9, 2019 were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

3. INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- Tom Benton was in attendance.

4. BUDGET - Dr. A. Tempel

- O&E (FY2019) (\$2,375) Since the last meeting we spent \$67.82 on a backup battery replacement for Nature Center computer. YTD spent = \$565.75. Balance = \$1,809.25. There is one month left to spend the balance.
- Clean Communities - (2019 grant \$50,329.53) Spent since October meeting = \$1,312.26 on: \$787.50 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages - plus other jobs; \$475 for litter can maintenance; \$49.76 for blank Certificates of Appreciation + pens. Spent YTD = \$14,349.60 since 8/15/19. The balance = \$36,767.13.
- 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 \$31,653.78.
- Dorothy asked about the replacement trees for Willow Park. Dr. Tempel said a Dogwood was cut down by DPW because it was in front of a security camera. The replacement will probably have to be planted in the Spring. Tom asked about the loss of some trees in the Dog Park. Dr. Tempel said she will talk to Jon Dean and Len Miller about whose responsibility it is to replace them. She explained it may be the fault of the Boro. The gator bags might have been clogged due to silt/debris in the sewer truck water tank that was being used by DPW to fill the bags. Tom said there is a water faucet at the dog park.

5. COMMITTEE and LIAISON REPORTS

A. Council Liaison - Mr. J. Dean

- There was no report.

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

- Rich said the only site plan on the agenda last night was JRB Properties on Snyder Road which we discussed in September. It was postponed for two weeks.
- 1111 Durham Ave. (Crossroads @ Durham) - final approval pending the storm drain/sanitary sewer study.

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

D. ERI -

- There was nothing new to report.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Debra and Dr. Tempel met on 11/8 to discuss the next steps in the CBA program.
- Debra read her draft outline for the 'Glitter Award' criteria. She asked for member's opinions. Should recipients be required to be CBA members? Dr. Tempel said historically, we've done it simultaneously if they were not members. Debra will draft a welcome letter to businesses who have been nominated for a 'Glitter Award'. Bett-A-Way was suggested as a 'Glitter Award' nominee. Debra will contact them about becoming a CBA member.
- Debra said she will submit a press release next March about the Clean Business Association (CBA).
- Debra and Dr. Tempel will go through the 'Adopt-a-Spot' contacts to see who is up for renewal.
- Debra said Saturday's Veteran's Day Community Celebration was to be a 'litter-free' event. There seemed to be a lack of communication with the Public Celebrations Committee, so the criteria was not met. Debra wants to educate groups and the public about litter-free events. Dr. Tempel suggested identifying those groups who are likely to host an event in town. We can write a short statement of the program and submit to those groups. Dr. Tempel said we should target all the event entities in town with a checklist of items to meet 'litter-free' criteria. The checklist should also include Boro & State Solid Waste Management Requirements. Adam noted he'd like to see recycling bins placed next to all litter cans at events.
- Debra and Dr. Tempel spoke about reviewing the Clean Communities website '2019 Best Practices' for different ways to make the community event organizers aware of the program.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- Green Brook Flood Control Project - John Ferguson and Dr. Tempel attended the 10/2 meeting. There is a new project leader named Alek Peterson. Congress approved some funding for 2020. The Upper Basin issue, which So. Plainfield lies in, is not resolved. The original plan has to be scrapped because land development over the last 20 years has made it impractical. Most likely a new General Re-evaluation Report will be done to develop alternatives, however, a lower level of protection will be achieved. The original plan was already a lower level than in the Lower Basin, which is protecting against the 100-year storm. Some areas of the Upper Basin were not going to be protected against anything bigger than a 20-year storm. Dr. Tempel said Congress might consider this a new project if too much changes from the original plan. It is beginning to look more and more like the project will not reach South Plainfield any time soon.
- Middlesex County Water Resources Association - Dr. Tempel attended and reported on the meeting. JeanMarie Hartman, Rutgers Landscape Architecture Dept., presented on 'Assessing Forest Status in the Lower Raritan Watershed & Infrastructure'. Her research indicated that upland forests as well as lowland and floodplain forests are our best green infrastructure at reducing flooding and improving water quality. The denser the trees, the more benefits e.g.- reduced soil erosion, leakage from nutrients. Dr. Tempel noted that 64% of the lower Raritan watershed has 0% canopy cover and only 15% has a closed canopy. Dr. Tempel asked members if they have any suggestions for floodplain restoration in the Boro. There is a '2020 Roots for Reforestation Grant and Technical Assistance Program' being offered by The Nature Conservancy & Sustainable NJ. The application is due by 12/13/19. Dorothy suggested Veteran's Park, however, the Cornell-Dublier Bound Brook remediation has not been completed yet. Dr. Tempel suggested we can plant more trees near the HAW entrance on New Market Avenue. Dorothy also suggested in HAW between trail markers 8 & 9 where there is a light gap. Dr. Tempel thinks the grant is specifically for lowland areas; those markers lie in uplands.

