MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION & SUSTAINABLE MONTGOMERY SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES: March 5, 2024 meeting

The in-person meeting was called to order at 6:06 PM.

Members attending: Mary Reece, Frank Derby, Greg Kaganowicz, Sarah Roberts, Kathy Lynch, Alternate 1 Ratna Revankar, Alternate 2

Also attending: Devra Keenan, TC liaison; Lauren Wasilauski; Guests/Residents Jim Bushong, Maya & Eli Shamiyeh

Mary referenced the Lenape Land Acknowledgement and an ongoing effort to schedule an event with a local group.

Membership update: Yasmin Reyes is moving out of Montgomery and leaving the EC. Kathy will become a full-fledged member, Ratna Alt 1 and the committee is thrilled to welcome Jim Bushong as our new Alt 2. It was agreed that we should honor Yasmin's long service to the EC and township in some way.

Sarah moved to approve the September 19, 2023 minutes, Frank seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. February 6, 2024 minutes were not available to approve.

Public Comments: None

Tree Ordinance
The State's deadline of May 1, 2024 for adoption of an ordinance is firm per Lauren. The next step in the process is a Town Hall meeting on March 27. The group was in agreement that the TC's late-stage changes to the draft are unacceptable and will make the ordinance less effective at preventing the loss of valuable trees. We will make a statement to that effect as a group; individuals are welcome to make their thoughts known at the TC meeting during the Public Comment period.

Action items: Lauren will soon circulate the full draft after final review; Greg and others interested will provide comments as the basis for our official position to be sent prior to the 3/27 meeting. Our aim is to work collaboratively with the TC and our hope is that they will defer to the experts who have spent a lot of time over the past **many** years to make this ordinance effective and enforceable.

On a related note: Sarah would like to see a Bamboo ordinance put into place to prevent the spread of this highly invasive species.

Stream Cleanup in partnership with Watershed Institute: April 13 at Mill Pond Park from 9:00-11:00 AM
Confirmed.

Earth Day Fair – **Date TBD**
Lauren informed us that a shredder is not available on the scheduled date of April 21. It was agreed that this is an important draw and we should reschedule to May 4 or 5 IF one can be had. Otherwise, we will stick with the original date.
Devra offered to oversee a "sharing table" by the e-waste collection so items that are still usable, just unwanted, can get a new home. Frank will check with the MHS Robotics Club to see if they want to look for items of value. Devra also mentioned the need to make sure this process is done safely so that no residents are near the dumpster as items are being tossed in.
To ameliorate the issue with difficulty of library access, electronic signage (2) will be prominent this year. Reminder to EC members that all hands are needed for a successful event, especially at end of day.

Sustainable Jersey
Lauren made the first submission deadline (of course she did, she's awesome) and uploaded 500+ points! Feedback from SJ to come. 2nd submission due 5/10 and the 3rd and final on 7/31.

River Friendly
Olivia sent an email prior to the meeting to let us know that Victoria Leopold, student at MHS and presenter to the EC last year about flooding issues in the township, is doing green infrastructure projects as part of a program at The Watershed Institute. Details to come.

2022 DEP Stormwater Grant Awarded
For retrofit 2 basins: Catbriar Court & Red Fox Court. Lauren is working to get the money upfront (called DEP last week and is writing a justification to follow up).

2023 Urban & Community Forestry Grant Awarded
This $15,000 grant will be used to conduct a comprehensive tree inventory/eval, both street and park trees including those at the Arboretum. Proposals from 3 companies to perform it have been received.

2024 Sustainable Jersey Grant
Application submitted to get funding for Watershed Inventory Report (part of new MS4 requirements).

Site Plan Reviews
Sarah wrote or will write 4 letters (for list see agenda) and provided details about two of them: the Reillys want to remove their patio and replace with a porch on a very small lot, which will reduce coverage; Sarah will ask for a tree. RPM has eliminated the retrofit of a detention basin into a bio-basin; Devra proposed we find another way to fund the project, which could serve as a good model for residents. Sarah mentioned she has added requesting electric appliances (instead of natural gas) to her review checklist.

Old/New Business
- Deer management: Season ended; final numbers will be available once end-of-season questionnaires have been tallied (due 3/8).

- Film Series collaboration with Franklin EC: Films under consideration are Kiss the Ground and American River to be hosted at Monty Library ideally. Lauren will update us after having a chance to read the latest emails on this topic.
- Microhabitat for Pollinators project. Jim, Sarah, and Devra will scout locations 3/9 on the municipal property – ideally one dry and one wet for each type of plantings. Sarah noted she has a planting plan for use under tree canopies. Devra emphasized that the Parks dept must be in the loop to avoid errant mowing, etc. Mary wants to see educational signage once it's completed. Lauren offered to use the Eco-listserv to recruit people to help if needed, and Kathy noted that she had gotten in touch with the MHS Enviro Club and they expressed interest in helping. Thanks to Jim for bringing such a good, and well-researched, idea to the table.

Upcoming Events:
- April 12: Arbor Day planting at Orchard Road triangle
- April 13: Stream Cleanup, 9-11 AM, Mill Pond Park
- April 21 (TBD): Earth Day, 11 AM -2 PM, Montgomery Municipal Complex
- April 28: Run with Rotary
- May 4: Spring Fling Festival of Colors
- June 1: Trails Day, time and locations TBD

Upcoming Meetings: April 2 OR 16, May 7, June 4

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 pm by Mary Reece.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Lynch.