



Environmental Commission

October 12, 2023 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

Paul Yarin called the meeting to order at 7:35 with the open public meeting announcement.

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance:

Present: Scott Devlin, Modi Feibish, Krishna Rege, Rachel Suter, Conway Wong, Paul Yarin

Absent: Jim Oettinger

Approval of Minutes: (September 14) Ms. Suter moved to approve, second Councilman Devlin. Carried.

Open Meeting to Public Comments: No public was present to comment.

Executive & Treasurer's Report: Chair Yarin gave an update on how the Commission operates and how the members interact. He emphasized the need for an environment of respect within the group. He asked everyone to attend and prepare for meetings, to volunteer, and to address issues and avoid criticism of individuals.

There is an ANJEC 50th anniversary conference. He will attend. Others may attend virtually if they wish; the fee should be able to be covered. There is also a composting event next week. The sustainable Jersey luncheon is 11/14. The NJ League of Municipalities Convention is also mid-November. Requests for this year's budget must be made by November 8. Requests for next year must be made soon. Councilman Devlin shared that usually the EC receives the Clean Communities grant for town cleanups and that Open Space funds are usually available for reasonable amounts. For next year, the Buzzoni development could use funds. How can the public and businesses be engaged? Also, the Environmental Resources Inventory will probably require grants, as it may cost \$15,000-\$30,000. Ms. Suter suggested using a subscription service to send out mailings to residents. She will look into rough costs for next meeting. Councilman Devlin suggested that the Borough or Recreation Commission may have a service. Councilman Devlin suggested buying "No Mow May" signs for next May with the budget that is left in this year's budget. Discussion. Mr. Wong suggested purchasing vests or other items distinguishing EC members when they go out into the field. Ms. Rege requested tools and



a tool box for Buzzoni (\$1,000). Councilman Devlin moved to approve, second Chair Yarin. All in favor. Carried.

Councilman Devlin moved to devote \$1,000 for No Mow May signs, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Carried.

Councilman Devlin moved to devote \$500 to high-visibility EC vests, second Chair Yarin. All in favor. Carried.

Ms. Rege pointed out that all vendors need to be approved but can be added to the system.

Chair Yarin suggested a budget framework for debate.

Unfinished Business

- a. **SustainableCloster.org website update:** Ms. Suter gave an update including the new information on the Sustainable Jersey certification and the press release. Links to the official website are also included.
- b. **Buzzoni pollinator garden update:** The fence was supposed to be installed last week, but it was postponed because of the rain. The new date is the 28th of October. She also asked for updated irrigation quotes. Mr. Feibish will send them to her. The DPW will also help to plant deer-resistant plants to beautify. Most of the volunteers are residents. Chair Yarin asked everyone to help volunteer if possible and to engage with the residents. Mr. Wong asked whether the EC is able to give out volunteer credits. Discussion. Mr. Wong will look into it in the hopes of involving high school students.
- c. **EV ordinance update:** Slides were shown outlining the lagging progress of the United States. The ordinance has been put on hold until the Village School development is more set. Closter Commons and St. Mary's Church are both good locations for EV chargers. Councilman Devlin pointed out that there are grants available.

New Business

- a. **Food waste composting concepts:** Chair Yarin spoke about the importance of food waste composting. New Jersey is a wealthy state yet still has significant food insecurity. The best way to reduce waste is to reduce the amount that is made. Next best are giving the extra food to people and animals. There are machines that can extract energy from food. Composting is also good.



Backyard composting piles are good but do have some challenges, such as odors and sometimes posts. Ms. Suter spoke about Neighborhood Compost; individuals can bring food waste to local sites and then it is added to larger compost operations. There are also similar operations. Discussion. Chair Yarin also spoke about a grinder/cooker he purchased to reduce food into a powder that can be used to feed chickens. Ms. Suter suggested doing something in connection with MacBain Farm. Earth movers are available for \$60 from BCUA.

- b. **Green building checklist:** Chair Yarin spoke about the possibility of using green development checklists and a form to allow developers to assess where they are in terms of green building when they build new residences.

Plan Review and Comment

Liaison Reports

- a. **Governing Body:** Councilman Devlin announced that the Board of Education received a \$47,000 grant for trees. The large spruce tree in front of Borough Hall is now unsafe and will be taken down and replaced. The Tree of Heaven has been declared as a hazardous tree due to lantern flies. The Rotary Club is hosting a cleanup and is looking for locations.
- b. **Shade Tree Commission:** The tree ordinance has been introduced.
- c. **Planning Board:** 25 MacArthur is coming to the Planning Board. The application has been deemed complete. It is not a good candidate for solar, but heat pumps are a real possibility.

Adjournment: Ms. Rege moved to adjourn, second Ms. Suter. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary