

South Plainfield Environmental Commission

Official Minutes - October 9, 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 8:05 pm.

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

Alternate members present: Jordan Mandel

Associate members present: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Others:

Absent: Jon Dean, Adam Butrico and Dr. Tempel

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 11, 2019 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 (FY2019) (\$2,375) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$497.93. Balance = \$1,877.07.
- Clean Communities - (2019 grant \$50,329.53) Spent since September meeting = \$9,996.70 on: \$857.50 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages; \$475 for October litter can maintenance; \$1,205 for storm drain markers; \$7,399.20 on street sweeping salary June-September; \$60 for street sweeping disposal fee. Spent YTD = \$22,246.54. The balance = \$38,079.39.
- 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.

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

- Brian said the board met last night. Reviewed final approval for Crossroads @ Durham. There were some inconsistencies in the final plan. Brian said it will be reviewed by our experts.

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

- 2602 Deerfield (1703 Kenyon Ave.) - Proposed residential subdivision. Jordan just received this site plan to review. There is currently a home at the corner of Kenyon & Rahway Avenues. Applicant is proposing to subdivide the property into another residential lot. There were no objections.
- JHP Development (240 Adeline Ave.) - Proposed residential subdivision. Current single lot with a home. Applicant is proposing to take down the existing house to build two new residences some time in the future. They need a variance for under-sized lots. Will request a formal tree planting/replacement plan. There is a tree planting list, but no measurements for tree removals.

D. ERI -

- There was no report.

E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dorothy read from Dr. Tempel's report:
- About 50 people turned out for the fall litter cleanup. Volunteers filled 49 bags plus some heavy debris. Estimate they picked up close to a ton of trash.
- Dr. Tempel sent thank you cards to 5 participating families/groups that she could find addresses for, plus 19 copies of a Certificate of Appreciation to the High School Environmental Science Club.
- Kevin Kober labeled 81 storm drains, picked up 5 bags of litter and 300 lbs. of heavy debris. Kevin removed 40 lawn signs and 17 pole signs during September.
- DPW said there are 20 high school students looking for community service hours who want to attach the medallions to storm drains. Dr. Tempel found out up to 25% of the Clean Communities grant can be used for storm water management activities; we can pay for more storm drain medallions. Tom said that will equate to Sustainable New Jersey action points.
- Adopt-a-Spot - some Fall Cleanup volunteers nominated Bett-A-Way.

F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel

- TAPinto SP reports that Mott and Smith, council candidates, support the idea of acquiring Longwood Estates as open space or for a cultural center. Dorothy said our commission has discussed this in the past and understood that the council didn't appear to be interested. Dorothy explained that before that information came out in TAPinto SP, Dr. Tempel received a call from Scott Reid, owner of Longwood Estates. He wanted to read our commission minutes. Dr. Tempel emailed Scott Reid to tell him he can come into her office and read our minutes. In speaking with Amy Antonides, Boro Clerk, she asked our commission if we want our minutes published on the Boro website. Dorothy asked members their opinion. Members thought it would be beneficial. Subsequent to that inquiry, Darlene Pinto, TAPinto SP, submitted an OPRA request for our January - October minutes. Lisa will provide the January - September minutes via email to Darlene Pinto; the October minutes will not be approved until our November meeting. Tom made a motion to publish our minutes on the Boro website each month, seconded by Danielle and all were in favor.

G. Forestry - Mr. J. Schmidt

- OTOSP - On 9/18 Dr. Tempel took down quite a few sweet gum root sprouts around the edges of the clearing where the Eagle Scout candidate cleared. She also spent time clearing vines from one of Jim's hazelnut shrubs. On 10/24 Dr. Tempel and Lisa Roseo cleared one heavily overgrown hazelnut shrub.
- Putnam Park - Greg Hoffman, Recreation Director, mentioned to Dr. Tempel that he is thinking of clearing trees out of the woods to get rid of areas where sexual predators might lurk. On 9/27 Dr. Tempel walked through the woods and found the central area very degraded. The dense area along Park Avenue could be thinned. Dr. Tempel notified Greg Hoffman and DPW that it looks like the tot lot is being invaded by horse nettle, which is thorny and toxic. DPW will clear it out.

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

- Dorothy said two light fixtures were repaired in the nature center.

I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph

- There was nothing to report.

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

- There was no report.

K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom mentioned the Mayor's Wellness Committee in conjunction with St. Peter's Healthcare System will be hosting a Health Fair on 10/19. The Gaitans volunteered to help staff a table.
- Tom said the Green Team will be meeting the end of the month to discuss Sustainable NJ credits.

L Public Information & Technology -

- There was no report.

M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom will try and put out information on clearing the storm drains on the usual social media sites.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- Bamboo ban - Dorothy said she reached out to Dr. DeVito, SPEC Associate Member, on the proposed bamboo/invasive species ordinance. She read Dr. DeVito's response: forget prohibiting invasive species that are wind dispersed; they are well established everywhere. E.g.- Japanese Barberry & Knotweed, Honeysuckle etc. We can prohibit bamboo of every variety because people won't know which variety is spreading/non-spreading. We can make the property owner responsible for controlling future expansion onto adjacent properties. For patches that have already spread onto adjacent properties, we can put a clause in that would allow the affected neighbor to have the source neighbor pay to remove the encroaching bamboo and prevent future re-establishment. Dr. DeVito does not think we should force a resident to remove their pre-existing stable bamboo; make it illegal for the patch to get larger. Residents will likely choose to remove their bamboo because it will become difficult to control. SPEC discussed and agreed to defer to Dr. DeVito's suggestion and let the Mayor & Council work out the legalities.

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 - Jordon read the pro / con list he wrote concerning the possibility of a plastic bag ban.
Pros:

- leads to a reduction in non-biodegradable materials and products littered
- fee proceeds could potentially help support local businesses and/or could be used for further implementation practices of the ban
- businesses save money on purchasing bags
- less down time at recycling plants due to less plastic film wrapping around machine parts

Cons:

- consumers will pay for use of bags or find suitable replacement
- could lead to a spike in plastic garbage bag sales / consumption. People generally re-use their single-use bags for other purposes e.g. - dog litter, garbage can liner etc.

Jordon will forward the list to Dr. Tempel, Dorothy and Lisa. SPEC discussed. Lisa said there are studies that suggest some alternatives to plastic bags have a larger carbon footprint than plastic. Brian suggested some of the fees collected for the plastic bags can be used to provide re-usable bags for consumers. Lisa said it would be great if we had a bio-degradable option. Jordon said he is in favor of the fee instead of an outright ban. It's hopeful that some people will end up re-using their plastic bags due to the fee.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- Brian mentioned that the street-naming committee which is a sub-committee of the Planning Board, are looking for new street names for the Crossroads @ Durham complex. They are looking for suggestions of veteran's names. Dorothy suggested perhaps the committee should contact our commission or the Historical Society for names that have had an impact in town. Dorothy said maybe it is time to have only the second female in town have a street named in their honor. She suggested Florence Terry - first woman ever elected to any public office - BOE 1944.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 13, 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
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