

**BOROUGH of METUCHEN**  
**Environmental Commission**  
**Minutes of the June 19, 2013 Regular Meeting**

A meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission was held on Wednesday, June 19, 2013 at 7:00 PM at Borough Hall. Present: Mark Herzberg, Chair, Dorothy Rasmussen, Council Liaison, Angela Dohl, Dan Hirsch, Joe Schaffer and Brian Weeks. Absent: Tom Rudel and Beth Strom. Also in attendance: Nikolai Krebs, Eagle Scout candidate, and his father Alan Krebs.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM. The minutes of the May 2013 meeting were approved.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- We received two editions of the DEP Bulletin. Neither contained any items directly relevant to Metuchen.
  - However, the May 22 edition included notice that PSE&G has applied to the NJDEP for general permits to perform additional work in flood hazard areas and freshwater wetlands for its “Northeast Reliability Project.” That project will increase the capacity of an electric transmission line and the height of its poles, from Roseland to Woodbridge. The project will replace wires and poles along the existing right-of-way.
  - The June 5 edition included notice that CPV, Inc. has applied to the NJDEP for permits to construct a new combined cycle natural-gas fired electric generation plant and associated infrastructure along the Raritan River in Woodbridge.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Dismal Swamp:** Nikolai Krebs of Boy Scout of Troop 17 and his father Alan returned to discuss Nikolai’s proposed Eagle Scout project, to develop a walking trail in the Dismal Swamp.

The Borough Administrator has considered the project and conditionally approved developing it along the Borough-owned former Camp Kilmer railroad embankment and Access Road “paper street” to Durham Avenue. Nikolai must produce a Boy Scout liability insurance policy, holding the Borough harmless and naming it as a beneficiary, and an agreement for access to the Borough property to perform the project. Nikolai is to provide these documents to Borough Administrator Bill Boerth.

Discussion of alternative trail routes and approximate property boundaries. Nikolai will decide whether to request permission to extend access routes to the trail across adjacent privately properties; however, the Borough has granted consent only on its own property. The Environmental Commission is looking at Borough maps to determine if any public access easements already exist adjacent to the proposed route of the trail.

The DPW has offered to assist by removing any debris or fallen trees too large to be hand carried by the Boy Scout volunteers, to haul away any debris removed from the route of the trail, and to haul away or grind into chips any vegetation removed from the route of the trail. Nikolai is to contact DPW Director Fred Hall to schedule a site visit to inspect the proposed trail route and coordinate tasks.

At his request, the County provided Joe Schaffer with property ownership and tax data for the Borough in GIS map format. Joe prepared a map using the data, which primarily shows property lots and blocks, overlain on an NJDEP aerial photo of the Borough and surrounding lands. Discussion of including this data as one of several “layers” in the mapping project for which the Edison Wetlands Association has offered the Borough a grant. That mapping would include a variety of environmental and land use data useful for mapping the Metuchen section of the Dismal Swamp, improving public access to the Dismal Swamp, extending the Middlesex Greenway, and planning restoration activities in the Dismal Swamp. Discussion of ecosystem enhancement activities in the Dismal Swamp such as developing trails, restoring wetlands, increasing its flood retention capacity and identifying properties to acquire for preservation. Discussion of the tasks, time and cost to undertake the mapping.

Joe Schaffer described potential low-cost electronic sensors that may help identify drainage and sewage problems. Discussion of a possible pilot program and possible funding sources. Joe will provide further details.

The Borough and the Environmental Commission have not yet received a response to their letter to finalize terms of the Edison Wetlands Association grant to the Borough to perform a Supplemental Environmental Project in the Metuchen area of the Dismal Swamp. Commission members are eager to finalize the grant and begin the SEP.

Discussion of rescheduling the meeting between Environmental Commission members and the County Mosquito Commission. (The County needed to postpone the June 6 meeting.) The meeting is to discuss improving drainage in the Swamp and along the Greenway extension.

**Greenway:** Discussed in the context of the mapping project in the Dismal Swamp, above.

**Recycling:** No activity.

**Energy - Global Warming:** No activity.

**Planning Board:** The Planning Board has met twice over the past month. Dan Hirsch, the Planning Board liaison to the Environmental Commission, reported that there has been a noticeable increase in permitting and construction in the Borough.

Approval has been granted to expand an existing two family home at 339 Main Street, on the southwest corner with Wernik Place, and to convert it to professional offices. The

work includes extending the building into its current backyard, realigning the rear parking area and sharing a common driveway to the parking area. The Planning Board and municipal engineer determined that the expansion will not increase runoff from the site or cause flooding on downhill properties or streets.

As part of the redevelopment of the municipal parking lot on Pearl Street, the American Legion hall will be relocated to part of the municipal parking lot on Halsey Street.

A redevelopment realtor, Fox and Foxx, is in the process of demolishing two existing homes, adjusting lot lines to create two equal-sized lots, and building two new homes on Harvard Street.

Approval has been given to build a new storage facility in an existing commercial lot on Liberty Street.

Construction is underway on a new three-story building on Main Street, on the site of the former bicycle shop. It will have retail on the ground floor and residential on the upper floors.

Approval has been given to build a one-half floor glass cupola on top of an existing three-story building on Main Street, next door to the former bicycle shop.

Construction is underway on a new residential development with parking, next to and north of Lola's Restaurant. It will extend from Central Avenue west to the right-of-way of the planned Middlesex Greenway Extension. Development approval was granted some time ago.

**Sustainable New Jersey:** No activity.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Discussion of organizing a tour of solar and "passive" (low energy use) homes in Metuchen. Mark will reach out to the owners, designers and builders of some of these homes to begin to identify interested property owners.

Mark and Brian advised DPW on Tuesday morning (6/18) of the deep erosion that has deepened over the past year and seems to present a safety hazard adjacent to the pedestrian bridge over Mill Brook between Charles and Myrtle fields.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m. The next meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission will take place on July 17, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brian Weeks