

Minutes of the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

March 25, 2019

Meeting called to order at 7:38pm

Attendees

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

Guests: Alvaro Medeiros, Ronald Weinger (The Historical Society of Berkeley Heights), Dave Ogens

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from March 11, 2018 (latest revised version) approved

Old Business

Community Garden

- Richard met with the township and was informed that approval is required before submitting a grant application.
- The Eagle Scout candidate wants to build a shed using a kit. It was asked if a kit would be an approved Eagle Scout project versus making it from scratch. Richard said one option is buying plans for a kit and all of the parts need to be purchased. The other option is buying a kit with the parts. A discussion about this has not occurred. The Scout needs to get approval from the Eagle Scout council.
- Richard talked to Tom Bocko about how to install the shed. The DPW will need to lay down 3/4-inch stones for the base on shed. The township will need to approve that expense.
- Richard asked Mitchell Gayer to supervise the Scout building the shed.
- Richard has asked Halls for quotes for soil. Halls is believed to be a vendor for the town.
- David can provide a generator for using power tools.
- There is no electricity in the parent house. The Historical Society of Berkeley Heights guests are not sure of the state of electricity in the museum, but it is likely two prong outlets. They were trying to get the previous administration to send an electrician, but it did not happen.
- The township wanted to know the specifications of the spigot.

Environmental Movies - Nothing to report

Scout Projects

- Kim - There are two girl scouts who are interested in a project with EC regarding keeping the environment clean, specifically pollution. She recommended they narrow the scope and suggested they attend a clean up event to talk to the group. She is waiting for feedback from them after they speak to their advisors.
- Angus - Nicole Mauriello's daughters have a presentation on reducing single use plastics. They may be ready to present at the next meeting.
- What is the equivalent of the Scout Council for the Girl Scouts.

Stormwater Ordinance

- Rich reviewed the Rahway River Watershed ordinance, which is the model ordinance recommended by ANJEC. It was very similar to the Cranford version. It designated
- Non-major development applies to disturbance of 1000 square feet or more of soil, or construction or redevelopment resulting in the increase of 250 square feet or more of impervious surface.
- We should make sure to add language that this ordinance applies when overall impervious coverage is exceeded.
- Kim asked that we create a document with change tracking enabled, so everyone's suggestions can be visible
- Richard said we need to present this ordinance to the township engineer, township council, and the planning board. The planning board has said in the past that they are guided by the ordinances.
- Renee suggested EC members read and compare all three sample ordinances and then discuss them at the next meeting. David stated that the result would be to choose one and then make changes on it. Rich said the Rahway River Watershed ordinance seems to be the best, but it lacks the changes from the municipal engineer. Rich will determine which ordinances we should review.
- David commented that applicability should differentiate between properties that below and above the maximum allowed impervious coverage, rather than only on disturbing over 1000 square feet of soil or increasing impervious coverage past 250 square feet. If you are above the overall maximum, then a higher rate of water capture should apply. Water capture solutions are permanent and onerous to install and maintain, as well for the township to enforce.
- John asked if we should consider natural solutions such as planting vegetation with high absorption rather than water mitigation systems. He is willing to reach out to townships for feedback on the efficacy of their ordinances and lessons learned. Richard suggested Marian Glenn, a member of the Summit Environmental Commission, or someone from Cranford.
- Richard said his goal is to encourage property owners to retain stormwater on the property. Most new home builders install downspouts to the street, which should become the exception rather than the norm. Driveways are impervious surface that generally drain to the street when sloped accordingly. Both downspouts and driveways should drain to the lawn, rain garden, or bioswale instead.
- Angus said developers and homeowners may not like the idea of stormwater staying on the property due to potential flooding impact on the home, which was echoed by David. John also asked about the cost of an engineer, which Richard stated should be addressed. If the township engineer requests information that needs to be supplied by an expert, perhaps the township engineer should be able to suggest solutions, since homeowners aren't expected to be experts.
- Rich said Zoning Board is very concerned about stormwater management, since there are areas in town that can have serious flooding.
- Kim asked if Sustainable Jersey might have insight into ordinances for townships, such as in south Jersey, where there is more open space and new development rather than redevelopment. John suggested we look into townships that have similar water management issues as Berkeley Heights. David suggested reaching out to Sustainable Jersey Union County Hub.

Sustainable Jersey - Richard sent an email asking for people to accept membership on the Green Team. After receiving replies, he will submit it to the township council to pass a resolution to appoint the Green Team. The list of members then has to be sent to Sustainable Jersey. The stormwater ordinance is one of the actions for Sustainable Jersey certification.

Master Plan - Alvaro asked if Richard can attend the meeting on Friday, March 29. It will be reviewed with the new planner.

Tree Ordinance - Nothing to report

Peppertown Park - Kim will be attending a meeting during the first week of April. Art for the Park will be taking place May 11, 2019.

Smart Cities - Kim stated Berkeley Heights was not a finalist, but will have access to the software as an applicant. Software has not been rolled out yet.

