

South Plainfield Environmental Advisory Committee
Official Minutes - March 13, 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 7:32 pm.

Present: Debra Leporino (chairwoman) Tom Walsh, John Ferguson, Genevieve Helbo, Kristina Nieradka, Melanie Mott (council liaison) and Rich Houghton (planning board liaison).

Others: Lisa Roseo (secretary)

Absent:

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the January 10, 2024 reorganization and regular 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 -

- Melanie reported she spoke with Glenn Cullen who said, most likely, our budget amount will remain the same as the prior year. The budget as a whole is being worked on currently. Tom asked if the Harris Steel Trust Fund and Signs Trust Fund will be maintained. Glenn had said he would get those reports and forward them to Kristina. Debra asked if our committee could see the budget numbers on a spreadsheet when they come out. Melanie replied yes.

5. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Council Liaison - Ms. M. Mott

- Melanie Mott said Mayor Anesh wrote a letter in support of a solar project as requested by the GT @910 Oak Tree Rd./Grand Slam. They need to submit an application to the BPU. Tom asked Melanie to forward the information to Bob Longo for Sustainable NJ.
- Debra asked if the GT is now its own committee. Melanie said the Mayor & Council are working to make the GT separate via ordinance as they appoint those members.
- The County awarded us a \$673,750 grant for improvements to Pitt Street Park & Little League Baseball Fields. The grant is through Middlesex County Open Space/Recreation & Farmland Trust.

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

- Rich said the Planning Board met last night. They began the process for the Harris Steel redevelopment plan. Approximately 80 acres. It will go before the Boro Council to accept or deny. Phase 1 – New Brunswick/New Market Avenues.
- Because T&M now reviews the site plans, Rich asked committee members if they still want him to attend as a liaison for the Planning Board. He would be glad to continue. Members said they welcome Rich and Brian's continued support.

C. ERI - Ms. D. Leporino

- The committee unanimously decided to eliminate this subcommittee as T & M Associates are handling.

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

- Kristina spoke about the planning so far for the Spring Volunteer Litter Cleanup. Kristina handed out copies of the ad she created for The Observer and TapInto. Kristina spoke about the 'Recycle Coach' app, which is free, that we haven't been using to its fullest potential. There is so much information and capabilities available beyond recycling information. We will be using it to have volunteers sign up for the cleanup. The app will maintain that database for future use. Kristina added many significant dates on the app i.e. – leaf pickup, compactor, recycling pickups etc. We could use this as a community calendar as discussed at the last meeting. Kristina is having the QR code for the app printed as stickers to display at our Recycling Center. Discussed trying to find contact information for past cleanup volunteers. Kristina has not been able to find Alice's file with that information. We do have some people's info on past 'Hold Harmless' forms and cleanup reports. Members also discussed specifics of the cleanup/pickup picnic. Went over cleanup supplies, volunteers, cleanup spots, pre-registration etc. Tom said he can get the prize wheel from Dorothy if we want. Kristina suggested for something new, we can ask the High School Environmental students to make up questions for a different game. We can also get questions from the State's Clean Communities Council. Kristina will reach out to Kathleen Benton. Talked about prize giveaways. Kristina said Glenn Cullen gave her permission to make purchases. She will price a few 'Cora' balls and wildflower seeds packets. Kristina said she and Paul Zawacki plan to visit local nurseries/stores to ask for donations of plants as prize giveaways. Lisa will purchase soda, plates/napkins for the picnic. She will also be creating the 'Certificates of Appreciation' for the volunteers. Kristina will be speaking with Pete Smith about securing discounted pizzas and sandwiches. On the main day of the cleanup, 4/27, Kristina, Paul Zawacki, Debra, Tom, Genevieve, Melanie and Lisa should be on hand. Melanie will ask about posting the cleanup on a digital board.
- Tom suggested promoting the 'Recycle Coach' app by putting an article in The Observer, TapInto, Boro website etc.
- Kristina reported she applied for a \$10,000 grant to make improvements to the Recycling Center. Also applied for a \$12,000 grant for a better hut for the Recycling Center crew. The Boro has increased hours of operation at the center/yard waste which residents are happy about.
- Kristina attended the Sustainable NJ convention in Atlantic City and acquired a lot of good information. Currently, a big concern is 'microplastics' which are in our clothes. When we wash our clothes, the plastics rinse out and enter into our water systems, thus we end up eating and drinking them. In the future, washing machines will be equipped with filters. Currently you can purchase a 'Cora Ball', which is supposed to prevent some microfiber pollution. *Coraball.com* Food waste was also a big topic. Schools and nursing homes are the top offenders. In the future we can discuss working with the schools on 'share-tables'. We can also talk about a community food compost site. Tom said we can probably find information through Sustainable NJ.
- Kristina spoke about our Boro, which invested in a 'roll-off' truck some time ago. We have containers that we now transport directly to the transfer station. We do have the ability to own our own containers at the Recycling Center. The Boro could potentially save approximately \$45,000/month for curbside pickup and cost of pulling boxes.
- Kristina reported she has reached out to South Plainfield businesses for their annual Recycling Tonnage Report. Our Fire Department has a list of all Boro businesses. These tonnage numbers get submitted to the State. She is also updating all of the business's contact information she gets and will enter it into a

