

Minutes of the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

April 22, 2019

Meeting called to order at 7:31pm

Attendees

Members: Richard Leister, Kim Diamond, David Harris, Angus Chen, Renee Ciesla (delayed arrival), John Leo (by phone)

Guests: Alvaro Medeiros, Girl Scouts Troop 40822 members Katherine Zhou, Pavni Bhardwaj

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from April 8, 2019 approved

Old Business

Community Garden

- Richard will be meeting with irrigation companies about water going from supply in the house to the beds. There are three zones.
- Some supplies will be procured from Berkeley Hardware.
- 10 cubic yards of soil will be delivered April 23.
- Richard wanted to know what approvals are needed from the township on the spigot that would be installed at the house. A plumber needs to install it, possibly the town plumber. A backflow preventer and pressure reducer are necessary. The water meter would be in the name of the Environmental Commission.
- Liza Viana suggested rain barrels, but a 50-gallon barrel would not supply enough water for the size of the garden. Because the land is flat, there would no way to pump the barrel water due to the lack of electricity.
- Any irrigation system requires a rain sensor, so that the system shuts off if it rains
- Richard would like to schedule a grand opening either the weekend of April 27 or the following weekend, depending on what everyone decides
- People may need to bring in water to water their plants until the water source is set up

Environmental Movies - Nothing to report

Scout Projects

- **Girl Scouts Troop 40822**
 - The Girl Scouts had a presentation at the beginning of the meeting. They want to complete a Silver award community service project about reducing littering and want to partner with the Environmental Commission on litter clean-ups. The project will last until August, so they can submit the report by September.
 - They plan to create a child friendly Google Sites website. They will reach out to schools to invite younger children to participate in clean-ups.
 - Kim submitted a motion to invite the Girl Scouts to partner with the Environmental Commission, Val's Valiants, and Sustainable Berkeley Heights in future clean-ups until September. The motion was passed.

- Kim submitted a motion to add a link to the Girl Scouts' website on the Environmental Commission website. The motion was passed.
- Kim Diamond will be the contact for the Girl Scouts on this project.
- The Girl Scouts asked for help on researching littering. They also asked how often the clean-up events will occur and the expectation is one per month starting in May.
- Girl Scouts may be cleaning up Lower Columbia on Friday, April 26. The state does not have any sponsored clean-up events until September.
- The Eagle Scout is required to raise money to build the shed as part of the Eagle Scout project. The shed costs are already budgeted, so any money he raises will reduce the budgeted amount.
- Angus met the CEO of NAECO on Earth Day at his workplace. NAECO makes metal straws and water bottles. He will pass this information about NAECO to the Girl Scouts who are working on the project eliminating single-use plastic straws.

Stormwater Ordinance

- Rich suggested creating stormwater ordinances for both major and non-major developments to attain the full 30 points for the Sustainable Jersey action.
- EC needs to meet with township engineer and Planning Board about best path for moving this forward. Renee suggested first defining what is feasible to help the EC strategize. Once a consensus is reached with the township engineer, then the ordinance moves to the Planning Board. Once consensus is reached with the Planning Board, the township council votes on the ordinance.
- Kim researched green roof ordinances passed by larger cities. San Francisco has an ordinance that integrates stormwater management and green roofs, which was added to their building code. She recommended raising the green roof ordinance together when the stormwater ordinance is presented
- The Delaware Valley ordinance that John Leo reviewed was in more layman language than legal terms. David said the Sustainable Jersey ordinance is more restrictive.
- Richard would like to include a requirement that new housing should not connect downspouts to the street.
- Renee and Kim both suggested presenting the risks of not having this ordinance in advance. Kim advocated for a long-term view rather than short-term. Developers may tend to think more short term. Alvaro said rules should be reasonable and asked if the green roofs should apply to existing planned business developments.
- Renee stressed the need to balance stringent rules on pre-existing structure versus new construction for homeowners. Making them too onerous could deter people from our town.
- Richard said stormwater management was discussed during the last Master Plan meeting. John asked if this would be an addendum to the Master Plan. Kim said EC should work on getting ordinance approved, then later integrate it into the master plan.
- Richard will schedule a time to meet with township engineer. Kim and David would like to attend. Need to provide the engineer a document to reference. David will create a draft and it will be circulated to the rest of the commission.
- Renee asked for the timeline. Rich said by the end of the year. Sustainable Jersey said to plan on the process lasting several months.

