

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, December 5, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, P. Walitsky, T. Kenyon. Absent: J. Johnson, E. Pires, Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: P. Walitsky reported on the commendation by Council, and read his (shortened) speech.

The minutes of the Nov. 21 meeting were approved.

The meeting was opened to the public. Diane Buchan, 33 Cartier Dr., spoke against requiring solar cells on roofs, on constitutional grounds. P. Walitsky replied that there is no intention to require them on residential dwellings, only on larger commercial buildings. R. Suydam noted that the EC has not yet even formed a committee for discussion of what to require. A. Schmidt thanked Ms. Buchan for her comments, and stated that the public should not be restricted in speaking to what was on the agenda. T. Chase spoke about the constitutional issue raised by Ms. Buchan.

Debbie Stuart, 2 Barrington Plaza, spoke about notice of what plans are to be reviewed at an EC meeting. P. Walitsky replied that we often receive plans very shortly before the meeting and are unable to put them on the agenda posted on the township web site. Jan Brandt, 22 Bryant Court, asked when the EC gets plans, when it reviews them, and how she can obtain the comments. P. Walitsky explained the process, noting that there is often a long lag time between when the EC receives plans and when the application is heard. T. Chase replied that EC comments should be obtainable from the Planning and Zoning Office.

Shirley Tallman, 7 Tallman Lane, spoke in favor of green roofs or solar cells on commercial roofs, but also wants less lawn grass, more native ground cover, especially on berms along streets. She is concerned about diesel exhaust from trucks; she would like the EC to make a statement.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: two letters were received about signs: one about signs on a hotel, which will be applying for a variance, and one proposing a static billboard facing I-287, at 347 Elizabeth Ave. The variance requested is for location less than 100 ft from an existing office building. A notice from Franklin Township concerned rebuilding the pumping station at the Sewerage Authority headquarters on Commerce Drive. The EC suggests adding solar cells as part of the general upgrading.

Reports from subcommittees: R. Suydam reported for the Communications Committee. They recommend a procedure to put items which are on the agenda for an upcoming meeting on the EC web page and e-mailing them to our e-mail list. T. Kenyon will contact IT about this. M. Santiago has sent to T. Kenyon the e-mail addresses obtained at the program in the library on energy aggregation.

Notice of the Council commendation, the photograph of the EC at the Council meeting, and a Franklin Times article T. Kenyon is writing should be put on the EC web page.

A. Schmidt reminisced about a posting, on the one electronic billboard along I-287, of a Somerset County Sheriff's Office message about distracted driving, thereby distracting drivers.

S. Jaracz reported that the Education Committee has obtained a date for a movie showing at the library. R. Suydam commented that this was too close to the holidays for effective publicity. After discussion the EC agreed with this, we will seek a date in February for a showing. We would like to show the movie *American Rivers*, but it is 1 hr 58 minutes long, too long for the two hours of time allotted by the library.

M. Santiago also reported contact with the Franklin High School Environmental Club. They are putting on a Green Fair on April 29. They completed a project converting old T-shirts to reusable bags, and are interested in electric cars. They want to establish a composter. T. Kenyon noted that Somerset County sells composting boxes at a reduced price, the EC might get one from them for the Environmental Club. She will pursue this.

R. Suydam wondered whether the greenhouse at McAfee School is being used.

T. Kenyon asked Rutgers for an intern for the spring semester. She has one enthusiastic applicant. R. Suydam reported that Rutgers is raising funds for a paid summer internship program.

Green Roof ordinance: the subcommittee should meet to consider what to recommend. P. Walitsky will be out of town Dec. 19 to Jan. 9 (returning just in time for the EC meeting that night). Committee members have a number of city ordinances for review.

Goals for 2023: T. Kenyon recommends using the Jan. 9 EC meeting to consider goals. She summarized the 2022 goals we have met. R. Suydam suggested starting this meeting earlier to allow more time for good consideration.

Annual report: the list of 2022 goals is a good starting point.

S. Jaracz proposed April 15 for the spring stream clean-up. Approved.

Old business: the anti-idling ordinance draft, with comments, has been sent to the manager.

Tree replacement ordinance: T. Kenyon is setting up a meeting of the joint (with the Shade Tree Commission) committee. A. Schmidt reported on the increase, from \$30 to \$300, of the fee for trees not replaced by developers. He then pursued redefining what is a tree, from 4" in diameter to 1" (which would grow larger). He showed photos of township-planted trees which are less than 4" in diameter. R. Suydam wants this proposal to go through the joint committee; A. Schmidt wants to submit it directly to Council. R. Suydam stressed restoring the prior ordinance requirement that developers could make payment in lieu of replacement of trees removed for no more than 25% of the required number of trees. She pointed out that the present ordinance requires that trees to be planted be at least 2.5" in diameter; she suggested that this requirement supports setting the minimum size for an existing tree at 2.5". A. Schmidt would still like to make the requirement be 2" in diameter. P. Walitsky suggested sending the proposal for these two changes to Council *and* the Shade Tree Commission. A. Schmidt agreed to accept 2.5" as the minimum diameter defining an existing tree, and moved this definition and reinsertion in the ordinance of the 25% limit on number of trees for which payment may be made in lieu of planting new trees. This motion was approved, to be sent to Council and Shade Tree. A. Schmidt assured the EC that Shade Tree would support it.

The meeting was again opened to the public. Debbie Stuart asked what the 25% limit was. T. Kenyon explained how to find the present ordinance on the township web site.

Jan Brandt asked whether the EC takes into account Scenic Corridor designations when making its recommendation on site plans. She made the point that scenic corridors are for all township residents, not just for Canal Walk residents. T. Chase described the origin of the Scenic Corridor designation in connection with a proposal which would have brought heavy traffic to Cortelyou Lane.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 PM.