

# South Plainfield Environmental Commission

## Official Minutes - September 11, 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 8:00 pm.

**Present:** Dorothy Miele, Debra Leporino, Danielle Hurst, John Ferguson, Jon Dean (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison)

**Alternate members present:** Jordan Mandel and Adam Butrico

**Associate members present:** Lisa Roseo (secretary)

**Others:** Dr. Alice Tempel (environmental specialist)

**Absent:** Tom Walsh (e)

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 14, 2019 were reviewed and the following changes were made: on page 2, Site Plan Review, 6<sup>th</sup> line should read.....flood hazard permit which allows them to put fill in a flood plain.

On page 2, Forestry, 1<sup>st</sup> line, 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence should read.....we plan to purchase extra trees to plant in Willow Park. After those corrections were made, all were in favor of approval.

### 3. INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- John Abbruzzese, Code Enforcement, was in attendance. He informed SPEC that the boro is taking steps to deal with bamboo. John said he would like input from our commission before adopting an ordinance. John said residents frequently complain about neighbors bamboo encroaching on their property. Dorothy asked if we should also address other non-native plants that are also an issue. John said it is the right time to do that. John would like to see all bamboo included in the ban ordinance. Dorothy asked how the ordinance will be enforced. She mentioned that many people are not aware that some of the plants they typically might purchase at Home Depot/Lowes, etc. are non-native and/or invasive. John said what commonly happens is a resident will call and report an issue about a neighbor. John will assess the complaint, with the caller's permission, and then deal with the neighbor. Dr. Tempel suggested that some non-native species on residents' property such as Japanese Barberry, may be spread to a neighbor via bird droppings. Those species will end up being controlled by mowing. That should fall under a different category than bamboo, which is very difficult to control. Some non-native species damage natural areas. Including those species in the ordinance will be hard to enforce. It might be better to include controls over what retailers can sell to the public. However, we cannot address retailers outside of South Plainfield. Jon said we should then prohibit those invasive species from being planted. Dorothy said there is a list of invasive plants on the Rutgers website. The proposed draft ordinance states that if a resident currently has bamboo on their property, they have to remove it. Dorothy believes it isn't fair to the property owner who didn't originally plant it. The draft also states that if a property owner planted the bamboo and does not remediate the issue, the Boro will do it for them. If the property owner cannot pay, the Boro will put a lien on their property. Dorothy believes the removal task can be very expensive and she isn't sure the methods are 100% successful. Jon said at least 2 - 3 feet of soil would have to be excavated several feet beyond the roots, fill brought in and re-vegetated. Lisa asked if an owner's remediation expense might be somewhat offset by having their bamboo farmed out. Members should come back to the next meeting with thoughts on the proposed ordinance.

#### 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 - (2018 grant \$45,915.07) Ended with a balance of \$4,400.19. Spent since August 15 = \$3,669.50 on: \$927.50 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages; \$475 for October litter can maintenance; \$1,500 on education; \$599 on publicity (Observer display ad for fall cleanup); \$168 on Clear Stream bags for 'litter free' events. On 8/19 we received a 6-month extension to finish spending the 2018 grant, through February 2020. After Dr. Tempel made her corrections, the 2018 grant has been spent.  
(2019 grant \$50,329.53) Spent since 8/15 = \$2,184.14. Balance = \$48,181.09. The cost of an assembly program was split between the 2018 and 2019 grant.
- 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

- Jon said there is nothing new to report. Dr. Tempel asked if the council expressed interest in applying for open space/Green Acres funds for the Park Avenue land for sale. Jon said the Mayor & Council didn't seem interested. Jon said he heard the property was subdivided and part of it will be developed. Not confirmed.

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

- Rich said there hasn't been a meeting since July, therefore nothing new to report.