Sustainable Jersey

● **Green Team**

- Any document going to Sustainable Jersey requires a green team.
- The green team is not the same as the Environmental Commission. Team can include members outside of commission.
- Rich will send the list of members to Liza and the Town Council to see if they want to amend it before approving it. Green team requires approval by resolution by the Township Council.

● **Mayor's Wellness Campaign**

- Alvaro and Renee had a meeting with Elise Telloni of Summit Health Management, who put them in contact with someone from the Union County. Elise is also helping to determine what the campaign should focus on. She also shared what Summit Medical Group has put out in the past to communities on health improvements.
- Alvaro is meeting with Board of Health on Wednesday and will discuss this campaign with them.
- This campaign is Sustainable Jersey points eligible with the goal of accruing points for 2020.
- Renee said the campaign is currently at the information gathering and brainstorming stage.
- Top 5 most prevalent conditions affecting Summit Medical Group customers are hypertension, diabetes, obesity, osteoarthritis and hypercholesterolemia. We will focus on the top 3.
- Alvaro also spoke to the Berkeley Heights Volunteer Rescue Squad to learn what kind of health issues they respond to
- Kim applied for a grant to Summit Medical Group and they said this year's funds have already been given out.
- The Environmental Commission will be staying aware of and supporting this campaign, but other committees are participating

Master Plan - Alvaro would prefer Richard postpone discussion of the Master Plan to a Town Council meeting after the May 7, so that Alvaro can attend. Alvaro will speak with Ana Minkoff about this.

Tree Ordinance - Nothing to report

Peppertown Park

● **Peppertown Park maintenance**

- Richard asked Joseph Graziano about removing grasses from the planting area in the back of the park. Joseph said the Peppertown Park Committee is responsible for this.

- Rich asked Kim to ask Peppertown Park Committee about cutting grasses and cleaning up planting beds. Kim said the committee is waiting for results on the M&T Bank grant application.
- **Art For the Park**
 - The event will be held Saturday, May 11 from 12pm to 5pm. The Peppertown Park Committee asked the Environmental Commission to sponsor a children's activity table pertaining to recycling art. Set up may be involved, so we may need to arrive earlier. The costs or supplies involved are unclear.
 - Renee asked what age group. So far it is for children under 12 years old.
 - Kim asked if the Environmental Commission could provide funding for this table if the Peppertown Park Committee could not fund it. Rich said no funds had been allocated for this in the Environmental Commission budget. Alvaro asked if other vendors are being charged and how much.
 - Renee said it is important to get kids inspired on the environment.
 - Angus will speak to the Girl Scout troop planning the single-use straw reduction project about what they were planning for this event. David said it would be helpful to have Girl Scouts there to help out.

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**

- There is a meeting on May 16 in Madison NJ.
- There is no action at the state level.

● **Trex Thin Film Plastics Recycling**

- Kim wrote an article that was published in TAPinto Berkeley Heights.
- The library bin has been adopted and pick ups began Monday, May 15
- Berkeley Heights Historical Society may begin YMCA bin pickups sometime in May.
- Angus asked about the Berkeley Heights Democrats Club adopting a bin, but it was suggested that political organizations not adopt bins.
- Groups that sponsor bins are reporting collection amounts directly to Trex, and sharing the amounts with Kim Diamond to track overall collection amounts for the township
- Father Andrew is requesting two bins for Little Flower Church. Kim told him that Trex usually wants the benches to go to schools or parks.
- Alvaro said the Environmental Commission should remain connected to this activity, even after all of the bins are adopted.
- Liza said the township may be willing to pick up the Town Hall bin. Alvaro will ask Liza to reach out to Kim.
- The schedule for EC members picking up unadopted Trex bins was discussed.
- Alvaro asked if there were good locations to house additional Trex bins. Kim said she brought up Trex bins at the last Berkeley Heights Business and Civic Group meeting. She advised that the bins should not be placed outdoors.

