

**Minutes, Meeting of the Metuchen Environmental Commission
August 20, 2014**

2014	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV
M. Herzberg, Chair	P	P	A	A	P	P	P			
D. Rasmussen, Liaison	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
A. Dohl	P	P	A	P	A	A	A			
J. Schaffer	P	P	A	P	P	M	A			
B. Weeks	P	P	P	A	P	P	M			
B. Strom	P	P	P	P	P	P	A			
D. Hirsch, Planning Bd.	P	A	A	A	P	A	P			
S. Burke			P	P	P	P	A			

Key: P=Present, A=Absent, Gray Box or where M is indicated = Minutes Assigned/Taken.

August 2014

Mark called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes of June meeting

Approved.

Correspondence

NJDEP bulletin: Four issues; only one had an item relating to Metuchen: St. Joseph's High School has applied for a stormwater general permit to perform work on and around its running track, including replacing the track itself and building new bleachers and a ticket booth. This work also will require Borough Zoning Board approval.

Middlesex Greenway

- Environmental Commission members anticipate that work on the new Route 27 bridge over the Greenway at Lake Avenue should be completed by October.
- Middlesex Greenway members inquired whether the Mayor could reach out to PSE&G and ask whether it has any objection to using the embankments and abutments from the former railroad bridge over Middlesex Avenue (adjacent to the current west end of the Greenway) as the foundation for a pedestrian and bicycle bridge. A bridge at this location would allow safe pedestrian crossing of this busy road, would facilitate access via the Greenway to the sports complex and would facilitate integrating the Greenway into the redevelopment area design. Discussion included three questions: Does PSE&G own the embankments and abutments? What sort of easement rights would the bridge need, and from whom? Would a bridge interfere with the existing underground gas pipeline or overhead lines?

- A Metuchen Boy Scout, Anton Nelson, has completed his Eagle Scout project of installing an information kiosk on the Trailhead Park site, adjacent to the current west end of the Greenway.

Dismal Swamp

- A Metuchen Boy Scout, Nikolai Krebs, has completed his Eagle Scout project of clearing a pedestrian trail on the former railroad embankment that runs through the Metuchen portion of the Swamp from the parking lot of the Win-Cup factory, adjacent to the Greenway, to the intersection of Durham Avenue and the “paper street” just west of Weston Street.
 - No update on the County’s planned acquisitions of land behind the former Gulton factory in the Metuchen portion of the Swamp, and the site for a now-abandoned proposal to build a new Jehovah’s Witness Kingdom Hall in the Edison portion of the Swamp. When those transactions are complete, we will ask the County if we may use its survey and other mapping data as part of our planned project to map the Metuchen portion of the Dismal Swamp.
3. Dorothy will ask John Wiley, of the Edison Wetlands Association (EWA) board, if the Dismal Swamp Commission may use a portion of the EWA grant funds to purchase software necessary for our planned project to map the Metuchen portion of the Dismal Swamp. That mapping would assemble available mapping databases on that area into a searchable, interactive web site with data layers indicating its geographic, environmental and natural resource characteristics. We understand that much of this data may be available from various government sources and from EWA, but in varying formats (e.g. different softwares and hard copies) and from different dates.

Metuchen Fall Street Fair

The Borough will hold its annual Fall Street Fair this year on Saturday October 11. Mark will fill out the form for the Environmental Commission to participate. Discussion of which issue(s) the Environmental Commission would like to address. Possible issues could include the Middlesex Greenway and recycling.

Recycling

- Discussion of possible measures to increase recycling of waste electronic items. The County’s electronic waste recycling contractor, SIMS Recycling Solutions, accepts a few more items than the Borough recycling center accepts. Discussion of whether the Borough recycling center could accept all of the items that the contractor accepts. This may increase the amount of electronic waste that Borough residents recycle. Those additional items include small discarded appliances; Brian will seek more information from the County Solid Waste Management.

- Discussion of whether DPW could pick up electronic waste curbside after the annual borough-wide garage sale, so those items are not discarded with other solid waste.

Sustainable Jersey

- When Green Team has selected its Sustainable Jersey initiative(s) for the year ahead, present these through community outreach during the Fall Street Fair.
- Dorothy will ask the Borough to renew its Resolution 2012-154, which created the Green Team, by expanding its membership beyond the Environmental Commission to include the Shade Tree Commission, the Bike/Walk Metuchen group, the Chamber of Commerce, the Farmers' Market, the Borough Administrator and the Borough DPW. The goal is to include on the Green Team residents with expertise on a variety of issues.
- Dorothy will ask the Borough to adopt a land use pledge, to incorporate sustainable practices into its land use rules and practices.
- Dorothy is working on obtaining an inventory of the Borough's vehicle fleet from DPW.
- Dorothy is working with the Shade Tree Commission to update its Community Forestry Plan.
- The Green Team members are working to complete the Borough's application for Sustainable Jersey bronze certification. The goal, if possible, is to submit our application by September 14. If we earn certification, we may be included in the League of Municipalities' next awards luncheon. The next deadline, November 18, would be too late for the Borough to participate in the League's next awards luncheon but would be valuable nevertheless to initiate the Borough's application process.
- Discussion of items to address in the Sustainable Jersey application. Brian will call a Sustainable Jersey representative with specific questions on the Borough's application and supporting documentation.

Tree Farm

- Dorothy planted in small pots over 100 small deciduous trees and a couple of dozen evergreen small trees from Earth Day, and has been watering and tending them at her home. These will constitute the first plantings in the Borough's new tree farm.

- Dorothy, the Borough Administrator and DPW Director have agreed to start the tree farm in the grass area around the tennis courts at Grove and Oakland Avenues. DPW will ensure that a source of water is available for the trees.

Open space inventory

Nothing new.

Planning Board

- The Environmental Commission's liaison to the Planning Board announced that he has been elected the president of his synagogue and, due to the time demands, will resign from the Planning Board and the Environmental Commission at the end of this year. Dan reported that his synagogue has been saving significant amounts of money on their electric bills due to their energy efficiency investments. Those investments, including a loan from PSE&G's Direct Install program, funded installation of energy-efficient air conditioning and lighting.
- The Planning Board will consider three resolutions at its next meeting:
 - a. Application by Woodmont for approval of its parking garage and residential development on the Pearl Street lot site;
 - b. Application by Woodmont for approval to begin construction of the new American Legion hall to replace the old hall that will be demolished for the Pearl Street redevelopment; and
 - c. Application by Fox and Foxx for variances to build two homes on a lot on Blair Avenue now occupied by a single home that it plans to demolish. The lot needs variances for its size and width.

New business

None.

Next meeting

Wednesday September 17th at 7 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Brian Weeks