

Minutes of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission meeting, January 5, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM, and the Sunshine Law Notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, T. Chase, S. Jaracz, M. Santiago, A. Schmidt, E. Ventola, and sustainability coordinator T. Kenyon. Absent: E. Pires, P. Walitsky, Council liaison E. Potosnak. There is one vacancy, due to the non-continuance of R. Suydam. T. Chase was reappointed as secretary.

In the absence of P. Walitsky, S. Jaracz, chosen at the December 15 meeting as vice chair, presided. P. Walitsky sent a brief chair's report: there was a judge's conference on the B9 warehouse on Dec. 18. Nine lawsuits have been filed in the matter.

The minutes of the Dec. 15 meeting were approved without change.

The meeting was opened to the public. Lisa Kapsoképhalos spoke about her neighbor's failure to recognize wetlands on his property. A threatened owl (Barred?) has been reported from township property behind his property. She has been in contact with the DEP, which says it is powerless to do anything. Ms. Kapsoképhalos is concerned about the neighbor's use of yellow tape to show the boundaries of his property (fearing that wildlife will become entangled in it), and that he has cut down all vegetation in the wetlands area [wetlands merely as identified by DEP aerial photos, not by a licensed professional]. Trees have blue or pink ribbons on them (indicating some to be removed?) She would like the township to pass an ordinance making it illegal to define property boundaries with tape.

T. Kenyon will contact Fiona Bennett (with whom Ms. Kapsoképhalos spoke at DEP) about Ms. Kapsoképhalos's concerns.

Jenny Kafas inquired about a contact with expertise in invasive species. She wants to write a memo on invasive species. Ms. Kapsoképhalos also reported presence of honey locust trees and sprouts, which are invasive and are invading her property.

The meeting was then closed to the public.

Correspondence: from Ms. Kapsoképhalos – see above. A new Watershed Ambassador at the Watershed Institute has contacted us.

Site plans: the carwash at 1427 Rte. 27 (corner of Sinclair Blvd) wants to erect a sign advertising the business closer to Rte. 27 than permitted, because at the allowable position there is a Sewerage Authority pipe main which prevents putting the sign there. No environmental concerns.

T. Kenyon asked for comments on the annual report. She would like to have a picture of the entire Commission.

Committee reports: the composting program had to be postponed because of late-running construction at the Senior/Community Center, and the Center cannot offer a new date in February or March. Could we use the Council Chambers? A suggested date is Thursday Jan. 29, 6:30 – 8.

A. Schmidt reported on his proposal for an ordinance restricting the use of fossil fuel-powered leaf blowers. T. Chase, S. Jaracz and E. Ventola have already commented on his draft. A. Schmidt will send out a revised version before the next meeting.

There has been no progress on having a youth member, or on R. Suydam's proposed for an advisory emeritus committee of former members.

Skip the Stuff: T. Chase gave a decal and sign to Mercato in Kingston [though I haven't seen it up]. E. Vastola has talked to several businesses, but the McDonalds at Rutgers Plaza cannot do it, policy is set by the McDonalds corporation. [The Legislature passed and Gov. Murphy signed a bill

mandating Skip the Stuff, i.e. making single-use tableware and condiments available only upon request].

S. Jaracz asked when the next Franklin Times will come out and when is their deadline for submission. He has an article on clean-ups ready for submission. He will send notices of the clean-up to the Watershed, schools, etc.

The meeting was opened to the public. Jenny Kafas asked about EC presence at events, can other groups such as the Astronomy Club be present?

T. Kenyon has EC business cards for distribution to EC members.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 PM.