

Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

Minutes of Monday, May 18th, 2020 Meeting (conducted by teleconference)

Attendees:

Members: Richard Leister, Chris Scalera, David Harris, John Leo, Kim Diamond, Renee Ciesla, Angus Chen, Kevin Hall.

Guests: Helen Kirsch, Dave Ogens, Alvaro Medeiros

Meeting called to order at 7:35 PM.

- 1) Minutes of the April 20th and May 4th meetings were approved as amended.
- 2) Hearing on agenda items only - 3 minutes per resident – none.
- 3) Old Business
 - a. Scout projects: Chris approached by a scout looking for a project to support; possibility of project associated with the Lower Columbia Park improvements, depending on funding. Support of the tree survey, begun last fall, may also be a possibility; training would need to be done via Zoom; Township would be asked to approve the resumption of this activity.
 - b. Stormwater Ordinance: no update.
 - c. Sustainable Jersey Actions: Richard applying for full SJ credit for community garden action, since community garden is established, and meets SJ requirements for organic and donating produce to food banks.
 - d. Tree Ordinance: no update
 - e. Peppertown Park: no update
 - f. Recycling
 - Mayor's Recycling task force: request for bids went out week of May 11th.
 - g. Ordinance on Restrictions on Plastic Bags, Plastic Straws, and Polystyrene: Township council agreed the new ordinance would not be enforced while the current Covid-19 situation prevails.
 - h. Topics for the township newsletter: articles on littering and EAB submitted.
 - i. Municipal Complex and stormwater: no update
 - j. Climate Action Plan Survey: no update.
 - k. Passaic River Park: meeting held May 15th between Dan Bernier & Betty Ann Kelly of Union County, David, Richard, John & Liza. Established that the biggest obstacle to constructing a new stretch of trail through the county property along the Passaic River is the funds needed for engineering surveys for permit applications to the State. The cost of constructing the trail will be relatively low in comparison. David & John will search for opportunities for funding (eg, grants, corporate donations, matching funds (eg, from Green Acres)).
 - l. 1,000 trees: Trees will not be delivered by the State; trees would need to be picked up from nursery in S. Jersey, between now and June 5th. Agreed to post offer of trees via newsletter, FB page, TAP; collect responses via Google form or EC email address or Google voicemail; Angus to evaluate options. Richard will let Alex McCartney at State of NJ know we will let

them know quantity requested in ~ 1 week. Several EC members volunteered to pick up the trees; distribution could be at CMS or Lower Columbia Park. Helen to confirm that school property could be used for the pickup.

- m. Composting: Angus attending Cornell seminar on May 19th. Richard provided summary of presentation on food waste; this contributes significantly to energy waste & methane production. Richard to share the slides when available.
 - n. EAB treatment: Bid has been awarded to vendor. Work to begin shortly treating the trees in BH.
 - o. Litter pick up: amended announcement to be distributed as part of newsletter. We are not encouraging residents to pick up trash from the roadside at this time.
 - p. Soil at municipal complex and trail behind 9/11 memorial: discussed at May 15th meeting mentioned above. Soil pile is to be tested for contamination. Dan Bernier is evaluating if some of that soil could be used in County property behind Mt Carmel or off Camptown Road. John evaluating trail behind 9/11 memorial, but that likely to proceed without using this soil.
 - q. Hub meeting: several initiatives kicked off at May 12th meeting:
 - Task force evaluating available data on survival of SARS-CoV-2 virus survival on supermarket bags.
 - Task force evaluating options for battery storage in town, to even out supply/demand from renewable energy sources. These may be, eg, stand-alone batteries or electric vehicle batteries; this is a fact-finding effort at this point. Fire safety is a consideration.
 - Initiative on backyard composting
 - \$1000 grant available; deadline May 29th. Submit any project ideas to Kim.
 - r. Girl Scout T-shirts: Angus drafted pages for Township website; awaiting response from Girl Scouts. David to follow up with Scouts.
 - s. Community Garden: garden is operating with scheduled visitation times to ensure physical distancing. Kim suggested Chris/Renee check what Summit community garden is doing in this regard. Community Garden to check with Township health officer before relaxing distancing provisions.
- 4) New Business: none.
- 5) Citizens hearing on any environmental issues -3 minutes per resident: none.
- 6) Plans: None reviewed at this meeting. Three applications (82 Forest Ave., 5 Wentworth Dr., and 299 Garfield St.) expected for review at next/future meeting.

Meeting closed at 8:55 PM.

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 8th, 2020, at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by David Harris on May 19th, 2020.