

January 23, 2023, Environmental Commission Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: E. Duerr, M. Duerr, Kohute, McCarthy (at 8:10 pm), Stippick
MEMBERS ABSENT: Brandt, Link
ALTERNATES ABSENT: Cavone
LIAISONS PRESENT: Keen, Marsh
GUESTS PRESENT: Mindy Curran, Roger Duerr, Barbara Halpern, Dave Marshall, Bonnie Marshall, Maggie McCool, and Al Wheeler

The January 23, 2023, meeting of the Township of Franklin Environmental Commission was to be both a live meeting in the municipal building conference room and a virtual meeting on Zoom. Due to some internet connection problems in the building, the virtual part of the meeting was conducted via Jon Stippick's phone cellular data. It was called to order by Mr. Stippick at 7:40 pm.

- I. **Minutes:** Approval of notes from the unofficial January 4 meeting (postponed from Dec. 26, 2022) and of the minutes of the official November 28, 2022 meeting were tabled because only 3 Commissioners from those meetings were present and it was unclear if a quorum of attendees must be present.
- II. **Guests:** Ms. Curran is seeking to get a sound wall along Rte. 55 and needs assistance in finding out how to get the state to do a study. Ever since the trees were cut, the noise level has risen substantially in her neighborhood. EC members advised that the state DOT would be the agency to contact and if there's a phone number for a planning person, that would be the individual to try contacting. It could be quite difficult to get this because sound walls are very expensive and there are none along Rte. 55. However, noise levels are regulated by the state, which is another approach. Also, the Township can adopt stricter limits on noise levels if it wishes. This could be addressed during the Master Plan Reexamination review, which will occur this year.
- III. **Emergency Response and Management Report:** There was no emergency management report.
- IV. **Applications:** There were no applications to review
- V. **Old Business:**
 - A. **Piney Hollow:**
 1. **NJDEP Green Acres Trail grant:** Ms. Halpern reported that she spoke to the CME engineer, and he advised that he had replied to the Pineland Commission's request for stormwater information about a week ago. The Commission then has a maximum of 90 days to respond.
 2. **Beavers:** Mr. Stippick reported that beavers have done more damage to the park dikes and that some large trees have fallen as a consequence. The first dike is totally inaccessible. Ms. McCool suggested contacting Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, which has considerable management experience with beavers. At the refuge, they have resolved problems by constantly replanting poplar trees, which are the preferred food of the beavers, and thus other trees are left alone. Boy Scouts have always done most of the tree planting. It was agreed that Unexpected would be a good resource.
 3. **Other:** Mr. Stippick reported that Piney Hollow looks good otherwise. There was no evidence of dumping or 4-wheel drive use when he visited. He did not get to the side where the farm dumping is located so he could not comment on that problem.
 - B. **Malaga Lake Park:**
 1. **Trash:** Mr. Stippick reported that he and his family did a cleanup of the Park's parking lot and beach

on Martin Luther King Day, but that there is still plenty of trash for our April cleanup, unfortunately. There are numerous trash cans there, but too many people seem to ignore them.

C. Interchange Redevelopment Study:

1. **Environmental Commission input:** Mr. Stippick raised the subject of requiring adequate buffers if the redevelopment zone is adopted and a plan developed. He suggested that the EC should have some input on this, perhaps by creating a guidance report on the proper structure of vegetative buffers and recommended species. This could be used by Township and applicant engineers to design more effective buffers, rather than always putting in a single line of trees.

Mr. Stippick also suggested that the Township's solar ordinance and its restrictions should be applied to the redevelopment zone and to the IC district generally. In general, the EC should have input into any standards (e.g., impervious cover, landscaping, etc.) in a redevelopment zone.

A question was raised about how to prevent clear cutting and whether there are rules about this in a redevelopment zone. Ms. Halpern stated that the current IC zone ordinance limits impervious cover to a maximum of 50% and a minimum of 25% is required for landscaping.

Ms. McCool suggested that there should be more concern about developers using farmland assessment as a way of clearing forest and then converting the property to development of some type. This is apparently what happened on the property owned by Fazio. He also cleared trees on the paper streets of the property. The question exists if this was a violation.

