

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, December 1, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. R. Suydam presided in the absence of chair P. Walitsky. The roll was called. Present were: T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, R. Suydam, E. Vastola, and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: E. Pires, P. Walitsky, Council liaison E. Potosnak. W. Andrews arrived at 7:32.

R. Suydam's parting words (this being her last meeting as member of the EC): have ideas, support others' ideas. Consider having an emeritus committee of retired (emeritus) members (no longer voting members of the Commission), meeting when its members choose – an advisory committee, serving as long as its members choose.

The minutes of the meeting of 11/17 were approved without change.

The meeting was opened to the public. Jenny Kafas spoke briefly. She will revise her article on Stop the Stuff for publication in the Franklin Reporter; it has already been approved by the Communications committee, with some revisions suggested. With no further comments, the meeting was closed to the public.

There was no correspondence, and no site plans.

New business: with R. Suydam's departure, a new representative to the Open Space Committee is needed. P. Walitsky is interested, can serve. In his absence, the Commission voted to recommend him to Council; T. Kenyon will report this to the township clerk.

T. Kenyon attended a webinar on the Clean Stormwater and Flood Reduction Act, which provided for municipal stormwater utilities, which would collect a fee from all landowners based on their amount of impervious coverage. She reported that the law provides for credits (against the fee) for activities onsite to reduce runoff. Utilities must annually pay \$50,000 or 5% of funds collected (whichever is less) to the state. The law prescribes what the money raised as fees may be spent on (generally, activities to reduce stormwater runoff). A report must be produced annually. A guidance manual must be prepared. Maplewood (one of three municipalities which have created a stormwater utility so far) has established an "Equivalent Residential Unit" for its rate structure – one unit = 3,133 sq. ft. A very knowledgeable person is needed to be in charge; some part of his/her salary would be paid out of fee money. (Maplewood generated \$880,000 in one year.) T. Kenyon will send her notes to all.

R. Suydam reported that Sen. Smith has said that there is money for a feasibility study (of a storm-water utility for a particular municipality); perhaps from Sustainable Jersey? She proposed drafting a resolution asking Council to approve a feasibility study. She then departed.

T. Kenyon brought up the bid for business cards for members of the EC – with 3 colors, a QR code (S. Jaracz recommended making the QR code larger, with less other information on the card, information which would be available on line using the QR code) and a blank space for EC members to write in their telephone number. The Commission voted approval to order the cards, \$45 for 500 cards from the Somerset County printer. T. Kenyon will pick them up from the printer, to avoid a \$40 delivery charge.

Committee reports: M. Santiago reported that she had prepared a flyer publicizing the program on composting.

S. Jaracz reported inspecting more brooks for litter. He found little in Raritan Brook (but did find a tent settlement of homeless people). A tree had fallen, blocking the bridge over this brook between the Ukrainian Church and its cemetery. He also inspected the brook behind the

Lakeside townhome development [note: some township documents call this Al's Brook]. In general, garbage will be found within 20 feet of any roads. Mile Run in particular tends to attract garbage. This brook and its history were briefly discussed.

A. Schmidt brought up developing an ordinance restricting the use of leaf blowers. T. Kenyon reminded the Commission that Council has requested receiving a list of what a proposed ordinance should contain, not a draft of an ordinance. A. Schmidt will work on this.

M. Santiago brought up a memo [? I'm not sure of the word here] opposing building a nuclear power plant at taxpayers' expense.

S. Jaracz reported the invitation to Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership's holiday party, Dec. 6; prior registration is required.

Old business: the Environmental Stewardship awards were presented to Jessica Johnson and Pine Grove Manor School at the Nov. 25 Council meeting.

M. Santiago brought up the webinar on LEED Certification of Cities, Dec. 5 at 4:00 (by Microsoft Teams).

T. Kenyon reported on further planning for dark skies with the Astronomy Club. They will make a presentation to the EC on Feb. 2 or 23.

T. Kenyon showed the EC calendar of meetings in 2026. This was discussed at the Nov. 17 meeting, but apparently not approved. She will put it on the agenda for the Dec. 15 meeting.

The meeting was opened to the public. The only comment was "It was a good meeting." The meeting was then closed to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 PM.