

Minutes, Meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission
 March 21, 2012

2012	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	SEP	OCT	NOV
M. Herzberg, Chair	P	P	P							
D. Rasmussen, Liaison	P	P	P							
A. Dohl	A	P	P							
S. Toth, Alt.	A	A	A							
J. Schaffer	P		P							
D. Hirsch, Planning Bd.	P	P	P							
T. Rudel		P	P							
A. Sardone	A	P	A							
B. Weeks	P	P								

Key: P=Present, A=Absent, Gray Box= Minutes Assigned/Taken

Meeting started at 7PM, Second Floor Conference Room in Borough Hall

Chair announced long-time member Ann Sardone plans to resign her position. Discussion of how much Ann will be missed. Mayor to appoint a replacement.

Minutes of previous meeting: Approved.

Correspondence: No correspondence pertaining to Metuchen.

High School Environmental Initiative: The high school tree planting project by its garden reportedly has made significant progress and has involved several active participants. These include Dr. Kamin's environment club, Mr. Gallagher's Garden Club, the High School drafting class and George Fromm from the Shade Tree Commission. The actual planting of trees is planned for Friday April 27.

Energy Audit: Dan reported that the Borough Administrator offered Borough files for review to identify any projects the Borough may have implemented pursuant to the energy audits. Dan and another member will try to determine whether this review can achieve that objective. An alternative might be to discuss recent improvements with a knowledgeable Borough employee (e.g. whether DPW installed a new boiler, and the Library installed new lighting, that are energy-efficient). Unclear whether, due to the passage of time since the Energy Audits, the Borough can earn credit towards Sustainable Jersey certification for actions taken.

Planning Board: Discussion of parking issues relating to redevelopment activities in the Borough.

Dismal Swamp: Some community members plan to explore the feasibility of a water trail in the Dismal Brook, as a possible enhancement adjacent to the Middlesex Greenway Extension, on Sat. March 24.

Tommy's Pond: Joe presented engineering diagrams for a permaculture enhancement to bioremediate hypernutrification using a model based on raft designs used in traditional Aztec agriculture. Discussion of involving community groups such as Boy Scouts to lash bamboo pole segments into the proposed structure.

Greenway and Greenway Extension: Chair to draft letter to send with petition to Freeholders, advocating for the Middlesex Greenway Extension. Efforts underway to arrange a second meeting with the County: this meeting will be with the County Open Space Committee, last summer's meeting was with the County Transportation Committee. Dorothy is reaching out to federal officials, Amtrak and Conrail about railroad-related issues in Metuchen such as replacement of trees cut down along the Northeast Corridor line and the Middlesex Greenway Extension.

Recycling: Single Stream recycling will start the first week of April. The new recycling truck is in service and its high-tech features are impressive. For example, a camera allows the operator to watch as the mechanical arms dump containers into the truck.

The new single stream system will have scheduled collection of recycling each week on the same day as MSW pickup.

There was a discussion of whether the Borough could pick up large electronic waste items, such as very large TVs, that residents may be unable to haul to the recycling center themselves. Discussion of the evident popularity of the statewide electronic waste recycling program as implemented in the Borough.

Edgar School and Pool Parking Lot: The Edgar School environment club is exploring environmental restoration of the Edgar woods to facilitate its use as an outdoor science and environmental education. Discussion of the profusion of litter in the Edgar woods adjacent to the pool's solid waste storage area.

Open Space: A group of Environmental Commissioners surveyed the condition of passive recreation spaces in the Borough on Sat. March 3, focusing on Centennial Park, Woodwild Park, Myrtle Park and the Edgar School / Pool parking lot. The memo identified several issues, especially the need for storm damage cleanup. The resulting memo has been circulated to relevant Borough officials, including the Mayor and Council, DPW and the Recreation Commission. Its recommended improvements are being discussed as possible projects for this year's Earth Day.

Sustainable New Jersey: See discussion of Energy Audit above.

Earth Day: Planned for Sat. April 28. Discussion for activities included storm damage cleanup with DPW support. Target areas narrowed to Centennial Park and woods south of Myrtle Park.

Global Warming: Discussion of Highland Park's program to calculate and reduce its "carbon footprint," i.e. air pollution. The focus is on improving residential and commercial energy efficiency. Residents and businesses reportedly are drawn particularly to the potential financial savings from such improvements.

New Business: Middlesex County will bring its large paper shredder for use by Metuchen residents, at no charge, to Edgar School on Saturday April 14 from 9 a.m. to noon or until the truck is full. Shredding limited to 5 boxes or 100 pounds of paper.

Next meeting: Wednesday April 18 at 7 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM – Respectfully Submitted by Brian Weeks