Recycling

● **Mayor's Recycling Task Force**

- Angus stated the last meeting was March 13 and the next meeting was March 27.
- The tasks determined at last meeting was reaching out to townships and counties for comparison.
- Richard asked about recycling kiosks for items that aren't picked up curbside.
- Alvaro discussed options such as garbage collectors hauling or shared services with other townships, such as Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority.
- There is a plan to have a survey to the township to find out what the residents are willing to accept
- Guest suggested having a recycling center for drop offs, but we currently do not have any space to accommodate one since the new municipal complex is under construction
- Angus stated that there was a consensus that dual stream should be explored because it seems to be less expensive than single stream. The report for the commission is due by July, but the research must be completed by the end of April, so that May can be focused on writing the report in time to meet the Sustainable Jersey action deadline of June 2.
- The primary goal is to reduce the township cost of recycling, not expand the scope of recycling. Giordano's costs increased because China is no longer accepting contaminated materials and operating costs are now a greater load.

- **Resolution on Plastic Bags** - Nothing to report. This initiative will be placed on hold because there is no movement from the state.

● **Trex Thin Film Plastics Recycling**

- Dr. Pat Smith has adopted the bin at Pet Supplies Plus. Friday, March 22 was his first pickup.
- The Historical Society of Berkeley Heights will adopt a bin. Ronald Weinger will confer with Kim regarding which bin to take over.
- The EC team has so far collected 350 lbs. The total collected overall since the program's inception on June 2018 is about 4300 lbs.
- David asked if we should encourage residents to drop off thin-film plastics at established locations such as Stop & Shop, instead of continuing with Trex and the EC ceasing to make collections. Kim said Lower Columbia Park still needs benches, as Carolyn George contacted Trex about ordering benches and was told they are \$800 a piece.
- Kim did bring up this initiative at the March 21 Joint Meeting for Union County Environmental Commissions, but there wasn't interest in partnering with Berkeley Heights. Summit is doing it as well, but different
- Richard forwarded a Little Flower Church contact to Kim. They will have two bins and Father Andy will be responsible for dropping them off. Renee suggested that older students help Father Andy with drop offs.
- Clear plastic bags will be left inside the Trex bins to aid in the collection process.

Clean-Ups

- There were two events on March 17 and 24.
 - March 17 - The items collected included 11 bags of litter, 9 bags of recyclables, and heaps of Christmas trees and concrete. About 50 people participated, including EC members Kim and Angus, and Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The participants were made aware of an area that many weren't familiar with.
 - March 24 - The items collected included 44 lbs recyclables and 80 lbs of garbage. About 25 people participated, including EC members Kim, Renee, and Angus. Kim will submit an article to Alternative Press. The sponsors are the Berkeley Heights Innovation and Sustainability Alliance, Val's Valiants, the Downtown Beautification Committee, and the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission.
- Kim proposed another cleanup event for Sunday, April 7 between 2pm and 4pm. The site will be Watchung Way between Horseshoe Road and Runnells Center for Rehabilitation and Healthcare. 199 lbs of trash and recyclables was collected the last time a clean up event was held at this site. It is also sponsored by the same four groups as the March 24 event.
- David suggested a clean up event at Passaic River Park east of Snyder Avenue towards New Providence. He can coordinate it with his son's Scouts troop. Rich stated that this needs to be coordinated with Union County because it is their property.

Vegan Fest

- Kim is waiting for the grant from Sustainable Jersey. Rich stated that the Community Garden grant is still open due to remaining \$300 that needs to be spent, so Sustainable Jersey may not offer a new grant for Vegan Fest until the previous grant is closed.
- Alvaro stated it could be discussed at the next council meeting.
- Rich said he sent Kim a link to Summit Medical Group grants. He suggested that Summit Medical Group may be willing to host the event in their cafeteria or somewhere else at their site on the weekend.

Community Adopt-A-Project - Nothing to report

Joint Meeting on Environmental Commissions

- Kim and Angus attended the Westfield NJ March 21 meeting. The primary topic was “The Scope of the Organic Waste Problem & Why We Need To Contribute To Some Solutions.” Waste Management has a program that uses anaerobic digestion to convert organic waste into engineered bioslurry and would like businesses to participate. The cost is about \$50 per month for a weekly pickup from a 64 gallon container.
- Rich suggested sharing the program with Tom McAndrew, the Director of the Berkeley Heights Department of Wastewater Treatment.
- Kim said she spoke with Dr. Pat Smith about Waste Management presenting to the Berkeley Heights Business and Civic Group. He said the April schedule was full, so perhaps May.
- Other townships were very interested in Vegan Fest and may be able to assist or attend the event.

Mayor’s Wellness Campaign

- Alvaro said the initiative is worth 20 Sustainable Jersey points. He has signed up Mayor Angie Devanney as a volunteer.
- He will be discussing it at the next Board of Health meeting on April 25.
- The healthcare provider for township employees is willing to join the campaign.

