

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

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

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

March 2015

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

A guest attended. Zack Chen, a resident of Highland Park a student at the University of New Hampshire, is taking a mediation class and wanted to see how the Environmental Commission operates.

Due to the resignations in February of Sharon Burke and in March of Beth Strom, the Environmental Commission seeks two new members. Nominations or volunteers from interested adult residents are welcome.

Minutes of February meeting

Approved.

Brian agreed to take minutes tonight and during the April meeting.

Correspondence

Copy of notice received from owner of real property on 205 Liberty Street, advising of application to the NJDEP for a freshwater wetlands and transition area Letter of Interpretation and a general permit to place fill in what was described as a ditch and gravel parking lot.

Earth Day

The Borough will hold its annual Earth Day event this year on Saturday April 11 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Senior Center. The Environmental Commission, Shade Tree Commission and Garden Club will give away small trees for residents to plant on their property. Borough Administrator Jennifer Maier also plans to present a workshop on home composting. Members of the Environmental Commission will bring useful composting tools to show residents. For example, Dorothy will bring her rechargeable electric mulching mower and Brian will bring his compost aerator tool.

Arbor Day

On Friday, April 24, a group of Girl Scouts plans to plant trees in front of Edgar School.

Middlesex Greenway

1. On Saturday April 11 at 1 p.m. a plaque will be unveiled at Trailhead Park on Middlesex Avenue honoring the voluntary service of the late Prof. Steve Strom. Steve's personal and professional dedication contributed to making the Greenway a reality.
2. Jennifer Maier will inquire whether PSE&G or the County 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 and the northwestern area of the Borough. Discussion raised several questions, including: Who owns the embankments and abutments? What sort of regulatory approvals and property rights would the bridge need, and from whom (e.g., County, Conrail, NJDOT, PSE&G, other)? Would a bridge interfere with the existing underground gas pipeline or overhead electric lines? How much would it cost for to study the engineering issues, obtain required permits, and purchase and install the bridge?
3. Jennifer asked members to review the "Together North Jersey" report on the Middlesex Greenway and identify goals for which the Borough can apply for grants to implement. The application for federal trails funding is April 30.
4. Jennifer will apply to ANJEC for a grant of up to \$1,500 to hire either the Borough planner or Rutgers summer interns to help implement some of the initiatives identified in the Together North Jersey report.

Dismal Swamp

1. No update from the County on its planned acquisitions of land in the Dismal Swamp in Metuchen, Edison and South Plainfield.
2. No update from the County on our request for a meeting with its planning department. The purpose is to ask the County if we may use its surveys and other mapping databases as part of our planned project to map the Metuchen portion of the Dismal Swamp. That data can be combined with software into a searchable, interactive web site. The web site would have data layers indicating the geographic, environmental and natural resource characteristics of the Swamp. Much of this data is available from various government sources and from mapping by the Edison Wetlands Association, but in varying formats (e.g. different softwares, hard copies) and from different dates.

Recycling

1. Starting May 1, 2015, the Borough will no longer pick up grass clippings. The Borough currently picks up about 400 tons per year, and pays about \$63 per ton to dump it as solid waste. The savings on tipping fees alone will be about \$25,000 per year, assuming residents compost the clippings on their property and do not discard them with their other solid waste. The Borough also would save the avoided costs of fuel and labor. The Borough will announce this change to all residents with a "reverse 911" call.
2. As discussed above, the Borough will offer a composting workshop as part of Earth Day on April 11 so residents can learn how to compost their grass clippings and other organic wastes.

Sustainable Jersey

1. The first Green Team meeting will be on Tuesday April 21 at 7 p.m. in Borough Hall.

Tree Farm

1. A Boy Scout volunteer may has expressed interest in planting a tree farm near the tennis courts on Oakland Avenue by Grove Avenue, using some of the small trees left over from Earth Day 2014 that Dorothy has been watering and tending at her home. These will constitute the first plantings in the Borough's new tree farm. Dorothy, Jennifer and DPW Director Fred Hall have agreed to start the tree farm in the grass area between the tennis courts and their parking lot at Grove and Oakland Avenues. DPW will ensure that a source of water is available for the trees.

Open space inventory

No news.

Planning Board

No news.

New business

None.

Next meeting

Wednesday April 15th at 7 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Brian Weeks