



Environmental Commission

August 10, 2023 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** Chair opened the meeting at 7:33 pm with the Open Public Meetings Act announcement.
2. **Attendance**

Present: Krishna Rege, Scott Devlin (Council Liaison), Jim Oettinger, Paul Yarin (Chair)

Absent: Conway Wong (Planning Board Liaison), Modi Feibish
3. **Approval of Minutes – Postponed** (July minutes are not yet complete)
4. **Open Meeting to Public Comments** Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus) congratulated Rachel on being appointed. He asked what the EC's feelings were on what was going on at MacBain Farm. Chair Yarin asked if anyone on the EC wanted to respond. Steve Isaacson stated that thanks to the complaints of a few neighbors everything had changed. He said that the Mayor and Council was in the process of reviewing the use of the farm for other purposes. He OPRAed the applications but was refused access and said that he had no idea that they were in the process of kicking John McCaffrey out. He said that this is Open Space and a public park that may be used for business purposes. He said that he had asked many times that the park be protected and that the Mayor and Council refused.
5. **Executive & Treasurer's Report** Chair Yarin recapped the progress on the goals for this year. Rachel Suter has joined the call and has been appointed to the EC. She will start as an alternate member finishing an unexpired term ending December 31, 2023. Rachel was sworn into office. The budget was reviewed.
6. **Unfinished Business**
 - a. **Sustainable Jersey:**

160 points (150 required for Bronze) were completed. The award will be received in September and a presentation will be made at the NJLM Convention in November. Congratulations to the team. The next level is Silver. The actions completed and possible future actions were reviewed. Discussion of how long the certification lasts and when the next level would be sought.



b. Buzzoni pollinator garden:

Chair Yarin showed pictures of the garden. More plants were purchased and planted. Large rocks were placed to try to thwart the groundhog. Chicken wire may be buried to better keep it out. The birdbath and bench were added. The environmental monitor has a little glitch in that the hotspot was not designed to run continuously. Mr. Feibish is looking into a watering system. Ms. Suter asked if anything should go on the website. Chair Yarin suggested instructional links and thoughts from residents. Ms. Rege suggested adding information on how this garden was created. Chair Yarin suggested making a video if people feel comfortable and will send the photos.

c. Native grasses and groundcovers:

Photos were shown. Explanatory signage may be added. More research will be needed if people want to replace a lawn with native plants. There will be a meeting with the local scoutmaster to see if the Scouts want to volunteer. Mr. Oettinger asked what kind of projects were being considered (watering, installing the fence, possibly others).

7. New Business

a. NNJC EV showcase and EV policies:

Private individuals and car dealers brought vehicles to display. Chair Yarin brought his as well. The public was engaged. Once the Village School developer is secured the electric vehicle charger ordinance will be able to be put into place.

b. Light pollution ordinance:

There are some interesting articles available. A discussion with Todd Bradbury gave some useful information. Council members support passing an ordinance. The issue was reviewed. Based on long-term satellite data, the town has been getting about 3% brighter every year. Mr. Oettinger spoke about the lights on Memorial Park and the difference between the ballfield and the basketball courts and that a control link would be helpful for all lights in parks.

c. Learning from Denmark:

Chair Yarin spent a week in Copenhagen, a world example of sustainability. It may become carbon neutral in a couple of years. Bicycles are everywhere; trains are efficient and driverless; secondhand clothing is very popular. A lot of restaurants have their own chain. Planning is very thorough; trash is incinerated cleanly, and there is no landfill. Trash and public messages are also made into art. Street-side EV chargers are convenient and attractive.



8. **Plan Review and Comment**

Three sites were on the docket for the August meeting (19 Wilson Place, 77 Venus Drive, and a site on Closter Dock Road) all were postponed to the following month.

9. **Liaison Reports**

- a. **Governing Body:** The Sustainable Jersey work did not cost anything to the Borough short of some research. It will be nice to give credit to Closter.
- b. **Shade Tree Commission:** The Commission did not meet in August; grants were submitted concerning trees for schools and the spotted lantern fly.
- c. **Planning Board:** Discussed above.

10. **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary