

Metuchen Environmental Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2013

Attendees: Brian Weeks, Tom Rudel, Beth Strom, Dan Hirsch

The meeting minutes from July were reviewed and the following amendments were suggested:

- 1) Beth was present at the Environmental Meeting in February
- 2) Dan Hirsch's name contains a "c".

CORRESPONDENCE:

The only piece of correspondence that we reviewed was a pamphlet from ANJEC regarding an training session that will take place on October 19, 2013, entitled "Planning in a Changing Environment". Some of the members expressed an interest in attending, and it included a course about asking the right questions in stormwater reviews. We also discussed the need for the town to review and adopt updated stormwater management ordinances.

GREENWAY:

We don't have any new information regarding the Greenway, but Brian reported that mark wants to have a new Petition for people to sign at the Country Fair in October concerning the extension.

DISMAL SWAMP:

We still have not finalized the grant letter for the Dismal Swamp. Mark & Dorothy got together and continue to work on the \$20,000 grant from the Edison Wetlands Association. We are looking to get estimates regarding the cost to make the maps in a GIS format with the layers that we have been discussing.

With regards to the Eagle Scout Project we have been discussing, Brian has spoken to the scout and he continues his desire to make the trail. We have learned that the town apparently has a drainage easement that is near the stream, and there was some discussion that this may assist this project. He was advised to build a straight trail off of Durham Avenue. He may also reach out to the property owners. Plan "C", which is dependent on the mapping project, is that we may learn of other easements which the town may own and assist the scout.

OPEN SPACE:

Nothing new was discussed.

## RECYCLING:

We discussed the fact that we have received some information from DPW which is showing little change in recycling from the change to single source recycling. It is saving on labor costs, but we hoped that the amount of garbage would be reduced and the amount of recycling would go up. We discussed what can be done with this, and it came down to two categories:

- 1) Enforcement, which involves extra costs, and
- 2) Increase public awareness about the cost of dumping garbage and the benefit of increased recycling

We discussed once again perhaps having high school students create commercials for MeTV to publicize the advantages of the recycling. We also discussed handing out information on single source recycling at the Country Fair.

## THE COUNTRY FAIR:

The Metuchen Country Fair is scheduled for October 5. We think it starts at 10:00 am and goes until 4:00 p.m. We discussed that we need a canopy and a table. Dan volunteered to bring a table. We agreed that we can bring the Greenway Extension Maps and books. We have to decide what we want to focus on, and came up with some ideas:

- 1) The Petition for the extension;
- 2) Recycling – particularly the dollars and cents aspect
- 3) We discussed bringing the Composter Guy from a couple of years ago. He had donated a composter when he came then.
- 4) Another idea that came up to have a tour of houses that have done green things around town, like solar panels and energy efficient cars, like Tom's Plug in Prius.
- 5) We also discussed possibly having someone from a gas company come to discuss the advantages of switching from oil to gas, especially with regard to the economics and the cleanliness of gas as opposed to oil.
- 6) We can also have someone come in to discuss fracking.
- 7) We can print out materials from the Middlesex County haz-mat days and distribute that, so people know when they can get rid of hazardous material in their homes like old paint and batteries.

We need to have volunteers to man the booth, and although Tom and Beth agreed to man the booth at 10:00, we need to schedule for the other time. Dan volunteered for the 2:00 – 4:00 shift. We will need to send out emails to schedule everyone else. We will be sharing the booth with the Dismal Swamp Commission.

## GLOBAL WARMING:

We discussed, briefly that crab fishermen in Alaska are complaining about what Global Warming is doing to their industry.

We also had a discussion about how nice it would be to introduce a bike sharing program in Metuchen near the train station to encourage people to bike to town and to the train, kind of like what New York City has done.

#### PLANNING BOARD:

Dan said that Planning Board was looking at two applications on September 19, 2013. One entails the teardown of an existing home on East Cedar, which will be replaced by three new homes built by LaPorta. The primary issues there are waivers for front and side yard set back. (Note: at the Planning Board, we learned that several trees may have to be removed, but that an effort will be made to protect a 100 year old beech tree as well as an old sycamore. The trees that are being removed will be replaced by new trees in better areas and the developer has agreed to donate some trees to the Shade Tree Commission if the space in the yard is insufficient for all of the planned trees.)

The other application is an application for an eleven unit storage building on Liberty. The property is odd shaped and is currently a waste of space and a place where trash accumulates. The developer has agreed to plant as many as 22 trees on both sides of Liberty Street to act as both a visual and audible screen to prevent it from being a nuisance to the residential neighbors. Some of the neighbors came to the Planning Board and complained about the trucks that drive through there and were concerned that the building was going to amplify the noise. The Planning board suggested that the trees should act as a buffer against the noise.

#### EDGAR WOODS:

Beth spoke to Judy Graziano about a naturalist who made a trail map of the Edgar Woods in 2004. They met with Jeanmarie Hartman (sp?) and provided Beth with a copy of the map, which she shared with us. They think that they can do a Bioblitz – basically bring in a bunch of people with expertise who will inventory the Edgar Woods – the trees and wildlife, etc. She also discussed that she could volunteer with advising us what grants are available and would help apply for the grants which are available, especially because it is an outdoor classroom. She gave July and Beth a list of organizations to work with, including the NJ/NY Trails Organization, which Beth has joined. They offer courses on trail layout and design. They may also help find sources of additional funding.

Regarding the Edgar Woods itself, Beth reported that the erosion near the traffic circle is getting much worse since when we last visited it, and that something needs to be done. We have identified an issue and need to come up with a plan to repair it.

We all agreed that the Edgar Woods, due to the fact that we can get the kids involved in caring for environmental issues, is an important opportunity to work with.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Hirsch