

Franklin Township Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 20, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 PM, and the Sunshine Law notice read. The roll was called. Present were: W. Andrews, C. MacIvor, A. Schmidt, D. Triggs, A. Vernick, P. Walitsky; and Council liaison T. Chase. Absent were: T. Biercz (out of town), J. Clyde, D. Pydeski.

Chair's report: one hazardous substance release notice and one notice of application for a Letter of Interpretation were received.

The minutes of May 6 were approved without amendment. Nothing new at the web site.

Four plans were reviewed, including plans for the proposed new school on Claremont Ave.

Steve Berkowitz, of All American Plastics in Piscataway, will speak to the Commission on June 17 about recycling of soft plastics not currently picked up by Somerset Co. (polyethylene, including bubble wrap). T. Chase will inform the Township Engineer, in hope that someone from Public Works will attend. A program for recycling such material could get us Sustainable Jersey points.

P. Walitsky reported that the Sewage Authority plans to convert eight generators (needed to keep pumping stations operative in case of power failure) from diesel fuel to natural gas. They have been using 7100 gallons of diesel fuel per year on these (testing, etc.) P. Walitsky will arrange to meet with the Sewage Authority Executive Director to obtain detailed information necessary to support application for Sustainable Jersey points in the Innovative Program category.

The rain barrel seminar on May 11, put on by New Jersey Water Supply Authority with EC sponsorship, was a success, with about 40 people in attendance (reportedly 7 or 8 were turned away) for a 15-20 minute presentation on the program and the adaptation of the barrels, and all 24 barrels brought were adapted and purchased. We should have another next spring (publicity through the township newsletter was deemed important for the good turnout, but could not be repeated for a second seminar in the near future).

Other possible seminars suggested by Cathy Blumig include bee-keeping and wild turkeys. Bee-keeping would be better in spring, wild turkeys perhaps in November.

Community gardens: e-mails from Audra Wood, teacher at Pine Grove Manor School who started the school garden, reported that the community garden there is doing "excellently", with all plots being used. Sarah Polakowski (affiliation? a garden user?) has unofficially coordinated the garden. Ms. Wood requests support for fencing material

to close holes in the fence protecting the garden from animals, and fresh topsoil. P. Walitsky will contact Connie Coriell, environmental coordinator for the schools, in search of Board of Education funding for this.

D. Triggs brought up the question of neonicotinoid insecticides, widely blamed for the decrease in honeybee populations. This will be discussed at the Open Space meeting. It would be desirable to have a public statement of policy concerning use of pesticides on township properties, including Open Space. C. MacIvor suggested that the EC sponsor a seminar on the safe use of herbicides, from the Somerset County agricultural agent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.