

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, J. Johnson, E. Pires, M. Santiago, P. Walitsky, and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon; and a full room of the public (≈50 people). Absent: A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, and Council liaison E. Potosnak.

In response to a question from the public, asking that site plans to be reviewed be listed on the township web site in advance of the meeting, P. Walitsky explained that we frequently get the plans very shortly before the meeting, therefore cannot list on the township web site what plans are to be reviewed. Formerly we would spread the plans out at the meeting and all EC members would participate in reviewing. People of Canal Walk were notified by e-mail that the plan of interest to them was to be reviewed tonight, if only very shortly before the meeting.

The minutes of the Aug. 1 meeting were approved (M. Santiago and S. Jaracz abstaining, not having been at that meeting).

The meeting was opened to the public. K. Anastasakos spoke against the warehouse proposed at Mettlers Rd and Schoolhouse Rd on many grounds, including threatening the health of seniors, air pollution, noise, flooding. Beverly Robinovitz spoke about flooding of Mettlers Rd during Hurricane Ida. Shirley Tallman spoke about 18-wheel diesel-fueled trucks, especially idling on Randolph Rd waiting for access to the Amazon warehouse. Another speaker said that Council told them to go to the Planning Board and Environmental Commission. Marlin Quan spoke about the pond on the property and threatened butterfly species. Jan Brandt spoke about the wetlands, noting that LOIs for the property have expired. Another speaker spoke of trucks coming up Schoolhouse Rd past Canal Walk. Steven Brant spoke about 24 hour operation of warehouses; can Council restrict hours of operation? Another speaker asked about accessibility of past EC site plan reports. The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: P. Walitsky described a couple of letters received by the EC about requests for LOIs. J. Johnson reported an e-mail forwarded by K. Frost concerning extension of time to apply for DEP grants.

Site plans: T. Chase reported on the B9 Schoolhouse Owner plans for two warehouses at the corner of Schoolhouse & Mettlers Rds. He explained that because of the zoning for industry, expanded westward to Mettlers Lane in 1998 (the same year that the general development plan for Canal Walk was approved), the Planning Board could not simply deny the application, but could ask for changes to mitigate the effects of the proposed development on its neighbors. In particular, the present plans show only a 50 ft setback of development from Mettlers Rd, but it is now realized that Mettlers Rd is formally a Scenic Road and a 100 ft setback is required. This would provide room for an earthen berm, topped by evergreen trees, for maximum shielding of the scenic road and residences across it. He expects that new plans will have to be submitted, hopefully taking into account Environmental Commission comments. He also noted the plan's request for a substantial variance for the depth of loading dock spaces, 70 ft where 137 ft is required by ordinance. If this is not granted, it – with the increased buffer along Mettlers Rd – could force reduction of the proposal to a single building. (However, a subsequent communication from Mark Healey indicated that the 60 feet turning space between the loading bays is also included in the necessary depth, so no variance is really needed.) Other routine EC requests include solar cells on the roof, or at least a “solar ready” roof; bicycle racks and facilities for bicycle repair; increased pervious pavement in car parking areas; increased planting of trees to replace those removed for the building; and anti-idling signs throughout. Many of the public asked

questions, which the EC endeavored to answer. Jan Brandt asked about PM 2.5 emissions from diesel vehicles; Marlon Quan asked other questions about health and safety.

E. Pires reported on the BH 31 Schoolhouse application for a warehouse at 31 Schoolhouse Rd. This would require demolition of an existing house and smaller industrial building.

J. Johnson moved to open the meeting to the public again at this time. This was approved. K. Anastasakos reported apparently unoccupied warehouses on Campus Drive. She wondered why new warehouses are proposed instead of using existing buildings. J. Brant asked about enforcement of anti-idling laws. The EC explained how these are enforced by the county Health Dept. She also expressed concern about safety of detention basins along Mettlers Rd, someone having drowned in the existing pond. The meeting was then closed to the public.

The time now being about 9:15 PM, S. Jaracz suggested holding a special meeting on Sept. 12 to deal with remaining items on the agenda. T. Kenyon agreed to poll all members of the Commission on this.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 PM.