Topics for the Township Newsletter

- Kim wants to add completed and upcoming clean up events.
- David suggested stormwater management awareness. Rich suggested getting information from ANJEC. He will draft something up whenever space is available.
- Kim stated that May is plastics month
- Rich will look for the original list and share it on the EC website as a standalone document. The new Berkeley Heights website will be online on March 26.
- David will send me a list of topics, which will be kept in all future minutes.

Municipal Complex and Stormwater

- Richard got the impression from Liza that there was going to be a meeting with the management firm. He wrote an email stating that there is grant money available from NJ American Water, but the application deadline is the end of March. He would like to know if the township is interested in green infrastructure for complex, but hasn’t received a response.
- Alvaro said township is worried about increasing costs, but perhaps green infrastructure could replace planned landscaping.
- Rich would like to attend the next council meeting, perhaps conduct a presentation during a conference session or during the open discussion session.

Pesticides in Fields

- There have been an email thread about this. Alvaro asked if Richard could meet with Tom Barton. Alvaro can reach out to Charles Santore about this.

New Business

Environmental Commission Website

- Richard stated that he is not receiving emails from the website are not being processed, so he is looking into this. The emails are supposed to be going to info@bh-ec.org. He can see the emails on the website, but they were supposed to be forwarded to multiple people.
- Richard was also not receiving emails sent to ec@bhtwp.com. Angus will reach out to Township Administrator Liza Viana about the forwarding problems and the name misspelling. We should see if any other EC members want to join this mailbox.

ANJEC Open Spaces Grant

- The grant application is due April 15. Kim wanted to apply funds to the upcoming April 7 Watchung Way cleanup and Locust Ave between the YMCA new site and Timber Dr. There are two other lots, but Rich is not sure how they are classified, who manages them, and whether the grant would apply. Rich will remind the township that the Green Acres signs are received and need to be installed at the Watchung Way site. Richard said a budget needs to be decided, submit it to the CMFO Eugenia Poulos, then the council needs to approve it by resolution before applying for the grant.
- Kim makes a motion to apply for the ANJEC open space grant for the specific lot on Watchung Way designated as an open space lot, so that the Environmental Commission can make an impactful difference on keeping that area clean.
- Kim said there is a lot garbage left at the Watchung Way area. If there is a garbage bin there, there was a discussion on who would be responsible for collecting it on a regular basis. Angus asked what is the DPW responsibility for trash pickup around town. David suggested doing the cleanup and using the publicity to make residents aware of this area.
- Area is not easily accessible and is densely populated with thick brush, so it is unlikely for people to frequent. Maybe a pathway should be developed and perhaps the project could be completed by the Eagle Scouts.
- John asked what the grant money could be used for. Are signs an effective use of the funds. Maybe we need to spend time learning more about the grant and the space, then we submit for the grant next year. David suggested connecting open spaces. Perhaps the goal is to pay for clean-ups and get signage about keeping the area clean.
- We should survey before the next meeting then vote on this motion during the next meeting.

Resolution on Grants - Angus read aloud the terms of the rules to the the Environmental Commission.

ANJEC Membership List - ANJEC is asking for a list of members and their contact information. We should all provide within a single email chain. Richard had sent it to Kinan

Green Roof Ordinance

- Kim wants to draft a green roof ordinance for commercial properties. She has a San Francisco ordinance for reference.

- Rich stated that it is worth researching, but a green roof requires an engineering evaluation because it adds considerable weight to a building as well as maintenance. Green roofs are also a way to manage stormwater because it gathers water and absorbs it with the soil on it.
- David said we should prioritize the stormwater ordinance. Richard said the commission can recommend green roofs in plan reviews.
- Kim is willing to draft an ordinance. There are no objections from the other members.

Plans

Nokia Detention Basin

- **Update** - Richard attended Planning Board meeting about this property. The board raised the question why so many trees would be removed. Nokia's answer was they were deepening the basin, so it would hold more water and allow it to soak into the ground. Rich asked why not change it to a retention basin that will have trees that can handle large amounts of water. Nokia said they would consider it, but it is not a commitment. They may still have to remove trees to make it deeper, but could still plant trees to naturalize the area. The Nokia engineer had no knowledge about this, so they will consult their landscape architect. Richard also offered to put them in contact with Rutgers, but it was deemed unnecessary.

100 Industrial Road

- **Findings of Fact** - Richard went over to the site and noticed a detention basin next to the side of the building between the building and driveway. This basin is not mentioned in their application, but it doesn't appear that the basin will be filled in.
- **Recommendations** - The existing detention basin should be retained. They should have a letter of interpretation about the wetlands area. If this is a floodway and wetland, the commission strongly recommends the applicant take measures to mitigate any stormwater runoff by removing any impervious surface from the wetlands area. They need a letter of exception from DEP if they want to do that.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03pm.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2019 at 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted by Angus Chen on April 5, 2019