

July 24, 2023, Environmental Commission Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: E. Duerr, M. Duerr, McCarthy, Stippick
MEMBERS ABSENT: Brandt, Kohute, Link
ALTERNATES ABSENT: Cavone
LIAISONS ABSENT: Keen, Marsh
GUESTS PRESENT: Roger Duerr, Barbara Halpern, Kevin Kelton, Bill Petravich, and Al Wheeler.

The July 24, 2023, meeting of the Township of Franklin Environmental Commission was both a live meeting in the municipal building conference room and a virtual meeting on Zoom. It was called to order by Mr. Stippick at 7:38 pm.

- I. **Minutes:** Upon a motion by Ms. M. Duerr, seconded by Mr. Stippick, the minutes of the June 26, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved.
- II. **Guests:** No issues were raised by the guests.
- III. **Emergency Response and Management Report:** A notice was received from NJDEP regarding a citizen complain of heavy pesticide spraying in an area of Bluebell Road over the last 2 1/2 years. The complaint, dated June 30, 2023, was anonymous but reported heavy pesticide spraying and strong odor of chemicals in the area and at 2050 Bluebell Rd. The complainant also reported **that various tree growth and vegetation is dying. The caller is concerned about the well water and soil being contaminated and is requesting a response and testing of the surrounding area.** The Environmental Commission has no ability to conduct such testing and will wait to see what DEP's response will be.
- IV. **Applications:** There were two Zoning Board applications that were reviewed, and one discussed briefly:
 - A. **ZB 23-05:** This application by JWJ Investments, LLC is for a C variance for 3086 Delsea Drive, block 2102/lot 22, in order to build a 4,375 sq. ft. pole barn with excessive impervious coverage. This property is within both an HC and an RA zone. A zoning permit was denied because of the RA zone requirements for a variance but the barn would be within the HC zone. There is already a concrete pad which would be increased in size. There would also be about a 20% increase in impervious cover, for a total of 51% coverage. The allowed limit is 50%. No detail was given about the barn or its use. The property is owned by a landscaping business.

The Environmental Commission had some specific questions: 1) Will any hazardous material be stored in the proposed facility or outside it? 2) What will the lighting be on the new barn, and will it encroach on the neighboring property? 3) The barn is close to the property line (23') and a vegetative buffer could be proposed.
 - B. **ZB 23-07:** Application by Darren Bosco for a C variance to erect a pole barn at 95 Malaga Lake Blvd., block 4515/lot 12, with insufficient side yard setback - only 8 feet from the neighboring property, due to the location of the septic system preventing the barn from being erected elsewhere on the property. The barn will be 950 sf. and there will be an increase of 1,000 sf of impervious cover. In addition, many trees will be cut on this small lot (100' x 150') to enable the barn.

Environmental Commission comments: This lot seems too small for this accessory structure. Specifically, stormwater runoff is a concern due to the increased impervious cover and the removal of trees. The neighboring house is only 13' from the property line. Stormwater needs to be prevented from migrating to the neighboring property.

- C. **ZB 21-08:** This application by the pool manufacturer for a D variance was reviewed previously by the Environmental Commission, although there was no actual site plan. The application will be heard by the Zoning Board on August 1. It is possible that neighbors over 200 ft away will not be aware of this hearing. The pool business will have to return to present a site plan.

V. Old Business:

A. Piney Hollow:

The Pinelands Commission unanimously approved the revised NJDEP Green Acres Trail grant project at its July 14, 2023, meeting. The next step is for the Township to put this out for bid. The Township must write up a bid packet with a plan and submit it to Green Acres for approval of the construction plans. Hopefully our engineers are working on this now. The Environmental Commission wants to see the bid packet before it's submitted to Green Acres. Mr. Stippick will notify the engineer about that.

Elements of the project, from the approved grant application (there is a link to the application at greenfranklintownship.wordpress.com):

- New trail
- Signage
- Improvement to parking lot
- Blocking access with gates
- 100 ft of boardwalk
- A kiosk for information
- Benches throughout the trail
- Cleanup of dumped materials (Franklin Township Public Works Dept. cleaned up some of the adjacent farmer's encroachment on the park)
- Blocking access of the farmer onto Piney Hollow land (may need to plant a barrier). The engineer should be made aware of this need.
- EC must do some maintenance after the grant work is completed.

B. Malaga Lake Park:

1. A grant application to the County was submitted for the park, although the EC has no details about it. It may be for repairs to the playground. Mr. Stippick will ask the Administrator about it and to advise about some of the limitations at the park such as its high-water table and drainage problems.
2. Mr. Stippick reminded everyone that Moth Night at the Park is scheduled for Saturday, July 29 at 8 pm. There will be a location at the start of the trail and another along the trail. Mr. Stippick has already posted information on this to Facebook, and he will post some flyers at the park this week.
3. Ms. McCarthy advised that the sign with the QR code for the nature trail guide and the sign pointing to the nature trail from the main parking lot have both been ordered.
4. The community surveys that were done about the park in 2014 and the concept plan for the park created by Alan Koch, then the County landscape designer, were sent to our Township Committee liaisons by Ms. McCarthy. Perhaps the community survey should be redone. It is possible to apply

for a Green Acres grant for Malaga Park, now that our Piney Hollow project is on track.

C. Community Day: Mr. Stippick hopes to have more live critters at our booth, from a moth night the night before. We should also ask Joe Arsenault if we can borrow his tick display.

We need to reserve 3 spaces in a location like last year. Ms. McCarthy will do that. We will also need to borrow the display stands from the South Jersey Land & Water Trust. Ms. McCarthy will arrange that and obtain them.

Our theme for this year will be “Rural Character,” which will allow for a variety of topics including:

- Farmland preservation
- Night sky protection (what is good lighting; what is poor lighting)
- Forest protection – what trees do for us.
- Native plants vs. lawns – their importance and the importance of insects, including milkweed and monarch butterflies.
- Rural waterways

We can make some signs that illustrate rural character. Ms. McCarthy will work on those.

It was agreed that Community Day is a good opportunity to recruit participation in the Environmental Commission and its projects. We can have a recruitment sign-up. With virtual attendance, participation is relatively easy. Perhaps we can re-activate the EC newsletter if more people participate.

VI. New Business: Ms. McCarthy reported that the preservation of the Schipani property was being delayed by the need to show that the Burn Site that once operated on the property is no longer an active DEP hazardous waste site. This location and six other sites were used illegally to burn off the insulation on copper wires, to recapture the copper. EPA remediated all the sites in 2004 and issued a No Further Action letter, but NJDEP apparently did not accept that determination fully. We are in the process of trying to track down an Environmental Assessment done for the site back in 2004/2005, in hopes that will resolve this issue.

More information on the Burn sites can be found on greenfranklintownship.wordpress.com.

VII. Mail: There was no mail.

VIII. Adjournment: Upon a motion by Ms. M. Duerr, seconded by Mr. Stippick and approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne McCarthy, Vice-Chair and Acting Secretary.

The next meeting of the Environmental Commission is on Monday, August 28, 7:30 pm. It will be both a live meeting in the Municipal Bldg. conference room and a Zoom meeting.