

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, Sept. 12, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM, vice chair W. Andrews presiding, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, and R. Suydam; and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon and Rutgers intern Santiago Varela. Absent: J. Johnson, E. Pires, A. Schmidt, and P. Walitsky (out of state) and Council liaison E. Potosnak. T. Kenyon introduced S. Varela, an Environmental Policy major from the School of Biological and Environmental Science, Rutgers, our intern assisting her this semester.

W. Andrews reported that he has joined the Local Health Assessment task force, after filling in for P. Walitsky. No chair's report was received from P. Walitsky.

The minutes of the meeting of August 29 were approved, R. Suydam abstaining since she was not present for that meeting.

R. Suydam moved to open the meeting to the public, for a period not exceeding 15 minutes, as the EC needed to catch up on business not addressed on Aug. 29. Approved.

Terry Thorson, 18 Lebed Drive, spoke about the Sierra Club Magazine about warehouses. Jan Brandt, 22 Bryant Court (Canal Walk), spoke about the cumulative effect of warehouses, especially 2.5 micron particulate matter (PM 2.5), which is not cleared by the lungs. R. Suydam noted that we do not have a Climate Action Plan, which Princeton does. J. Brandt asked about notice of meetings (this being a special meeting). Shirley Tallman asked about how Federal money, from the infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Acts, will reach the township; it must be applied for.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: T. Chase reported on materials received in the EC mailbox and passed on by P. Walitsky, including a site plan, as submitted to DEP for a Letter of Interpretation, for a proposed warehouse development on the property at the corner of Mettlers Rd and Weston Rd. This property is zoned R-O-L (being changed to RR-3), in which warehouses are not a permitted use; this proposal will go to the Board of Adjustment. Other items included a proposed flag lot subdivision on Treptow Rd and a request for a Letter of Interpretation on block 5.02, lots 98, 99 and 100, off Rte 27 across from the southerly end of Old Rd.

M. Santiago reported for the Education Committee. R. Suydam described the planned educational presentation on energy aggregation, to be presented on Sept. 29, with speakers from Sustainable Jersey and Gabel Associates (who act as an intermediary between municipalities and would-be energy providers, managing the bids). The Education Committee wants to get good attendance of the public, in preparation for the vote Nov. 8 on the proposal to undertake energy aggregation for the township. They will post advertising on Facebook, various newsletters, etc.

S. Jaracz visited the Franklin Youth Center in August and met with 8 youth and Center director Windy White about a future presentation on environmental issues (what issues would the youth like to hear about?)

R. Suydam reported on brochures advertising central New Jersey, specifically the D&R Canal region, prepared by Brad Fay for the Somerset County Office of Tourism.

S. Jaracz reported on his No Mow May experiment (not mowing his lawn during May in order to allow plants to flower for pollinators). He reported that 1) May is not exactly the right time period, the no-mow period should start earlier (dandelions flower earlier than May) and end when the grass is 6" high and should be mown; 2) what is most important for pollinators is not using 'chemicals' (primarily weed and insect control agents, but including fertilizer, in the fall and

spring. Agents aimed at termites, carpenter ants, etc. are OK.) T. Kenyon suggested preparing a proposal for relief from the township's lawn mowing ordinance for those who wish to not mow for such a period, with Stan's report as an attachment.

S. Jaracz also spoke about problems in scheduling committee meetings, which increase exponentially as the number of members of the committee increase.

T. Kenyon reported on the Adopt-a-Drain program. It is moving right along, could be publicized again.

The anti-idling ordinance is still under review. S. Jaracz spoke about the inefficiency of Somerset County Health Dept. enforcement. We need citizen enforcement, as in New York City. However, this probably would require state legislation.

Local Health Assessment: R. Suydam wants to set up focus groups (6 – 8 people who have some connection, such as members of the same church) for discussion, meeting in late October – early November,. First Baptist Church might be the basis for one such focus group; other possibilities were discussed.

T. Chase reported on the site plan for a warehouse at 785 Old New Brunswick Rd, replacing an existing, smaller building. The proposal requests numerous variances, notably having no buffering (evergreens etc.) at the corner of the building directly across New Brunswick Rd. from Somerset Run. Many variances could be reduced or eliminated if the building were smaller.

The meeting was opened again to the public. T. Thorson spoke recommending No-Mow May as a money-saving action (or rather inaction!) She also asked about the EC web site. J. Brandt spoke about trucks idling, e.g. at the Amazon warehouse, and Somerset County Health procedures for enforcement. S. Tallman expressed interest in No-Mow May for Canal Walk. She invited S. Jaracz to speak there, also to Somerset Master Gardeners. She spoke about the need for "clean idling" diesel trucks (some new trucks meet this standard).

The meeting was then closed to the public, and adjourned at 9:00 PM.