

Present: Mark Herzberg, Tom Rudel, Ann Sardone, John Leazer, Will Waldron, Pat Donahue, Mike Vissichelli, Brian Weeks, Arline Zatz

Absent: Steve Toth

Meeting began at 7:38PM

John Leazer asked for a volunteer to speak to a group of pre-schoolers. A welcome was extended to Will Waldron, the new liaison with the Town Council.

Correspondence:

This month's DEP bulletins contained nothing of particular interest to Metuchen. A schedule of hazardous waste collections by the county was published. An ANJEC matching grants program circular for 'smart growth' arrived. Will Waldron asked if this type of grant might be applied to energy audits. The matching requirement makes it difficult to apply for these grants. An issue was raised about what other commissions are doing with regard to related issues. We did have some success with a matching grant some five years ago.

Update on last month's correspondence: The Liberty Street cell phone tower application was made. The property just changed hands. Ann Sardone pointed out that the parcel is close to the town's Dismal Swamp conserved open space and is adjacent to the Conrail property that we have sought as part of the proposed greenway extension; questions were raised about zoning for cell towers. Is there a pre-emptive zoning issue here? The parcel in question is not part of the development on the Gulton property.

Old Business:

Tommy's Pond: ice in the pond has prevented water sampling over the past month; sampling should begin in the next month. The goal here is to get a set of baseline readings on the chemistry of the pond with the idea of putting barley in the pond to suppress the algae growth. Perhaps we should monitor for a year before we put in the barley. The environmental club at the high school has been interested in conducting the monitoring. To reduce water pollution, a flyer will be circulated in the neighborhood around the pond with recommendations about lawn care and related chemical uses.

High school: Indoor air pollution issue. Most of the major work has been completed, so hopefully the air quality has been improving. The difficulty here was that the initial contract with the builders did not specify a program of monitoring. There is an issue of institutional memory here. Hopefully, future renovations will be handled differently.

Greenway: the NJ Turnpike Authority now wants a 'hold harmless' agreement with the county regarding pedestrians. The authority is concerned that debris from the traffic on the freeway could hit pedestrians and they do not want to be liable for damages in these

instances. Otherwise, pedestrians might not be able to use that section of the greenway. Edison Greenways is concerned about this issue.

Dismal Swamp: Bill Boerth, the town manager, indicated that work needed to be at the Dismal Swamp and that he would request that DPW do the work. He was reluctant to issue the work order, but he would do so if more informal contacts did not result in some work being done there. Commission members discussed whether or not alternative groups, like the boy scouts, which might be willing to help with routine maintenance at the site.

Dog Park: People will be asked to sign up if they want to walk their dog in the Memorial Day parade. Flyers will be handed out to see if we can get a decent group of dogs to march.

Tree Farm: this issue has been merged with the pool parking lot given that one of the proposed sites for the tree farm is adjacent to the pool complex. The shade tree commission, working cooperatively with other commissions, will plant the trees on Arbor Day in April. Developers talk about banking trees. What does that mean? John Leazer said that he will find about these procedures.

Edgar Pool: the entire property was at one point entirely wooded. The students at Edgar complain about the absence of any shade on the playing fields. These lands turn out to be borough property. On Friday, April 25th at 4:00PM the shade tree commission will be sponsoring a tree planting event along the fence that runs back towards the Edgar School. The issue of grinding down the stumps in the area came up. Shade Tree Commission will be providing the trees. There is considerable enthusiasm for this project. The watering of the trees during the summer is particularly problematic. Will we need help from DPW? Brian will try to answer this question. Size of the trees is open to question.

Open Space - Tom Rudel sent an email to the mayor asking him if he would like to walk the Woodbrook Pond property with the idea that the town might want to preserve the property. There are important liability issues here. We will see if we can schedule a walk of the site this spring.

Global warming - ANJEC has a list of vegetation centric initiatives that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A list of the energy conservation efforts with associated greenhouse gas emissions would be useful. The Metuchen Messenger would be a possible conduit for this information.

Planning - the last meeting was cancelled. The commissioners went to the town council meeting about the history of real estate development in the town. Two recreational enterprises are being proposed, one for the Oakite site and the other for the old Borough Motors site close to 287. Recycling tips were circulated. Hesstech.com will continue to collect used electronics. Would a collective collection effort work, say on Mondays? Currently, individuals can just take their materials down to the Hesstech site on the first Saturday, 9 to 1, of each month. This service is free to residents of the county. A

townwide pick up of electronic waste might work. It could happen right after the townwide garage sale.

Country Fair -If the commission wants a table, we will need to sign up by April. We will see if the donor for Tommy's Pond would consent to the use of some of his monies to pay for the booth.

A draft of the annual report was circulated. People will comment and return them to Pat.

We should update the website, with the terms of people and other material. We might want to do a brief presentation to the council about the commission's activities.

New Business

A discussion about the Oakite site followed. With the Oakite site the builders can not excavate; they will have to put in a slab on which a building will be erected. There were asbestos dumps at the site in addition to the dumping of solvents. The DEP has been getting regular reports on the site. Maven.com is the website of the developer for this site.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45PM.