

South Plainfield Environmental Advisory Committee

Official Minutes - April 10, 2024

1. Call to Order

Notice having been filed with the S.P. Observer and TAP into SP, Chairwoman Debra Leporino called the Environmental Advisory Committee meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act at 7:34 pm.

Present: Debra Leporino (chairwoman) John Ferguson, Genevieve Helbo, Kristina Nieradka, and Brian Bythell (planning board liaison).

Others: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Absent: Tom Walsh and Melanie Mott

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the March 13, 2024 regular meeting were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

3. Invitation for Public Comment

Paul Zawacki, DPW/ Recycling Center Operations Mgr., introduced himself. He has some Forestry experience that he can offer.

John McConville, retired SP Police Sgt., introduced himself. He is interested in the committee.

Debra welcomed both of them and told them to reach out to Amy Antonides if they would like to become members of the EAC; an application is required. Members gave Paul & John a brief outline of our former commission's responsibilities and what our new committee is currently. This newly formed committee is working on its purpose/direction for the future.

4. Budget - TBD

- Debra said she has not heard anything from Glenn Cullen as the Mayor & Council have not approved the final budget yet.

5. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Council Liaison - Ms. M. Mott

- Debra read Melanie Mott's emailed report: Melanie was thinking we should open up litter cleanup all year for those who are unable to attend townwide litter cleanup events. There are many people who are non-committal to adopt-a-spot and/or unable to attend planned events and this may help with that, particularly those who need community service hours. Or even businesses in town who would like community recognition. Melanie said she does not foresee this being an issue with DPW picking up the garbage when jobs are complete, especially because it will not be very often. If EAC agrees, Melanie will confirm with Len Miller and then we can plan from there.
- Kristina responded by saying we do have employees on litter patrol. Kristina and Paul work with Luke Melik, who is great. Kristina is in favor of doing this year-round but wants to make sure the hype of the big Spring Cleanup remains. We would need to work out a manageable system to perform regularly scheduled cleanups. Debra mentioned that our group has discussed offering an incentive to residents similar to the 'Glitter Award' that is given to businesses. Debra said we will revisit this proposal after the Spring Cleanup. Debra would also like to see the 'Adopt-a-Spot' program grow.

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

- Brian said the Planning Board meeting was canceled last night.

C. Clean Communities - Ms. K. Nieradka / Ms. D. Leporino

- Members discussed the upcoming cleanup. Kristina said she advertised the cleanup extensively. She has received a fair number of responses. Kristina created a spreadsheet that contains cleanup locations (as Dr. Tempel named). She handed out copies and asked which spots are kid-friendly, clarifications of said locations and what Adopt-a-Spots are still available. Kristina ordered, with Glen Cullen's approval, 144 grabbers @\$1,008 + \$130 shipping. We need to make sure volunteers return them after the cleanup. Debra and Genevieve will document how many and to who are given grabbers and safety vests. Debra contacted Hometown Heros who will provide trays of sandwiches. Debra suggested having small bags of chips too. Lisa said she purchased the cans of soda, paper plates and napkins. Pete Smith has secured the pizza from Ciccios. Genevieve said she usually gets the ice for the coolers.
- Debra mentioned Gina D'Urso, DPW, is creating a display board to recognize cleanup donors – i.e. Ciccios, Hometown Heros. Kristina said she and Paul got plant donations from Home Depot and Town & Country for prize giveaways at the pickup picnic. Kristina met with Kathleen Benton and Pari Patel (HS Environmental Science Club President). The students are very enthusiastic. They will be creating the environmental game for the picnic. Kristina also showed the students the up-cycled sewn creations she made using used blue jeans. She worked with the students for 3 hours last Saturday creating prize giveaways. That experience gave Kristina an idea we may want to consider, having a vendor table alongside the HS Environmental Club at the Labor Day picnic. The HS students need a funding source to rejuvenate their greenhouse and other endeavors. Kristina spoke to them about putting together a parade float; they were very excited. EAC members exchanged ideas.
- Adopt-a-Spot – Debra reported we have not received back any renewals from the last quarter of 2023; she assumes those folks do not want or cannot renew. Kristina suggested she and Debra get together soon to discuss the details of the program. The 1st quarter of 2024 had five renewal applications sent out and only three were returned: Tom Stillman-Fireman's Memorial/Austin Family-Plainfield & Maple Avenue area/Pender Family-HAW. The 2nd quarter of 2024 has eight renewals that Debra will be sending out soon.

