

Montgomery Township Environmental Commission & Sustainable Montgomery Subcommittee Minutes for February 6, 2024

In attendance were Mary Reece, Chair; Sarah Roberts; Frank Derby; Greg Kaganowicz; Yasmin Reyes; Kathy Lynch; Ratna Revankar; and Lauren Wasilauski. Guests were James Bushong and Anuradha Munshi

The meeting was held in person and called to order at 6:04 PM. The meeting opened with the acknowledgment that we were on the ancestral lands of the Lenape. Members who had not done so executed their oaths of office.

Mary was nominated by Sarah and seconded by Kathy to serve as the EC chairperson. The motion carried unanimously.

Frank was nominated by Mary and seconded by Greg to serve as the EC representative to the Site Plan Subdivision Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Greg was nominated by Mary and seconded by Frank to serve as the EC representative to the Master Plan Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Susann was nominated by Mary and seconded by Frank to serve as the EC representative to the Open Space Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Greg was nominated by Mary and seconded by Frank to serve on the township Sewer Committee, with Kathy to serve as an alternate. The Motion carried unanimously.

The minutes from the meeting of November 21 were unanimously approved. The minutes from the September meeting were not available and were carried to the next meeting.

There was no public comment.

The draft 2024 meeting schedule was presented for discussion. It was agreed that there be no hybrid meetings and that the August, November and January 2025 meeting be held via Zoom.

Sarah moved and Kathy seconded that the EC renew its membership in ANJEC for \$425. The motion carried unanimously.

The tentative schedule for the presentation of the draft tree ordinance to the Township Committee was discussed. The state deadline to adopt such an ordinance is May 1.

The stream cleanup, in coordination with The Watershed is scheduled for April 13. The Mill Pond location was suggested.

Earth Day is scheduled for April 21. There may be a conflict holding the event at the Municipal Building because of construction at the next-door senior housing project. Village Elementary School was proposed as an alternative site. The police department is reviewing the planned traffic map if held at the municipal building.

Discussion turned to the EC's Sustainable Jersey application. Other notable events worth including

win the application included as estimated number of 2023 Earth Day attendees (450) and 2023 stream cleanup attendees (110), together with the deployment of an electric mower by DPW, the tree ordinance, and some events with the Watershed.

Lauren has prepared the 2023 Annual Report in draft. Some suggested additions for 2024 goals included Mr. Bushong's pollinator micro-gardens, the tree ordinance, the Community energy grant plan, the proposed film festival, and the promotion of stormwater management.

Discussion turned to green initiatives at the Municipal Center. The township has hired a consultant to advise it on the installation of solar power at the building. The township is also getting quotes for the installation of EV charging stations. Plans proceed to install a rain garden at the building by Daniel Leopold as his Eagle Scout project. The meadow is to be mowed this week. Note was made that no native plants had been planted around the building signs and that the landscaping looked expensive, contrary to the recommendations previously submitted to the Township. This last point engendered much discussion, and the suggestion was made to attend the Township Committee meeting on February 15.

A question was raised as to the availability of electric school buses. Kathy agreed to make an inquiry to the Board of Education.

Frank advised on the award of river-friendly status by the Watershed to Bedens Brook Country Club for its efforts to manage the course in an environmentally friendly manner.

There was no news on the efforts to locate a composter. Kathy offered to explore further.

We are still awaiting paperwork from the state for the use of our 2022 DEP stormwater grant. Lauren is submitting a \$20,000 grant proposal for Sustainable Jersey requesting funding for a watershed inventory report, now part of the new MS4 requirements,

Sarah discussed recent site plan reviews at the Malvern School site on Route 518, the Renard Management Site (formerly Gamma Tech on Route 518) and the Carrier Clinic.

We will explore hosting additional rain garden construction events.

The deer harvest yielded 181 deer with 67 donated to local food banks to date. There is less than 2 weeks left in the season. So far, this is a decrease from last year but the population in general appears to be down as well.

James Bushong then made a presentation about pollinator micro-gardens. He got interested when he noticed that lawnmowers kill bees. He wondered about planting summer clover in retention basins. He noted that honeybee mortality is well-known. James suggested using small parcels to plant native pollinators which have been shown to be super-impactful. "Small" means a 10-foot diameter circle microhabitat. He suggested a pilot program, saying that his family would sponsor two such gardens and wanted to do so in a visible way, perhaps at the Municipal Building. Mary moved, and Greg seconded a motion to try the pilot program. The motion carried unanimously.

A recent article in Forbes magazine was discussed. The article cited a study that states New Jersey has seen increased plastic manufacturing since the single-use plastic bag ban. The study indicates this additional manufacturing is to create the reusable bags. Kathy mentioned the study was funded by the

plastic industry and was misinformation.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.