

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, September 29, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM, and the Sun

shine Law Notice read. W. Andrews presided in the absence of P. Walitsky. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, E. Vastola, and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: E. Pires, R. Suydam, P. Walitsky.

W. Andrews reported on the EC table at Franklin Day.

The minutes of the Aug. 18 meeting were approved.

The meeting was opened to the public. There were no comments at this time. The meeting was closed to the public.

Correspondence: one e-mail from Ms. L. Kapsokephalos, a copy of an e-mail sent to Bob Vornlocker, asking for an ordinance defining how the borders of a property are marked. This is with reference to the yellow tape used to define the property next door, which she protests. The EC concludes that this is not an environmental issue.

S. Jaracz presented a list of names and addresses for our e-mail list from Franklin Day.

Site plans: 1) resubmitted plan for 500 Atrium Drive. They propose reducing the impervious surface from 77.5% to 69.8%, and that the building be solar-ready. E. Vastola asked about lighting requirements. T. Chase responded that buildings are normally proposed with lights shielded to direct light only downwards. S. Jaracz asked that the lighting color, normally expressed as a temperature, be stated. 2) JC IOS, a shift in the use of the lot (945 Rte 27) on Rte. 27 just south of the railroad crossing, from storage of Montauk school buses to storage of general heavy equipment. Existing impervious cover is 80%, they propose to reduce this by only 0.1%. They propose to take down two small buildings (while leaving the office and maintenance buildings), improve one drain inlet, and plant trees along the Rte 27 frontage (no trees are to be removed). 3) A mural on a building at 851 Hamilton St. is considered a sign because of inclusion of a business logo, and therefore in need of a variance for its size. No environmental aspects.

T. Kenyon reported that Sustainable Jersey has awarded us Silver certification.

The ANJEC Environmental Congress, Oct. 10, will give an award to the EC for our Micro-mobility study and Community Energy plan, and the Candace McKee Ashmun award for lifetime service to T. Chase.

T. Kenyon reported that one Jahvan wishes to volunteer on the EC Energy committee.

Leave the Leaves program: J. Kafas wants to make a video about this, of a Zoom conversation between her and S. Jaracz's daughter.

A. Schmidt reported on activity of the Shade Tree Committee. They have worked with the township on a shade tree maintenance plan, reviewing first and second drafts. Expecting approval of this reviewed second draft, with requirements for watering of planted trees, they propose planting 50 trees in Castleton Park (on the side toward Easton Ave.) and 50 in other parks.

M. Santiago reported on the energy efficiency presentation at the library. Milena Pimpong from NJLCV and Jean-Marie Ryder from PSE&G spoke. Attendance was not as large as expected.

S. Jaracz spoke about the Sierra Club webinar on PJM and the cost of electricity, Oct. 2. He also described a Rutgers agriculture/solar cell installation at a Rutgers farm on Ryders Lane.

Old business: Franklin Day. EC members at the table were in almost constant conversation with citizens. The lot, at DeMott Lane and Amwell Rd, needs shade. We suggest planting trees.

Skip the Stuff is now described on the EC page of the township web site. We will have a list of participating establishments on the web page, once we *have* participating establishments. Only R. Suydam has been working on this. Decals and signs are now available.

No movement on authorizing a youth/student non-voting member of the EC. T. Kenyon noted an article on youth members in the latest ANJEC report.

Environmental Stewardship awards: we will give the institutional award to only one school, Pine Grove Manor, but will give honorable mention to the high school and the Elizabeth Ave. school, which also reached the Silver level.

The meeting was opened to the public. Barbara Marcalis spoke about people parked with cars running. Reporting to the Somerset County Board of Health, the enforcement agency, is futile because they take too long to arrive, if they arrive at all. The public session was then closed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 PM.