D. Forestry - TBD

- Debra said our committee needs a chairperson for the Forestry subcommittee. Kristina said Paul and John are in attendance with interest in the forestry aspect. EAC members offered information/examples of what this subcommittee did in the past. Briefly discussed tying in tree plantings as a possible recognition to residents 'Glitter Award' program. We will discuss further when we talk about re-introducing the business 'Glitter Award.'

E. Highland Avenue Woods / Public Education - Mr. T. Walsh

- Lisa read the email Tom received from Dorothy: Looking forward to a beautiful spring in the woods with migrants arriving earlier than usual due to the odd fluctuation in warming and storm patterns. Dorothy encourages people to take a stroll, enjoy the scenery, the emergent wildflowers and the peace and quiet of our precious Nature Reserve.
- Dorothy plans to post photos from the very first Community Cleanup from 1982 with some commentary on the Historical Society Facebook page and HAW page.
- The Fishing Derby will make a return to Spring Lake Park after a hiatus of 20 years as per the Chief of Police who contacted Dorothy for a little history of it.

F. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. T. Walsh

- Lisa read the email Tom received from Dorothy: The lead archaeologist at the Colonial Oaks site (New Brunswick Ave.) will give a PowerPoint presentation to the Historical Society on Saturday, September 21 @ the SP Public Library. The public will be invited. Samples from the dig will likely be on display. The time of the presentation is TBD.

G. Pollution - Mr. J. Ferguson

- John reported that the issue with the PFAS's (forever chemicals) will remain important. The EPA is making it a liability for all the drinking water purveyors/suppliers. There will be a limit on 6 of the PFAS's: 4 pp trillion which is equal to one dropper of water in six Olympic-size pools.
- John mentioned that South Orange implemented a new 'dual' separation of recyclables. They found that by having specific recyclables picked up on different days, not single-stream, money is saved by all parties. The company saves by not having to separate.
- Lithium batteries – John was informed that when these batteries are burning, they make hydrochloric acid. The acid will destroy/dissolve the calcium in bones. Kristina expressed further concern about accepting and storing the lithium batteries at the Recycling Center. John said to make sure the ends of the batteries are duct-taped to prevent contact.

H. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom emailed his report: The GT met on 3/21 to discuss the upcoming Sustainable NJ (SJ) Action Items. Sustainable NJ got back to us with their notes for the action items to be completed we had to submit in February. When the action items were submitted by Bob Longo in February, SJ locks the website so no further action items can be worked on until they review. We are now permitted to work on the action items. The GT is starting to complete the action items based on SJ's review notes. Our next action item submittal date is 5/10.
- The next GT meeting is on 4/25 @7 pm.

I. Public Information & Technology - Ms. K. Nieradka

- Kristina has been posting on our Facebook page.

J. Stormwater Advisory Committee - Mr. J. Ferguson

- Resilient NJ – This program is designed to reduce flood damage in coastal and riverine towns. 7 of Middlesex Counties municipalities are taking part. John handed out a copy of Sayreville's framework for identifying/including 'Green Infrastructure' into any work being done within the town.
- GBFCC – John attended the last meeting. The USACE is finally deciding what to do with the Upper Basin. Unfortunately, it sounds like they want only to do non-structural mitigation to get people out of harm's way. e.g.- home elevations, home buyouts. That plan will not help South Plainfield in the long run. John believes we/GBFCC will argue that at least some levees and storm walls are needed.

K. Chairwoman's Report - Ms. D. Leporino

- Debra thanked Paul and John for attending our meeting.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

- Debra questioned whether we could omit this from our agenda as it was Dr. Tempel who reported. Decided to discuss replacing it with another title.

7. Old Business
8. New Business
9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024 @ 7:30 p.m. in the Borough Hall Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Lisa Roseo
 Environmental Advisory Committee Secretary

Acronyms

ANJEC	-Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
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
EPCRA	-Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act
FEMA	-Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOW	-Friends of the Woods
GBFCP	-Green Brook Flood Control Project
HAW	-Highland Avenue Woods
KCS	-Known Contaminated Sites
LOI	-Letter of Interpretation
MCDSWM	-Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management
MCOEM	-Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management
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
SPCCA	-South Plainfield Clean Communities Association
SPEAC	-South Plainfield Environmental Advisory Committee
USACE	-United States Army Corp of Engineers