



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

July 20<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 July 20<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: Juan Alvarez; Olga Metaxas; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Ryan Bellinger; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison
- Not in attendance: Michael DeCicco; Heath Hofmeister; Denise Carra, Planning Board Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from June 15<sup>th</sup>

Mr. Sacino made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Bellinger seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Armahizer spoke to DPW and they agreed to help out with the community cleanup. Ms. Metaxas shared that Jim Foey would know the history of past cleanups to help DPW estimate how many trash bags might be collected.

Mr. Armahizer also asked the group for input on possible new road signs. The current proposal is for new navy blue signs with white lettering, as many of the existing road signs are rusted and leaning over and lack uniformity. The current infrastructure budget should cover the costs.

Mr. Alvarez was able to attend a recent Borough Council meeting and discussed the enhanced stormwater ordinance with the borough engineer and Joe Brosnan (apprentice to the borough engineer from Van Clef, and also our Sustainable Jersey technical assistant). Mr. Armahizer raised the issue of the NJ Inland Flood Protection rule with borough engineer and apprentice, and they are aware of this rule and four additional related rules that will come down from state in the future. The general feeling from Mr. Shrek and Mr. Brosnan is that they would rather wait for the state to promulgate new rules than to adopt the enhanced ordinance beforehand. The group expressed concern about the number of redevelopments that could happen in the meantime and urged **Mr. Armahizer to encourage Mr. Brosnan to attend one of our upcoming meetings to discuss further.**

The group discussed NJDOT's plans to extend the jughandle from 202 South onto First Ave. The current proposal would take several properties by eminent domain in order to increase the length of the ramp. The group discussed an alternative design that Mr. Alvarez proposed and shared with Council President Carra and Borough Administrator Colvin. **Mr. Armahizer will also bring Mr. Alvarez's proposal to the borough engineer.**

6) Report from Planning Board

None of the members attended the most recent Planning Board meeting. Mr. Armahizer shared that

the purchase of the PNC Bank building is complete and the borough now owns the building. Renovations will be planned for both the bank building and the current municipal building, which will house the police department and courthouse.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items

- Rain barrel workshop planning  
The workshop is currently planned for Saturday, August 26, 10am-12pm. **Mr. Alvarez asked for volunteers to help him clean out the barrels to get the olive smell out. Mr. Alvarez will update the flyer from last year, and Mr. Bellinger will post it on social media. Mr. Bellinger will set up a Google document for people to register and submit their contact info.** He will set it up with 10 participant slots and a waitlist and can move people off the waitlist if any of the original 10 registrants cancel. We will set the location as Washington School and set up tents for shade. That means we can hold the workshop rain or shine. **Mr. Alvarez will submit the paperwork to get reimbursed from the borough for the purchase of the barrels. Ms. Stander will look to see if the NJWSA rebate is still in effect and will prepare information for participants so that they can apply.**
- Clean Communities event planning  
The cleanup is currently planned for Saturday, September 30, 10am-4pm. The meet up location will be at the Basilone statue and we'll move in multiple directions from there. DPW will be able to provide materials like bags, gloves, etc. **Mr. Bellinger will put together a flyer.** We should share it with schools and Scout troops and hand them out at the Basilone parade. DPW can provide drinks and snacks using the grant funds. **Mr. Alvarez will ask if DPW can use some of the grant funds to get T-shirts printed. Mr. Armahizer will contact the Economic Development Committee to see if there are any local businesses that would like to get involved.**
- Social media update and planning  
**Mr. Bellinger will put up the initial Instagram post that he designed. Mr. Bellinger will also set up his own Facebook account so that Mr. Alvarez can add him as an administrator on the EC's Facebook account. Once he's an administrator on the Facebook account, he will put up the original post as well as the rain barrel workshop flyer.**
- Stormdrain stenciling planning  
Mr. Alvarez has two stormdrain stencils. We will pass them around and spraypaint our neighborhoods as we have time. **Mr. Armahizer will contact the police department to let them know we will be doing this in the coming weeks so no one runs into any problems. Mr. Sacino will reach out to Mr. D'Alessandro to see if we can get more stencils.**
- Status of recommendation to adopt enhanced stormwater ordinance, in light of new NJ inland flood protection rule: <https://dep.nj.gov/inland-flood-protection-rule/> See Borough Council report above.
- Trees for Schools grant program follow up  
Mr. Hofmeister reached out to JFK administration, and they are very interested in collaborating on a grant proposal, but the time frame was too short to make that happen this year. We will look to work on a proposal for next year and work together to identify appropriate locations on JFK property for tree planting. The group discussed setting up a sub-committee to work on this. We tabled more discussion for next month's meeting when Mr. Hofmeister should be able to attend. Mr. Gussman and Ms. Stander both expressed interest in helping with this effort.

9) New Business

Bylaw review: Ms. Stander brought an example of the EC bylaws from Hamilton Township that ANJEC shared with her. There are a number of clauses that we should consider adopting. **Ms. Stander will work on modifying the Hamilton bylaws to be specific to Raritan in time for the group to review at**

**our next meeting.**

The EC received a letter in its mailbox from Eugene DeStefano, who is interested in joining the EC. We do have an open alternate slot, but it appears that the gentleman resides in Bridgewater (right over the border!), not Raritan. **Mr. Armahizer will talk to Mr. Colvin about this situation.**

The group briefly reviewed the site plans for the proposed Raritan Crossing development (i.e., the old Shop and Stop mall). The group expressed concerns about the amount of impervious cover, lack of proposed bioretention or stormwater management structures, lack of specification of native plants in the landscaping plan, and lack of specificity about EV chargers (i.e., are they level 2 chargers? How many will be installed?). The group was also skeptical about the ability to evacuate residents and personal vehicles in the event of storms or a water main break that could cause flooding in this low-lying area. Members also expressed dismay at the lack of retail space and exclusion of affordable housing units in the proposed redevelopment. The group also wondered what standards were used in capping the old landfill and whether further remediation would be necessary to protect residents from methane leakage or other environmental hazards associated with the former landfill.

10) Green Team

a) Report out and discussion regarding Ryan Bellinger's Sustainable Jersey efforts

Mr. Bellinger has started working on our Community Forestry plan. He's using Somerville's as a model. **Ms. Stander will send him the Natural Resources Inventory, as he may need to refer to it.**

b) Other activities identified by Team members?

11) Adjournment

Mr. Alvarez made a motion to adjourn at 9:04; Ms. Metaxas seconded the motion.