



# B O R O U G H O F R A R I T A N

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### MINUTES

1) Open Public Meetings Statement:

In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, be advised that adequate notice of this Meeting of the Environmental Commission of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset was made by posting on the Raritan Borough website indicating that this Meeting would take place at the Raritan Municipal Building at 7:00 p.m. on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

2) Roll Call

- In attendance: Olga Metaxas; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Heath Hofmeister; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison
- Not in attendance: Juan Alvarez; Michael DeCicco; Christopher Gussman; Denise Carra, Planning Board Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes: No minutes were taken at the January 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Armahizer reported that Borough Council's last meeting was on Feb 7. Recreation Master Plan: Council President Carra said the borough will put an emphasis on capital improvements, upgrading bathrooms, improving basketball courts, etc. The annual budget meeting will be on Feb 28 at 7pm in the municipal building. The stormwater ordinance recommended by the Environmental Commission is still sitting with the Borough Engineer. Mr. Armahizer will meet with him tomorrow and hopefully will have an update for the EC at our next meeting in March.

The group discussed that it would be helpful for at least one member of the EC to attend the budget meeting, especially since we requested a budget increase this year. Mr. Hofmeister indicated that he is available. Ms. Stander said she will attend if she is able.

6) Report from Planning Board.

No members of the Planning Board were present so there was no report.

7) Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

8) Discussion Items

- Report out and discussion regarding Green Team member Ryan Bellinger's social media efforts
  - Needs a municipal worker to access the Sustainable Jersey online reporting system.
  - The green design resolution: Somerville and Wyckoff used the model resolution from Sustainable Jersey without making any changes.
  - Will be learning how to do community forestry plan this semester through his degree

program.

- Social media posting ideas:
  - Other towns: Trash to Treasure competition with kids, kids take trash items and upcycle them
  - Throwback Thursday, Fun Fact Friday
  - Natural beauty spotlight
  - Before and after photos from clean ups
  - Urban forestry graphics – ecological services provided by trees and forests
  - Raritan photo competition
  - Facebook business suite: since FB owns Instagram, if you use FB business suite to create your post, it posts to all of them at once
  - Ryan is using Illustrator to create the posts
- The group discussed the pros and cons of setting up and maintaining a social media presence. Mr. Hofmeister opined that although there are some problems with social media, the benefits outweigh the costs.
- Ms. Stander will reach out to Mr. Alvarez to see if he has access to the existing FB account, and if so, we can set up an Instagram account through the existing FB account.
- The key will be to get followers, so reach out to the other borough committees and ask them to share our posts, put up flyers around town, look for other Raritan-based FB groups (i.e., parent groups, etc.).
- Plan to do a post every two weeks, so at each meeting we could identify two people who can do posts that month.
- Follow up discussion regarding suggestions from Soil Conservation District Manager for Somerset and Union counties, Matt D'Alessandro
  - Mr. Sacino said that he was in touch with Mr. D'Alessandro, who said he would like to attend our meeting on April 20.
- Follow up discussion about outreach to local businesses regarding items to give away at future community events
  - Mr. Hofmeister reached out to NJ Transit and got no response, which he takes as a no.
  - Mr. Bellinger said he works at Rutgers Gardens and has some contacts for plant donations. The Shade Tree Foundation also donates tree seedlings; he will try to get some information about that. Mr. Armahizer added that many people want more trees in Frelinghuysen Park for shade. Ms. Metaxas mentioned that it would be nice to have more play equipment and plantings at the Elizabeth Ave park. Ms. Stander noted the last lot on Elizabeth Ave next to the park recently sold and is wondering if Elizabeth Ave will be extended to that lot. Ms. Stander will reach out to Mr. Alvarez to see if he's been contacted about tree seedling donation this year.
  - Ms. Stander informed the group about the 600 year old Salem oak that recently died. Each town in the state is supposed to get a seedling offspring to plant in their town. Somerville recently did a big event around their planting. The group agreed that it would be wonderful to do something like that.
- Status of recommendation to adopt enhanced stormwater ordinance
  - Mr. Armahizer covered this in his Borough Council report.

## 9) New Business

- Earth Day-related event this year?

The group discussed the possibility of teaming up with the Events Committee to plan something, perhaps not for Earth Day since it's coming so soon and the weather is iffy in April, so perhaps plan something in the summer or the summer of next year. In the meantime we should plan to have a table at Raritan Day in late July. Mr. Armahizer will look into who is chairing the Events Committee now and get us in touch. Ms. Stander will reach out to Mr. Alvarez to ask about obtaining rain barrels again. If we can obtain the barrels and kits, Ms. Stander will engage the new watershed

ambassador to see about running another workshop this summer.

- The group discussed the possibility of having shrubs and flowering plants near benches on Somerset St. Would need DPW to maintain this, or potentially have Scout groups adopt areas.
- The group discussed the previous conversations about EV chargers in town and reprised some of the locations that had been discussed, the potential benefits of building a charger in town, and the BPU funding that is available. Governor Murphy has recently announced plans to phase out gasoline-powered cars by 2035. This will likely drive state funding toward EV infrastructure.

#### 10) Green Team

- a) Report out and discussion regarding Ryan Bellinger's Sustainable Jersey efforts
- b) Other activities identified by Team members?

#### 11) Adjournment

- Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:09; Mr. Hofmeister seconded the motion.