Clean-Ups

- Kim will schedule events now that Girl Scouts want to partner with the EC for their project.
- Vicki Reed contacted Kim about having an event with one team spread to clean-up two different locations. David will set up something with Cub Scouts and figure out a date. He will coordinate together with Vicki and Kim.
- Kim also applied for ANJEC Open Spaces grant to secure garbage grabbers for clean-ups. She is not sure when funding would be awarded.
- Rich stated that L'Oréal also has a volunteer day in June, but the exact date is not yet known. Rich had them help with Peppertown Park last year.

Vegan Fest

- Dr Pat Smith suggested applying to his foundation for a grant to fund this event. He is going to work with Kim.
- Kim needs to follow up with Mayor Angie Devanney about Brown & Brown sponsorship. Alvaro stated Angie wants Kim to send over the event budget.
- Kim asked if we know any businesses who would be willing to contribute funds, to pay for faculty T-shirts, trophies, and advertising. Last year there were contributions of \$400. Kevin Hall also contributed \$100 himself.
- Renee will share a list of businesses that tend to donate for fundraising.
- David suggested Chopt in New Providence as a sponsor. Kim stated they didn't donate last year, but will try again this year.
- David suggested sponsorship from new business Untied Brewery in New Providence.
- Sustainable Berkeley Heights will apply for grants to pay for this event, since it can accept funds as a 501c3.
- Kim is looking for speakers for the educational panels, for either the Earth- or Health-Focused panels

- Kim reminded Alvaro to ask about participants can sample the food when he attends the Board of Health meeting

Community Adopt-A-Project - Richard spoke with Pam Yoss, who will attend the next meeting.

Joint Meeting on Environmental Commissions

- Richard posted a poll on Basecamp asking for the best of three dates for Berkeley Heights to host the May meeting, so the EC members should respond. He will close it soon so he can confirm the best date with Columbia Middle School.
- Refreshments were provided at previous meetings, so providing them at the May meeting was discussed.

Topics for the Township Newsletter

- Richard wrote something about volcanos on trees.
- David is going to write something about fertilizer use.

Municipal Complex and Stormwater

- Richard would like to set up a EC presentation at a future Township Council meeting. Alvaro suggested bringing up the stormwater ordinance.

ANJEC Membership List - Membership list updates have stopped at Kevin Hall for now. Rich has reached out to him and awaiting a reply.

New Business

Environmental Commission Website

- Richard and Angus met with Pam Yoss to learn how to update the website.
- Angus gave a demonstration on how the website works. The calendar on the EC page is fed from township calendar. Anything the EC wants to add to this calendar should be submitted to Barbara Russo.
- Kim asked if it was possible to create surveys or collect pledges
- It was suggested that the website should be updated primarily by Angus and secondarily by Richard
- The Communications Committee would prefer that the Environmental Commission not create its own logo, so that it is consistent with existing township branding
- All communications to the EC should be received at the ec@bhtwp.com mailbox.
- Action: Members should review old bh-ec.org website and decide what to move to the new site and suggest how it should be integrated. Angus will send out a reminder email to EC.
- A SharePoint site has been created to store files, but it does not offer document level change tracking. Users would have to download the Word files, edit them in Word on a computer, and upload them to the site. Angus needs to research if comments work. Renee said to find out the retention policy of SharePoint site, so that files aren't automatically deleted.

Arbor Day

- Governor Livingston High School invited Richard to come over on Earth Day to help plant a tree and clean up the rain garden.
- Richard is expecting photos from Woodruff Elementary School after Arbor Day.
- It is part of the Community Forestry Management plan to plant trees and give out saplings. This is a Sustainable Jersey action.

Green Wall

- Richard shared with the EC members an email from Liza Viana about a green wall for the municipal complex.
- Kim said Urbanstrong said they would be happy to present to our Township Council. They've also built green roofs and solar roofs.
- Alvaro said to be mindful that the municipal complex is very expensive and the township is trying to control costs. Any changes submitted to Epic would increase the cost.
- Richard stated that green walls also have maintenance cost and who would be responsible for it. Alvaro said that the township would likely have to take care of it. Kim said sometimes green walls installers will cover maintenance costs for some time.

The EC meetings have been running very late, so a timekeeper will be assigned at each meeting to keep the topics on schedule. Guests will be given a time limit when they want to address the commission.

Meeting adjourned at 10:21pm.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2019 at 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted by Angus Chen on May 6, 2019