

Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

Minutes of Monday, January 10th, 2022 meeting

Meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm.

Attendees:

Members: Richard Leister, David Harris, Kim Diamond, John Leo, Nirit Rotenberg, Renee Ciesla, Angus Chen

Non-Members: Steve Carrellas, Robert Cianciulli, Tom Foregger

1. Minutes for November 15th, December 6th and December 20th 2021 meetings were approved.
2. Hearing on agenda items only - 3 minutes per resident – none.
3. New Business:
4. Plans: Connell - The District, a solar project, and a subdivision. EC recommendation memos, as drafted by Richard, were approved.
5. Old Business:
 - a. Request from the Mayor for committees/commissions to develop a code-of-behavior (bylaws) to govern conduct of meetings. Richard to check with the Mayor if a template of such a code-of-behavior has been drafted by the Township Council, and also if this has been reviewed by the Township attorney.
 - b. 2022 Calendar – schedule drafted by Richard was approved. The liaison from the Board of Education will be named at January 20th School Board meeting.
 - c. Scout projects: Eagle Scout Project at Community Garden (Vibhav Chaturvedi) – project has been approved by the Historic Preservation Committee; Vibhav to present to the Township Council on Jan 18th. Proposal to the Township Council to include proposal that a member of the Environmental Commission and a member of the Community Garden be designated to liaise with Vibhav on the planning and execution of the project.
 - d. Community Garden: Trimming the trees that are shading a portion of the garden is thought to be infeasible (expensive and would only provide short-term benefit). Instead, the shed to be relocated to the shadier portion of the garden and additional beds to be installed where the shed currently stands. This may need to be done in the winter when the ground is frozen, per the DPW, likely next winter. Scouts will be engaged to help disassemble and reassemble the beds. An estimate should be sought from an irrigation company to move the plumbing.
 - e. Stormwater Ordinance – no update.
 - f. Adopt a Drain: 82 participants and 157 drains adopted as of end 2021. Kim circulated the year-end report for the two NJ towns enrolled in the program (ie, BH and Westfield). Invoice for 2022 has been submitted to the Township for

payment. Naming competition to occur this month; Kim to distribute the list of adopted drains; EC members to rate the drain names for all drains adopted prior to Nov 25th; EC members agreed they will not be eligible to win.

- g. Sustainable Jersey Actions
 - i. Expired Actions – list of expired actions was circulated by Richard. Richard asks the EC members to review this list and volunteer, by Jan 24th EC meeting, for actions they can lead or help complete. Richard to check if there are any new actions available.
 - ii. SJ Grant for Rain Gardens – Richard has not yet submitted this; awaiting an estimate for cost-per-square-foot for constructing rain gardens.
 - h. Tree Ordinance – no update.
 - i. Peppertown Park – no update.
 - j. Recycling -
 - k. Topics for the township newsletter
 - i. Kim to draft a short paragraph on Adopt-a-Drain program.
 - ii. Kim/Angus to draft article on suspension of Trex program (see below).
 - l. Passaic River Park – Kiosks created under AARP program have been installed; these highlight Passaic River Park. Contacts in New Providence and Summit identified to progress the trail eastwards.
 - m. Trex collection and Trex benches: Due to unwillingness of local Trex partners to continue thin film plastic collections, the BH thin film plastic program that has been led by the EC is to be suspended indefinitely. No further thin film plastic to be dropped off at Taylor Rental. Residents to be encouraged to drop off their thin film plastics at grocery stores (Stop-and-Shop in BH; ACME in NP; Shop Rite in Sterling; Home Depot stores). Kim has spoken with Stuart Newman at Union County re the possibility of Union County supporting thin film plastic collection. Article highlighting the suspension of the program to be placed in the township newsletter.
 - n. Lower Columbia Park – DPW has not yet prepared the soil for planting for the planned garden.
 - o. Leaf Blower Noise – no update.
 - p. “Forest Stewardship” Bill S3549 (Smith)/A4843 (Murphy) – no update.
 - q. Green Amendment – no update/
 - r. Projects with Watershed Ambassador
 - i. Rain barrel project – 7 sign-ups collected at Winter Walk; additional names sought before scheduling a workshop.
 - ii. Invasive species effort – David to contact Sydney Abraham again.
 - s. Annual Report – Richard is drafting; need all EC members to provide estimates of hours spent on EC activities.
6. Citizens hearing on any environmental issues - 3 minutes per resident – none.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:03 pm

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 24th, 2022, at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by David Harris, January 10th, 2022.