

Minutes of the February 18, 2009 Meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission

Present: Pat Donahue, Mark Herzberg, Tom Rudel, Ann Sardone, Brian Weeks, Arline Zatz

Absent: Kathy Busch, Steve Toth, Mike Vissichelli, Will Waldron

Visitor: Heather Barrett, N.J. Watershed Ambassador; Kevin Tucker

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted as amended.

Correspondence: the DEP bulletin reports on permitting processes. There were several items of conceivable significance to Metuchen, one involving Edison Woods and drainage from the old CIC site. Another involved a development along the greenway, also in Edison.

Old Business

Thomas Park Pond - the installation of the barley is scheduled. We will need volunteers to put it in, either in late March (28th or 29th). A large tree came down during a wind storm earlier this month on the Tommy's Pond property.

Planning Board - no report.

Dismal - Greenway

The inter-municipal agreement idea received endorsement from Metuchen. Edison has not considered it, and South Plainfield seems to be reluctant to endorse the plan. For this reason progress on this issue would be slow. The idea of leasing the Greenway extension by the county came up at \$1 a year. A discussion ensued about the Gulton property and its connection to the larger Dismal Swamp. The Gulton property could conceivably become the target of open space acquisition. An application for a smart growth planning grant for this area is apparently in the works, coming from the office of Jim Constantine, the municipal planner for Metuchen. Arline and Pat will work up the slides about the Dismal into a powerpoint presentation that will be mounted on the website.

Dog Park - dog parks are becoming increasingly recognized in the media.

Recycling - Fred Hall has accepted our invitation to attend our meeting next month to talk about recycling and his agenda. We are interested in talking about (1) recycling, (2) passive recreation areas, and (3) the pool island. Ideas for improving recycling enforcement were discussed.

Open Space - see the discussion about Dismal Swamp and the Greenway.

Global Warming - Bicycles - Ann suggested that, as part of the transit village, the town should require bike racks.

New Business

The River Friendly Workshop. Heather Barrett spoke about using the senior center for the workshop. Heather is recruiting speakers for the workshop. It would be scheduled for mid-April. She is trying to get organic, slow release fertilizer to raffle off. The workshop could be done on a weekday, on April 16th, 7 to 9PM. Ideas for how to publicize the activity were discussed. She is planning to contact other groups: the Greenway group and the Edison Environmental Commission in particular. She described the curriculum in some detail. It seems quite effective.

Mr. Tucker expressed concern about the state of the trails in Centennial Park; in particular there is debris blocking the trail. As a Cub Scout project he and several parents had thought about cleaning up the trails in the park with their kids, cutting down the deadfalls that are now obstructing the trail and picking up trash. The commission talked about the safety issues posed by doing work in the park, a poison ivy infested tract along the train tracks. Mr. Tucker will let us know when they are going to do the work. It could be done in conjunction with Earth Day activities.

Energy Audit - we looked over the bid and had the following comments to deliver to the town council. Mark will communicate with our liaison to the Town Council. The proposal seems generally well conceived. The town should take them up on their offer of supplying links to previous customers, municipalities in particular.

The history of contamination at the Homestead site was reviewed in a report to the town. The place has a full complement of residents at present. Some of the units were COAH.

The environmental commission will be involved in the upcoming smart growth grant that is mentioned above.

The annual report was compiled by Pat Donahue. After taking in comments, Pat will forward it to the town council. We endorsed Brian Weeks enrollment in the ANJEC workshops on sustainability.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12PM.