

## **Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, November 17, 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, S. Jaracz, E. Pires, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, E. Vastola, and P. Walitsky; sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon, volunteer J. Walker. Absent: Council liaison E. Potosnak.

Chair's report: he received an e-mail from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), suggesting we apply for their LEED certified status. This would be a significant project for the township, requiring data acquisition and analysis and a budget. He has written to them for details. M. Santiago has obtained and read the packet. Fees are involved, as much as \$8000. Changes to the Master Plan would be involved; he has e-mailed Mark Healey about this.

The minutes of the 11/3 meeting were approved, with confirmation that the Education & Communication Committee program in January will be on alternative jet fuel.

Correspondence: two letters were received from NJDO

T, notifying us that they are applying for flood hazard area determinations for replacement of the bridges over the D&R Canal at Griggstown and Zarephath.

The meeting was opened to the public. Jenny Kafas was recognized, but had no comment.

P. Walitsky reported on a court hearing on the appeal of the denial of the B9 warehouse application. The judge set Dec. 18 for a hearing on the conditions set by the Planning Board. Both the B9 proponents and the objectors objected to some of the conditions (both to condition 11).

P. Walitsky is willing to continue as chair in 2026. The EC recommends him to Council. Since R. Suydam is resigning from the Commission, we recommend that Jahvon Walker be appointed as alternate #2, with M. Santiago moving up to full member and E. Vastola to alternate #1.

T. Kenyon presented recommendations for the 2026 budget for the Commission (presented to Council as part of the Planning Board budget). ANJEC dues and the cost of plaques for Environmental Stewards both went up \$50. R. Suydam suggested we get Franklin Township Environmental Commission business cards. If we have \$200 left from this year's budget we might be able to do that this year.

The possibility of encouraging Mayor Kramer to be a Climate Mayor was discussed. T. Kenyon said we had done this in the past, but not for 2025. It involved a substantial amount of paperwork but got us little, so she recommended against it.

M. Santiago will attend a USGBC webinar tomorrow, and will report to us on expected fees. T. Kenyon reviewed the proposed budget to be submitted to Mark Healey, with an addition tomorrow for projected USGBC fees. The Commission approved this submission.

T. Kenyon showed a list of restaurants which have agreed to Skip the Stuff. We will list them on the EC website (not there yet). R. Suydam presented to the Commission more signs for participating restaurants.

T. Kenyon attended the webinar on forming a stormwater utility. Maplewood adopted this, raised \$800,000. This can be spent only on stormwater projects. She will review the enabling legislation in detail.

The Education Committee is sponsoring a workshop on composting food waste on Jan. 8 at the Senior/Community Center. Publicity for this should be started immediately after Thanksgiving.

The Astronomy Club wishes to address the Commission about proposed partnership on dark skies. Suggested dates are Feb. 2 or 23.

No progress on having a youth member. An update of the tree ordinance awaits agreement on a tree maintenance plan; the Shade Tree Commission has reviewed two drafts of this.

W. Andrews brought up flood hazard maps, which are not readily available. T. Kenyon will get maps for Franklin from state maps.

The meeting was opened to the public. J. Kafas brought up getting more Leave the Leaves signs, preferably with the same legend on both sides so that they can be placed perpendicularly to streets for better readability. She asked about an updated lighting ordinance. This would be an update of the existing ordinance to meet Dark Skies standards. The meeting was then closed to the public.

S. Jaracz reported that his inspection of streams for the spring clean-up found that the homeless encampment near the Hamilton St. crossing of Mile Run is still there and active, though further back. He suggested that the 2026 clean-up be of Seeley's Brook near Rutgers Plaza, on April 11. There is already interest from the Franklin High School environmental club.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM. R. Suydam bade the Commission farewell, as she will not be at the December meetings.