

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, June 29, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Vice Chair W. Andrews, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, and R. Suydam; and Council liaison E. Potosnak. Absent: J. Johnson, E. Pires (excused), and P. Walitsky (medical problem); and T. Kenyon (vacation).

Chair's report: W. Andrews commented on possible use of infrastructure money to update the township water system, having read the annual report from the Water Dept. T. Chase explained the roles of NJ American Water, New Brunswick and South Brunswick in supplying water to the township. T. Chase presented a chair's report sent by P. Walitsky, mainly concerned with warehouse proposals, and reported on Council's actions to limit warehouse development in the Schoolhouse Rd area; E. Potosnak also commented.

The minutes of the meeting of June 6 were approved.

Correspondence: neither J. Johnson (electronic correspondence) nor P. Walitsky (paper letters to the EC) being present, there was no correspondence to review.

The meeting was opened to the public. C. Kratovil of Food & Water Watch spoke about the proposal for an additional gas-fired generating plant in the Keasbey section of Woodbridge, which Food and Water Watch opposes. He provided material about pollutants which the plant would release. A. Schmidt commented on the draft resolution which Kratovil had previously given to the EC. S. Jaracz asked a question about pollution if the plant were located elsewhere. B. Maher and L. Powell also spoke against the plant proposal. The public session was then closed.

Yvette Viasus, Community Engagement manager for Solar Landscape, presented about her company and the Community Solar program. This program was established by the Clean Energy Act of 2018. Community Solar projects now provide about 150 MW of solar energy to New Jersey; Solar Landscape provides 45 MW of this. They lease warehouse roofs for their projects. This makes it possible for any homeowner to in effect use solar-generated electricity without their own rooftop array (though the electricity produced goes into the general grid, from which home use electricity is drawn). The cost is discounted, 20 to 25%, from what PSE&G would charge for the electricity (shown as a credit on the PSE&G bill, and a charge for 20-25% less than the PSE&G credit billed separately by Solar Landscape; eventually this will be handled by a unified bill.) Franklin is/will be served by 8 projects, two built in round 1 and 6 now being built in round 2, which can power \approx 1900 households. This allocation is derived from the previous year's usage. The BPU requires that they enroll 51% low & moderate income users; non-low & moderate income users may be placed on a waiting list until sufficient low & moderate income users have subscribed. There are Sustainable Jersey points available for communities adopting Community Solar. Low & moderate income subscribers can be recruited through affordable housing management and non-profits. Solar Landscape will soon have a portal for registration. They can supply names of housing authorities and affordable housing landlords who are using Solar Landscape.

Site plan applications: neither P. Walitsky nor T. Kenyon being present, there were no site plan applications for review.

For discussion of a resolution against the proposed power plant in Woodbridge, the meeting was opened to the public. R. Suydam asked what permits the project needs. C. Kratovil replied that Woodbridge Township has given full approval for the project, but an air quality permit from the DEP is still needed. A. Schmidt commented on the draft resolution (four pages) submitted by Food & Water Watch, it needs editing and shortening. R. Suydam moved that the EC approve the cover letter submitted and in principle the resolution, with comments from A.

Schmidt submitted to C. Kratovil for production of a revised and shortened resolution. The final resolution would be approved at the next EC meeting (July 18).

Committee reports: S. Jaracz moved that the Community Solar material be moved to the Education Committee for publicity. He reported on the Adopt-a-Charger program, based in Kentucky, by which non-profits sponsor an EV charger, not networked (unlike chargers sponsored by the BPU) and thus cheaper to operate; apparently the non-profit sponsoring the charger pays for the electricity. R. Suydam is exploring this program with her church.

T. Chase and E. Potosnak reported on the Energy Aggregation proposal presented at the June 20 special Council meeting. At present no net cost savings are expected from it. Council is likely to approve a ballot proposal under which Council would move forward with energy aggregation when savings of at least 5% can be expected.

R. Suydam presented two items for approval for publication: an article on Adopt-Drain for publication in the Franklin Times newsletter, and a notice of an energy efficiency stimulus grant program (from the BPU) for women- and minority-owned small businesses; however, the due date for applications is June 30, so it is too late to publicize. She also asked for approval for the Communications Committee (plus the EC Chair) to prepare a press release for the Local Health Assessment (once the assessment tool is ready). M. Santiago reported arranging for a speaker from New Jersey Progressive Energy Equitable Coalition in the fall.

A. Schmidt asked about progress of the Anti-Idling ordinance. E. Potosnak had no information.

The meeting was again opened to the public. L. Powell asked about compatibility of Community Solar and Energy Aggregation. Community Solar would still offer a discount from whatever the charge was for energy aggregation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.