separate file. The businesses have begun to file their reports. Kristina asked if new businesses are informed of the tonnage reporting requirements. If not, can that be arranged?

E. Land Use -

- Committee members unanimously decided to eliminate this subcommittee as T & M Associates are handling.

F. Forestry - TBD

- Discussed what actions/information was handled previously by SPEC. Tree sapling giveaway, Big Trees of SP contest, OTOSP maintenance. John said he feels it is important to keep up with current information on the state of tree species within our State and Boro so we can be equipped to maintain our trees. Is there someone who can provide that? Melanie said our committee can always discuss concerns about our trees/policies and work on public outreach. Kristina said Paul Zawacki, Recycling Center Operations Manager, is well versed on trees. Before Alice left, she had conversations with Paul about him being available to lend a guiding hand. Debra suggested maybe Paul would like to join our committee. Kristina will ask Paul.

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

- Tom said he spoke with Dorothy. Dorothy will submit a monthly report on the activities at HAW and of the Historical Society via Tom for our committee to discuss.
- Dorothy plans to write an article about the history of our town cleanup week which began in 1982. It will be posted on the HAW/Historical Sites Facebook pages a week before the cleanup.

H. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom read Dorothy's report: Colonial Oaks site (New Brunswick Ave.) – The archaeological dig that began in 2021 is completed. It revealed indigenous people's artifacts. Some of the findings included by-product flakes from stone tool production from approximately 6,000 plus years ago. There will be a presentation at our public library tentatively scheduled for September 2024.

I. Pollution - Mr. J. Ferguson

- John said there has been serious discussion about the plastic bag ban. They are finding fewer plastic bags in waterways, however, we have increased our carbon output in order to manufacture the reusable bags.
- The EPA is currently deciding how many of the 327 plus PFAS's (forever chemicals) cannot be used. Companies have to do their own studies to determine if it is safe at the determined levels/limits set forth.
- Our Delaware River is reported to be the 14th most polluted river in the country.
- EPCRA – John said his unit performed an emergency response simulation with a company in Woodbridge – Dana Transport – 36 people from the surrounding area participated.

J. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh

- Tom reported the GT met last month. Bob Longo, Chairperson, submitted the first round of action items to Sustainable NJ. The next round is 5/10. Found a new action item that Tom is working on with Wendell Born: emergency community planning. These are things that our Emergency Response Team is already doing and are worth points. The next GT meeting is on 3/21.
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K. Public Information & Technology - Ms. K. Nieradka

- Kristina has been posting. She would like to work on capturing more followers in the near future.

L. Stormwater Advisory Committee - Mr. J. Ferguson

- John attended two ANJEC webinars. 'Retrofitting for greener stormwater management' and 'Tie-in stormwater management with MS4 permits. The main purpose is to get the public to truly understand what stormwater management is about. Residents are an essential element for cleaner water.
- Middlesex County received a \$1.2 million grant to help with mitigation projects in the southern portion of our county.
- Received a grant to upgrade our 911 system as discussed in January.
- GBFCP – John said apparently the flood control commission did not write up paperwork correctly for the USACE to use the federal funds set aside. They are still working to get the one hold out homeowner that will not sell his property. There are three plans for the Upper Basin. Once all the public comments are reviewed, the USACE will decide which plan. Then back to how much funding will be needed.

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

- Debra said our committee has a mailbox in the Boro mailroom if anyone needs to drop off papers.
- The Mayor & Council would like our committee to do more community outreach. We can discuss this further after the Spring Litter Cleanup.

6. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 10, 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