

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, November 3, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase (7:06 PM), S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, R. Suydam, E. Vastola, P. Walitsky, sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon, volunteer J. Walker. Absent: E. Pires, A. Schmidt.

There was no chair's report. The meeting was opened to the public. There were no comments. The meeting was closed to the public.

The minutes of the 10/20 meeting were approved without changes. There was no correspondence, and no site plans.

New business: T. Kenyon reviewed the results of the self-study. Generally, our responses qualified us for Superstar category, with some concerns about attendance of the Council liaison, use of the Environmental Resource Inventory (we do have one, but it is not regularly updated, nor is it used in formulating our comments on site plans). R. Suydam spoke in favor of pushing for more EC influence on planning, not just reacting to site plans. We should be involved in Master Plan updates.

Committee reports: M. Santiago reported for the Education & Outreach Committee that a workshop on composting is scheduled for Jan. 15, 2026: Why Food Waste Matters More than You Think. Communications: the Franklin High School aviation teacher has been lined up for a session on Sustainable Aviation Fuel, but T. Kenyon is still trying to contact United Airlines for a speaker. Users of the Princeton and Manville airports should be interested.

P. Walitsky reported that his two daughters drove in from Rochester, NY and Washington, DC in electric cars, recharging at Canal Walk's level 3 charger.

W. Andrews brought up an article in Franklin Times on flood maps. Why aren't they more available? The data are available through the DEP's web site.

R. Suydam reported on a plan for reducing run-off from Six Mile Run Reformed Church (the only lot in Franklin which runs off into Middlesex County) which she got from Chris Obropta (Rutgers). She wants to generate a finance plan for it. It could be an education for the neighborhood. It would include rain gardens; could the township help with the necessary excavation?

T. Kenyon got a grant from National Wildlife Federation for plants for the garden on the Meadows (Van Wickle-Van Duyne House). R. Suydam also suggested involving students of Franklin Park and Claremont Ave. schools with the Six Mile Run Church plan.

J. Walker put together a questionnaire for township DPW on frequency of mowing. T. Kenyon will review and comment.

J. Walker also reported on collection of reusable cups at German soccer stadiums; however, reuse requires a washing facility.

T. Chase brought up – and others contributed – the need to remove caps from plastic bottles before recycling. The business which recycles what the county picks up rejects bottles with caps still on, costing the county money.

Old business: T. Kenyon reported on a meeting with the co-president of the Astronomy Club about dark skies.

Leave the Leaves: T. Kenyon proposed developing a township-wide program, with larger Leave the Leaves paid for by the town. This would reduce the collection of leaves by the DPW.

Skip the Stuff: R. Suydam showed the sign and decal. She and M. Santiago will distribute them to take-out restaurants along Hamilton St. New York has adopted a law, as have 24 NJ municipalities. There is lots of material on this. Jenny Kafas is writing an article on this, from the points of the view of the consumer and the restaurant.

Youth member for the EC: no progress. Council wants a general ordinance applicable to all township committees.

Food Banks are asking for food, not just money, having seen a 150% increase in clientele during the Federal shut-down.

The meeting was opened to the public. A member of the public commented "you guys are doing a great job". The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.