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

- Bridgepoint (602 New Market Ave.)(former Gypsum site) - applicant wants to build a large warehouse for storage and office building with parking in a flood plain. We reviewed this last month. Dr. Tempel did some research into why there is a pond in the detention basin. Their engineer said it is for water quality. The detention basin not only has to slow the discharge, it has to improve the quality. The micro-organisms in the pond will eat the pollutants coming off the impervious surfaces. Dr. Tempel is working on a comment letter for this application.
- Rosie, LLC (1510 Park Ave.) - current office building across from Burger King. The applicant wants to convert the two-story building to mixed use - apartments over commercial. Jordan and Adam looked at the site. Jordan said they propose 4 two-bedroom rental apartments. He said there will be an increase in garbage and recycling. There is no recycling plan included. SPEC will suggest they enhance their landscaping if possible. Dr. Tempel said if there is excess pavement on site, the Planning Board can suggest they convert the excess into vegetation.
- JRB Properties (111 Snyder Rd.) - Jordan and Adam looked at this site. Jordan reported the applicant proposes to add additional warehouse (4,000 sq. ft.) to square off their recent 26,000 sq. ft. addition. There are no trees present. SPEC will comment on more development equaling more storm water runoff in an already wet area. We will ask if the existing detention basin is large enough to handle the addition. Jordan looked at NJDEP's Geoweb link; there is groundwater contamination where they propose to build.

##### D. ERI -

- Dorothy said we need someone to oversee this committee.

##### E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel

- Dr. Tempel sent a press release to various outlets for the 9/21 Fall Litter Cleanup. As of 9/6, six people have signed up, plus Buddha Light International Assoc. Debra is planning to email the flier to TAP,

- The Observer, BOE and the SPBA.
  - Kevin Kober cleared 204 storm drains, picked up 19 bags of litter/1,756 lbs. of heavy debris and began putting on decals on unmarked storm drains in August.
  - Clean Campus - The Illusion Maker is booked to do assemblies in Franklin, Riley, Roosevelt and Holy Savior in November.
  - Dr. Tempel received a call from the Spotswood police chief, Michael Zarro, a South Plainfield resident. He is interested in forming an Adopt-a-Spot program there, and asked about how we run our program.
- F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel**
- There was nothing new to report.
- G. Forestry - Mr. J. Schmidt**
- Dr. Tempel asked Jon Dean about the status for the tree planting in Willow Park. Jon said he will talk to Len Miller, DPW, for a time frame.
  - There are a few trees at the Dog Park that died. Jon said it looks as though some of the water bags may be clogged and not dispersing properly.
  - Dr. Tempel and Jon Dean will get together to discuss the next part of the Franklin Avenue tree planting.
- H. Highland Avenue Woods / Public Education - Mrs. D. Miele**
- Dorothy said Adam Butrico made repairs to the station posts, cleared trees off the trails and fixed the kiosk board.
- I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph**
- There was nothing to report.
- J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico / Ms. D. Hurst**
- Adam found out our commission is not eligible to be notified when an environmental issue occurs; we have no standing. We would need to file an OPRA (open public records act) request on a case-by-case basis with the NJDEP. Adam said John Obryk, health department, gets forwarded LSRP (licensed site remediation professional) reports which contain info on active sites.
  - Dorothy reported she met with Danielle, Adam, Jordan and Jon prior to our meeting to discuss the proposed ban on plastic bags. Discussed info that each member found. Jordan summarized the issues/studies. SPEC discussed the variables. Danielle suggested posting a survey on SPEC's Facebook page for public opinion on the ban. Debra asked Jordan if he can attach the links from the research he obtained and post it on Facebook. Jon said he will bring this up at the next council meeting. Jordan will put together a pro/con list to discuss at our next meeting.
- K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh**
- Dr. Tempel said the team will meet on 9/19 to figure out what actions we have been working on and what new actions we want to institute that will get us certification points toward next level certification in 2020.
  - Dr. Tempel said Bob Longo wrote the report to Sustainable NJ to finalize the \$2,000 PSE&G grant.
  - Councilman White, Bob Longo, Debbie Boyle and Dr. Tempel participated in the main interview with the editor of 'Business View' magazine. The article will promote South Plainfield as a sustainable town.
- L. Public Information & Technology -**
- Dr. Tempel posted information on an event in Bridgewater about 'National Drive Electric Week'.
- M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh**
- Dr. Tempel mentioned that John Ferguson's eNewsletter provided info on the 'American Ambassador Program' They are working with towns to incorporate green infrastructure in their storm water management. Adam said he and Jordan will take a look at it.
  - John said the Middlesex County OEM (Office of Emergency Mgmt.) met today to discuss how to handle climate change issues - e.g. rising ocean levels. He will share the report when it is complete.
  - FEMA is re-doing the coastal flood maps.

- John was notified that FEMA is opening up funding for mitigation projects. John sent that info to the 25 towns with ongoing projects. It will provide acquisitions to some residents who need to elevate their homes.

N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel

- There was nothing additional to report.

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

8. NEW BUSINESS

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 October 9, 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