G. Forestry - Mr. J. Schmidt

- Dr. Tempel reported that a resident on Selene Avenue approached the Mayor to ask that the Boro demand his neighbor take down a hazardous tree that had already damaged his shed. The Selene Avenue

resident cannot get his neighbor to take the tree down; she doesn't have the funds. This triggered a proposed ordinance to make property owners abate tree hazards. Dr. Tempel said there is currently no authority in the Boro code to do that. The Boro attorney has drafted an ordinance to give the Boro authority to tell people they must remove hazardous trees on their property. The Boro would remove a tree and place a lien on that property if they cannot recover the costs from the resident. Paul Rizzo asked Dr. Tempel if the ordinance should apply to businesses as well as residential properties. She told him it should, but that would vastly increase the number of potential violations; who will do the inspections/enforcement? We would need a tree expert to decide the health of the trees. Dr. Tempel will send SPEC members a copy of the draft for review and comment at next month's meeting.

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

- Dorothy asked Dr. Tempel if the repairs were made at the Nature Center. Dr. Tempel said the torn water vapor membrane under the center was repaired. Light bulbs were replaced in the History Center, but DPW has to wait for an electrician to replace the light fixture in the Nature Center bathroom. She is not sure if the gutters were cleaned out, but the request was made.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

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

- Adam reported New Jersey is attempting to crack down on vehicle idlers. It will mainly include vehicles idling too long in the morning - more than 3 minutes. The first offense = \$250. Adam believes the state is sending out grants to municipalities to use for enforcement.
- Dr. Tempel said the Boro is finalizing a 'Right of Access' agreement with Home Depot to allow monitoring wells to be installed in the Boro ROW on Tyler Place and Gardner Avenue so the groundwater contaminant plume can be delineated. The groundwater pollution emanating from under Home Depot is from a prior owner.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Dr. Tempel said she and Bob Longo attended the Health Fair on 10/19. They distributed info about energy efficient homes, anti-idling, recycling and storm water management. The Green Team, as one of our actions, will be encouraging homeowners to have an energy audit. Sustainable NJ has developed a program, through the state, to provide homeowners with specific rebates if the audit recommendations are performed. Also, Dr. Tempel gave out free gallon jugs for used cooking oil, which our recycling center accepts.
- Councilwoman Faustini is asking for our help in completing the 'No Smoking' signage in the Boro parks we started two years ago. The opinion is there is not enough signs.

L Public Information & Technology -

- Dr. Tempel submitted several posts to our Facebook pages including the latest 'Coachlings' campaign.

M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom submitted a 'Clear the Drains' article to the usual outlets.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel said the MCIA and Freeholders are awarding the next recycling contract to Soltera (the only bid). The cost is more than doubling because of recycling markets. The per unit cost is now \$2.68 and will be increasing to \$5 + per unit/ per month. Additionally, the cost of hauling our bottles & cans from our drop-off center is going from \$95/ton to \$285/ton. Dr. Tempel explained it's been a long time since we've had income from our recyclables. Since we are mandated to collect them, the normal 'supply & demand' fluctuations don't work. All our manufacturing went overseas years ago, so all the mills that use these goods are not here. China doesn't want our stuff because it is not clean enough. We should start enforcing cleaner recycling. We are now also paying to get rid of cardboard.
- Kathleen Benton mentioned to Dr. Tempel there is a recycling issue that came up in the High School. Her Environmental Club students found that recycling isn't being done in the classrooms and the

containers outside are full too often. The custodians aren't separating the recycling from the trash. Dr. Tempel said she thinks Soltera follows the residential pickup schedule for that area. Dr. Tempel said Tom Wiggins, Building & Grounds manager, recently informed her that the High School doesn't have enough container capacity. Unfortunately, Dr. Tempel just approved the county specs for the new contract. She emailed the MCIA to ask for more or larger dumpsters, but hasn't received a response yet. Once she does, she will call a meeting with Tom Wiggins.

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

- There was nothing new to report.

6. INCOMING / OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

- A list of correspondences is attached

7. OLD BUSINESS

- Plastic bag ban - Dorothy said she and Dr. Tempel thoroughly discussed SPEC's ideas from last month's meeting. Dr. Tempel said the Facebook poll that members proposed may be beyond the scope of what we were asked to do from Jon Dean. She explained poll taking/analyzing is a science that SPEC is not qualified to perform correctly. For one thing, our poll through SPEC's webpage, would be skewed because people who look at our page have an environmental slant. The way in which questions are asked is important to maintain neutrality. It would also be a small sample size. Dorothy and Dr. Tempel feel there isn't a clear-cut best option to be found concerning single-use plastic. Dorothy asked members if they want to continue looking into the ban in light of the council change in 2020. Members said we should reach out to Jon Dean and ask if he still wants our opinion.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- Adam asked if there are deer population control grants available. Dr. Tempel spoke about SPEC's efforts to address deer control with the Mayor & Council some years ago. Ultimately, they were not interested for several reasons.
- John Ferguson reported that Middlesex County OEM received the hazard mitigation grant; the Freeholders signed off. Will now look for a party to help rewrite the hazard mitigation plan. There will be a meeting to discuss the rewrite on 12/3 with FEMA and several Rutgers University personnel. OEM is hoping to incorporate the mitigation plan into the new State Master Plan.
- Kathleen mentioned the High School seniors are required to complete a community service project for graduation. Currently 35 students are in need of projects. Perhaps they can help Debra with the Clean Communities/Clean Business Association needs. Debra will reach out to Kathy for their information.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:53 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2019 at 8:00 pm 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
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
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