

## Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, January 9, 2023

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, J. Johnson, E. Pires, M. Santiago, R. Suydam, and P. Walitsky; and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon and Rutgers intern R. Dave. A. Schmidt arrived ≈7:55. Absent: Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Reorganization: J. Johnson nominated R. Suydam for vice chair (chair P. Walitsky was appointed by Council); S. Jaracz seconded. No other name being put in nomination, she was elected (pending approval by the township clerk, since she is technically only an alternate). Committees: everyone previously on a committee was continued.

Chair's report: he thanked W. Andrews for chairing the 12/19 meeting in his absence, congratulated E. Potosnak on his appointment to the board of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Council, and predicted that the Environmental Commission will move into new areas in 2023.

The minutes of the 12/19/2022 meeting were approved, J. Johnson abstaining because she was not present.

The meeting was opened to the public. Roz Sherman, 529 Rosecliffe Court, spoke about the growth of warehouses near the senior communities and Elizabeth Avenue School, expressing concern about the health effects of diesel exhaust from trucks. The Dept. of Environmental Protection does not have enough staff to monitor the resulting air pollution. R. Suydam suggested going to the Somerset County Health Dept. S. Jaracz noted that the state gives grants for the difference in cost between electric and diesel trucks. Further discussion centered on the need for expertise in air pollution.

Terry Thorson, 18 Lebed Drive, reported on heavy trucks on smaller roads, even Lebed Dr. R. Suydam suggested raising the level of fines for violation of weight limits, e.g. on Skillman Lane. P. Walitsky noted that as part of the agreement between the Canal Walk and the applicant for the B9 warehouses, cameras are proposed for Mettlers Rd to identify trucks violating the weight limit there. Angela Kavalesky, Canal Walk, asked about trucks on Mettlers Rd.

S. Jaracz announced that Amazon is introducing electric delivery vehicles for short hauls in New Jersey. They are already in use in California.

P. Walitsky noted a study by a senior student at New Jersey Institute of Technology, measuring in real time 2.5 micron soot particles from diesel exhaust in the Ironbound area of Newark.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

T. Kenyon introduced the spring semester Rutgers intern, Reena Dave.

Site plans: E. Pires reported on a sign variance requested by the hotel at 110 Davidson Ave., wanting three signs on three faces of the hotel, totaling 400 sq. ft.

T. Chase presented two site plans: 1) a sign variance at 4437 Rte. 27 (Kingston Village Plaza), requesting replacing an existing sign with a slightly larger sign and logo for Dollar Store. R. Suydam suggested that the legend, and therefore the sign, does not need to be quite so large, should be more the size of the existing sign for Retro Fitness.

The second plan was a revised plan for the Baldwas Realty proposal for a 73,000 sq. ft. warehouse at 545/549 Weston Canal Rd. The principal change is that instead of relying on well water, a septic field and propane gas, they now propose a 3400 ft. connection to township water and sewer and PSE&G gas at the corner of Randolph Rd and Weston Canal Rd. This enabled removing from the plan the previously proposed tanks for firefighting water and propane at the

rear of the building, and thus being able to have a slope from the level of the building (60 ft above sea level) to the existing grade (at highest 71 ft above sea level), instead of a retaining wall. Massed evergreens, including white pines, are proposed as a buffer above the slope and somewhat down it. He suggested instead a double row of red cedars at the top of the slope, and white pines planted at the bottom of the slope, where eventual loss of lower branches will not matter but top branches will add to the buffer (this is a visual buffer aimed at apartments in Summerfields, ≈ 650 ft away). Other discussion focused on anti-idling signs (besides the two shown along the driveway, there should be signs at either side of the six loading spaces, at the door of the reception room, and at the parking area at the rear of the building) and on the proposal's relation to the scenic corridor along Weston Canal Rd. The survey of the site for wetlands mentioned *Ailanthus* trees; if any of the five trees to be preserved are this non-native species, which is a host for the spotted lantern-fly, they should be removed and replaced with native species such as red maple, already planned for the area.

Committee reports: S. Jaracz reported that the film showing at the library on Feb. 1 is set, but details (e.g. what films) are not yet available.

J. Johnson reported for the Communications committee on plans for description of agenda items for upcoming EC meetings on the web page. She does not have any new items for the web page. T. Kenyon showed a DEP sustainability infographic on environmental New Years resolutions. Another infographic on Conscious Cosmetics was suggested for posting at the Youth Center.

New business: scheduling of discussion of goals for 2023. We will devote the first meeting of February to this; committees should meet to generate suggestions to bring to the meeting.

Anti-idling ordinance: T. Kenyon has not yet boiled the draft down to use references to state law as much as possible (at the suggestion of the township counsel).

Old business: the joint EC-Shade Tree Commission committee is working on a comprehensive revision of the Tree Ordinance. Council has introduced, and will vote on at its next meeting, an increase in the fee for trees not replaced.

Green roof ordinance: R. Suydam reported on a conversation with Councilman Potosnak, who suggested it should be a Large Building ordinance, covering all proposed large buildings and environmental aspects beyond just the roof. LEED certification could be an aspect of this. The committee originally formed to address 'green' roofs will work on this.

Adopt-a-Drain: Hamline University sent a report on Franklin activities in 2022. We should post this report on the EC web page, and inform those who have adopted a drain of this.

Local health assessment: data collection, including focus groups, is now complete. Reena Dave will assist T. Kenyon in preparing the report. The report will make recommendations for addressing health disparities within the township.

S. Jaracz reported on his survey of possible areas for the spring stream clean-up. Although Mile Run in the vicinity of Hamilton St. was the location of last year's clean-up, it already has more trash than other possible sites (middle and lower reaches of Mile Run, Seeley's Brook in the vicinity of Shop-Rite) and therefore should be the site of this year's clean-up. He hopes to get the Franklin High School Environmental Club to do a clean-up of the woods at Naaman Williams Park.

The meeting was again opened to the public. No public spoke, but R. Suydam suggested that members of the public could join the EC committees.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 PM.