

## Minutes of the January 21, 2009 Meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission

Present: Kathy Busch, Pat Donahue, Mark Herzberg, Tom Rudel, Ann Sardone, Steve Toth, Will Waldron, Brian Weeks

Absent: Arline Zatz, Mike Vissichelli

Visitor: Heather Barrett, N.J. Watershed Ambassador

The annual commission reorganization was discussed. Mark Herzberg was renominated and elected to serve as Chair of the Commission for this coming year. Responsibilities for taking the minutes were allocated. Discussion of the length of the meetings came up. We decided to meet at 7:00PM next month to see if starting earlier would lead to earlier adjournments.

Minutes from the previous meeting (November) were distributed. Several corrections were noted. The Brasil brothers refuse question and Boro Motors/Oakite water contaminants items were discussed and corrected. The tree farm turns out to be an option rather than an actual plan for the town. People were to get the corrections to Pat and she will send the amended minutes to the Town. Minutes, as amended, were approved.

Correspondence: Nothing of relevance to Metuchen was in the NJ DEP bulletin. The Homestead playground issue came up presumably because some additional contaminants may have been discovered. Marc Herzberg will investigate. Letter was received from ANJEC promoting 'smart growth' grants. The question came up as to whether these grants would aid in the push to make the town more bicycle friendly and dovetail with ongoing planning efforts in the town.

### Old Business

Tommy's Pond: A plan exists to put the barley in the Pond to deter aquatic growth sometime early in the spring.

Planning Commission report: The Myrtle subdivision raised questions about whether or not owners can cut down trees in the town's right of way. The answer is 'no'. Owners can cut down trees on their own unencumbered lands. The discussion turned to the disposition of funds from developers for trees that they have cut down. There was some agreement that in principle people on the Planning Commission would be willing to earmark these funds for planting of trees in the borough. Monitoring of tree planting would be much easier to do. This activity could and probably should tie into the Shade Tree Commission's plans. We will need to coordinate with them.

Reviews of the Sportlands proposed development for a 'bubble' were discussed. The location of the proposed ramp from 27 to 287 led the developer to withdraw their proposal for the athletic facility.

Dismal Swamp: two requests for talks received by Steve Toth. Slide show, put into powerpoint, could be mounted on the website. The question came up about how we should follow-up, if at all, after the Barnes-Wiley proposal to create an inter-town memorandum of agreement regarding conservation of the Dismal Swamp. The brochure did go up on the website. Dog Park - Edison is 'moving forward' with the creation of a Dog Park at the CIC site adjacent to the railroad and 287. Edison requested assistance in restarting their Environmental Commission.

Recycling - we want to get the month to month tonnage figures. We need to keep the issue in front of people. How to do it is the question. We will invite Fred Hall to a future meeting to discuss the recycling issue.

Open space: We don't know what has happened with the Barnes initiative (see above). We will try and find out at the next greenways meeting.

Edgar School and Pool Parking Lot: several trees in the pool parking lot may have to come down. The maintenance of the existing islands in the parking lots came up in discussions with people from the pool commission. Discussion ensued about what further work we might do in planting additional trees and how DPW and the pool commission might react. Do we want to continue with this effort? Some people would like the area to look better. A path for a stroller would be good.

We could walk with the recreation commission through the open spaces in the spring, and, as we go, come up with our own sense of priorities for future commission efforts.

#### New Business

Tree cutting companies and complaints about their work- some residents have complained about tree cutting by PSE & G subcontractors. The work of the subcontractors is subject to a set of regulations issued by BPU. The question is how best to get some sort of governance of these activities. How do we figure out an enforcement mechanism? Some commission members felt that the Board of Public Utilities needs to be more involved in regulating these activities. An educational effort and neighborhood watch efforts could be useful in this respect. The Shade Tree Commission could and maybe should get involved. There is an educational component here - we could do something at the country fair on this issue. A change in infrastructure, burying the lines, would resolve this problem.

Annual report: All commissioners will give Pat Donahue by February 4th a paragraph detailing their activities and accomplishments over the past year. She will compile the contributions that together will constitute the report.

The town is doing an energy audit of four buildings. We have put the audit work out to bid. We will have the results from the audits and then a matching grant program should 'kick' in.

Heather Barrett - Watershed Ambassador - she wants to carry out a 'river friendly resident' certification program - there are four components to the program. It is a 'self-certification' program. The program would be done in the spring. It is aimed at homeowners and targets how they manage their properties, in particular their lawns. Suggestions for other contacts and entities that shape water quality were mentioned: lawn companies, and stores that sell lawn product.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45PM