2. **Master Plan:** Ms. Halpern advised that the Township's Open Space Plan recommends 300 ft buffers on Franklin's lakes, and possibly on its streams, rather than the 150 ft buffers required by NJDEP. Townships can adopt stricter requirements than the state's; they just cannot be less strict. The Open Space Plan was adopted into the Master Plan in 2004. This led to a discussion of the Master Plan.

Mr. Stippick pointed out that the Master Plan has at least 9 nonresidential zones where commercial and heavy manufacturing are already permitted. Other objectives of the Plan, such as retaining rural character, seem to contradict the establishment of a redevelopment zone. There will be a Reexamination of the Master Plan this year, as required by the state. That may provide some opportunity for improvements.

Ms. Halpern advised that there was almost no public notice about the Master Plan Reexamination in 2013. She distributed flyers in the areas being impacted by proposed zoning changes. Otherwise, the neighbors would not have known anything about the changes affecting them. It's important to attend Township meetings to find out about things like this – meetings of the Committee, the Planning Board, and the Economic Development Committee (those meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month). That led to a discussion of Township notifications.

- D. **Township communications:** Mr. Keen advised that he is the liaison to the Communications Committee, which is working on redesigning the Township website. They will also be working on notifications. There is a mechanism already for such notices (essentially email blasts) but it is apparently not working. Ms. Halpern advised that she had signed up for it twice and never received even one notification.

Ms. McCarthy reported that she recently looked at the committee listings on the website and found no agendas or minutes for most of them. A requirement to post at least the agendas would help with the notification issue. Mr. Keen explained that he was advised that there's no legal requirement for some committees to post agendas and minutes. Nor are committees required to follow Roberts Rules of Order. He is looking into both these regulations.

VI. New Business:

A. Elections of EC Chair and Vice-Chair:

Upon a motion by Ms. McCarthy, seconded by Ms. M. Duerr, and unanimously approved, Jon Stippick was elected as Chair of the Environmental Commission for 2023.

Upon a motion by Mr. Stippick, seconded by Ms. M. Duerr, and unanimously approved, Ms. McCarthy was elected as Vice-Chair for 2023.

The Environmental Commission needs a regular Secretary. Ms. McCarthy has been acting as Secretary for some time because the Secretary we had was unable to continue. The position pays \$1,000 for doing the minutes for 12 meetings and occasionally having to look up a file. As an appointed Commissioner, Ms. McCarthy cannot be paid. Mr. Keen will discuss this with the Township Committee and will also ask the Secretaries of other committees if anyone is interested, or knows someone who might be. With virtual meetings, a person could do this from home.

B. ANJEC (the Association of NJ Environmental Commissions)

1. Membership: Mr. Stippick described the benefits of membership in ANJEC. The cost is \$400 for 7 members and \$35 For each extra person. The total is \$505 For 7 commissioners + 3 additional members (one alternate and 2 liaisons).

Upon a motion by Mr. Stippick, seconded by Ms. McCarthy, membership in ANJEC was unanimously approved.

Mr. Stippick will fill in the membership form and forward it to Ms. Freijomil.

2. Request to Present: Mr. Stippick received a request from Hannah Katz of ANJEC to do a presentation on lakes, rivers, and groundwater. ANJEC is also asking for a resolution of support from the Franklin EC to NJDEP asking DEP to safeguard the future of water in Northwestern NJ (the Highlands).

Upon a motion by Mr. Stippick, seconded by Ms. M. Duerr, and unanimously approved, Ms. Katz will be invited to present at a Franklin Environmental Commission meeting whenever her schedule permits.

C. EC Annual Report: Mr. Stippick advised that he will be working on this report.

D. Outreach for EC Events: It was suggested that the EC could reach out to churches and businesses. The EC did connect with the Community Alliance (Unity) group and worked with them once last year. Ms. McCool also suggested connecting with schools, such as St. Augustine, that have service requirements.

E. Grants: Mr. Keen reported that he is investigating grants that might be available for the EC and the Township via the U.S. Rebuilding Infrastructure legislation, including charging and fueling for electric vehicles.

VII. Mail: There was no mail.

VIII. Adjournment: Upon a motion by Mr. Stippick, seconded by Ms. M. Duerr and approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne McCarthy, Acting Secretary.

The next meeting of the Environmental Commission is on Monday, December 26, 7:30 pm. It will be both a live meeting in the Municipal Bldg. conference room and a Zoom meeting.