

BOROUGH of METUCHEN
Environmental Commission
Minutes of the April 27, 2011 Regular Meeting

A meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission was held on Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 7:00 PM at Borough Hall. Present: Mark Herzberg, Chair, Dorothy Rasmussen, Council Liaison, Pat Donahue, Tom Rudel, Joe Schaffer and Brian Weeks. Absent: Ann Sardone and Steve Toth.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM. The minutes of the March 2011 meeting were approved with minor corrections.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Three editions of the DEP Bulletin were received but none contained any items of relevance to Metuchen.
- Notice was received from PSE&G of its application for a statewide freshwater wetlands general permit to disturb areas for North Central Reliability Project. That Project will upgrade existing transmission lines and substations from 138,000-volt (138kV) power to 230,000-volt (230kV) power in the northern and central regions of the state. PSE&G says that the upgrade will meet current and future electricity demands by New Jersey businesses and residents, provide better power quality, and reduce transmission system congestion in the region.

PSE&G says the project will cost ratepayers \$350 million, and replace many of the existing lattice-work towers with taller monopoles. The project, which is approximately 35 miles, will follow an existing PSE&G overhead right-of-way from the West Orange Switching Station in Essex County to the Sewaren Switching Station in Middlesex County. The line will traverse five counties and go through West Orange, Livingston, Roseland, Florham Park, Chatham Borough, Chatham Twp., New Providence, Berkeley Heights, Watchung, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Clark, Edison, Metuchen and Woodbridge.

PSE&G will file for project approval with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) in May of 2011. The company estimates that, with BPU approval, work could begin in early 2012, with an in-service date of June 2014.

- We received information sheets from ANJEC on the rule of Environmental Commissions and on Site Plan Review.

OLD BUSINESS

Earth Day: The Borough celebration of Earth Day has been adjourned from April 16, and will take place on May 7. The event, coordinated by the Borough Recreation Commission, Environmental Commission and Department of Public Works, will begin with a continental breakfast at the Senior Center at 9 a.m. We will then walk to the trailhead park parcel and view progress on the Greenway construction, then walk to the SportsPlex to learn about its planned 312 kilowatt solar photovoltaic system, and then proceed to the Dismal Swamp and view part of the area that the Greenway Extension will make available to the public.

This is a rain or shine event. Dress in outdoor casual or work clothes, wear gloves and feel free to bring a favorite rake, trowel, shovel or small clipper. The trail is unimproved, so wear boots or shoes for hiking or walking. This event is made possible by a New Jersey Clean Communities grant, so we will pick up trash and perhaps plant some tree seedlings along the way.

Residents, family and friends of all ages are welcome. A number of government officials, and community groups including the Boy Scouts of Troop 216, have been invited to participate. The event will be publicized in the schools and through the Recreation Commission.

Thomas Pond Park: Discussion of the two pumps at the pond: one for the aerator (the visible fountain-like spray), and the other for the groundwater well under the pond. Dorothy will inquire whether the groundwater pump remains functional and, if so, how to operate it. Joe and Dorothy will visit the pond on Tuesday May 10 to inspect the pond and the visible controls for the pumps. Discussion also about possibly placing barley straw bales into the Pond again.

Dog Park: Pat reported that free rabies shots for dogs and cats will be available at the high school on Sat. May 7 from 9 a.m. to noon, and that pet licenses will be available there for sale.

Open Space - Dismal Swamp: On March 17, Mark and Brian met with the Borough Planner and Engineer and councilman Cammarano to discuss the possibility of a wetland mitigation project in the Borough. Locations could include the Dismal Swamp, the streams flowing into it, the trailhead park parcel, or suitable locations such as adjacent to Mill Brook near the Greenway. Such a project would create and/or improve wetlands, and some State funds are available for qualifying projects.

Joe will work with the Borough Engineer to develop a Geographic Information System mapping of parcels that include or border on wetlands, streams, and flood plains. Such mapping could enable hydrological analysis to identify parcels appropriate for a wetland mitigation project.

Greenway: Mark has arranged a meeting with Rick Leer of the County transportation committee to discuss transportation aspects of the Greenway extension. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday June 28 at 7 p.m. in New Brunswick.

Recycling: Discussion of consolidating the collection of all waste materials, both solid waste and recyclables, into a single day in each of the Borough's four sectors. One container (blue) would hold all recyclables combined and the other (black) would hold solid waste. DPW anticipates that this would leave its staff one day without pickup duties to work on other tasks.

The Borough DPW also has proposed that residents discard grass clippings with their solid waste rather than recycle that material, to save the cost of picking up the grass clippings. Discussion of cost versus recycling implications.

We will continue with the neighborhood surveys to be sure that our numbers are reliable.

Dorothy will ask DPW whether it will pick up electronic waste at curbside on the Monday after the twice-per-year town-wide garage sale.

Energy - Global Warming: Mark will ask the Borough Administrator which measures, identified in the energy audits of municipal buildings, the Borough has decided to implement. Those audits identified several cost-effective energy efficiency measures with short (under 5 years) payoff times.

Planning Commission: We understand that the Planning Commission is finalizing the appointment of an inter-commission liaison person.

Sustainable New Jersey: No activity on this project at this meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission will take place on May 18, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Weeks

AGENDA

Metuchen Environmental Commission

May 2011

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