

**Minutes, Meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission  
May 20, 2015**

2015	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV
M. Herzberg, Chair	P	P	A	A	P					
D. Rasmussen, Liaison	P	P	A	P	P					
A. Dohl	M	M	P	P	A					
J. Schaffer	P	P	A	P	P					
B. Weeks	P	A	M	M	P					
Jennifer Maier, Planning Bd. Liaison	P	P	P	P	P					
A. Dutemple				P	M					
J. Kelly					P					

Key: P=Present, A=Absent, R=Resigned; M=Minutes Assigned/Taken.

Mark called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Two guests attended. Cecile Lefebvre, a resident of Metuchen and a member of Metuchen Families for a Pesticide-Free Borough and Bernadette Sohler, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs from Middlesex Water Company. Ms. Lefebvre attended to discuss a new citizen's action group that has started in Metuchen to advocate for pesticide-free lawn care and Ms. Sohler came at the invitation of commission member Brian Weeks to discuss various options for water conservation measures within the Borough.

Jennifer Kelly, a new member of the Environmental Commission, attended her first meeting this evening.

**Minutes of April meeting**

Approved.

**Correspondence**

Copy of notice received regarding PSE&G's Sewaren to Metuchen transmission system upgrade, which will cross the Middlesex Greenway. There is a proposed diversion on the Greenway during these upgrades to electric lines. A scoping hearing to obtain public comment on this request will be held on June 9<sup>th</sup> at PSE&G's Center for Training and Development on Pierson Avenue in Edison.

Copy of a notice for permit application for a pipeline maintenance project of the Texas Eastern Transmission line.

One Metuchen item was listed in the NJDEP bulletin this month: copy of a notice of application from the owner of property on 205 Liberty Street to the NJDEP for a freshwater wetlands and transition area Letter of Interpretation and a general permit to place fill in a ditch and gravel parking lot.

## **Water Conservation**

Bernadette Sohler, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs from Middlesex Water Company came at the invitation of Brian Weeks to discuss water conservation issues within the Borough. The Borough is currently renewing its membership in Sustainable Jersey. A water conservation ordinance would allot 20 points toward Metuchen's Sustainable Jersey status and a water conservation educational campaign would allot 10 points to SJ status.

Ms. Sohler discussed the history of Middlesex Water Company (a USEPA WaterSense Partner) and its recommended water conservation actions. Ms. Sohler has also worked with the township of Woodbridge on their water conservation program and gave detailed suggestions for how to encourage water conservation both within residential homes and within Borough municipal buildings. Many of the suggestions are listed on Middlesex Water Company's website. She encouraged looking for water conservation updates on Middlesex Water's facebook page as well.

A possible rain barrel design and/or decoration project for school children as a way to encourage active water conservation was discussed.

A public filling station for refillable water bottles was also discussed as a means to encourage residents to use less bottled water. The Board of Education has already purchased several of these types of refilling stations and placed them in Metuchen High School and Edgar Middle School.

Ms. Sohler gave us examples of educational materials (literature, cups, magnets) that the company distributes at some of their events.

## **Pesticide Free Lawns**

Cecile Lefebvre spoke to the Commission as a representative of a new grassroots organization in Metuchen that raises awareness about the dangers of lawn pesticide use. The group is called Metuchen Families for a Pesticide-Free Borough. The new group had its first meeting on May 19, 2015. Ms. Lefebvre spoke about the importance of educating the community about healthier landscape practices and about encouraging local landscaping companies to move toward more organic practices. Ms. Lefebvre also suggested a pesticide free zone program within the Borough (possibly in parks, playgrounds, etc...) She passed out Clean Water Action literature.

The Metuchen Families for a Pesticide-Free Borough will be manning a booth during the Borough's upcoming Farmer's Market season.

There was a discussion about how this new grassroots group meets the criteria of the Sustainable Jersey action of Adopt a Toxicity Reduction Program, from the Community and Outreach category.

## **Grant Update**

Jennifer Maier gave an update about outstanding grant applications:

Metuchen has applied for two grants, a sustainability grant from ANJEC and a federal trail funding grant to be used for security cameras along the Metuchen portion of the Greenway.

There are three new grants Metuchen is in the process of applying to: The first is a planning grant from NJTPA for greening and wellness called Get 2Gether Neighborhood Challenge which will match funds up to \$2000 to build a local economy and “green” the local community. The second is called Get Active NJ, which is a grant for technical assistance, training, and incentives for education to promote walking within the community. There was a discussion about using this grant to get more access to the Greenway for senior citizens. The third was a DEP grant for bonus recycling for food waste, abandoned tires, or public space recycling. There was a discussion about using grant money for food waste recycling and/or purchasing new public recycling bins for downtown.

### **Dismal Swamp**

- No update from the County on our request for a meeting with its planning department.

### **Recycling**

- Discussion about composting grass clippings in town and how to encourage residents to do at-home composting.
- Discussion of possibly purchasing new solar compacting recycling containers downtown to replace existing recycling containers that are in disrepair.
- Discussion of food waste recycling and pros/cons of aerobic/anaerobic and vermiculture composting approaches.
- Discussion of a possible repair meet-up group in town to match residents with broken appliances with residents who would be able to fix them in an effort to save landfill space.

### **Sustainable Jersey**

- The second Green Team meeting was held on May 19, 2015. The actions that Green Team members reported on from last month were discussed and chosen for application to SJ for the June deadline.
- The third Green Teams meeting is schedule for Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>. at 7pm in Borough Hall.

### **Open space inventory**

No news.

### **Planning Board**

No news.

**New business**

None.

**Next meeting**

Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Alyson Dutemple