



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

March 21st, 2024

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 March 21st, 2024. 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; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Ryan Bellinger; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison
- Not in attendance: Olga Metaxas; Michael DeCicco, Planning Board Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from February 15th

The group approved the minutes with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

The grant writing firm is now on board. The contract is finalized, and the firm is already at work.

The Tilman St redevelopment proposal now includes two additional apartments and parking lots.

The Council is fine with the clean up date and rain date.

Councilman Armahizer inquired if the group is planning any upcoming tree planting events. Mr. Alvarez shared that we would need to acquire grant funding.

Councilman Armahizer informed the group that residents now have access to the Recycle Coach app.

The Clean Communities account currently has \$30K, as the funding can roll over from year to year.

Street trees on main street were aggressively pruned by DPW.

6) Report from Planning Board

There were no members of the Planning Board present.

7) Public Comment

8) Discussion Items

- Clean Communities event planning for April 27 (rain date May 4)
 - Event planning with Recreation Director, Andrew Sibilia
 - The plan is to make the event a combined Earth Day and Arbor Day celebration.
 - The group would like to invite the Recreation Committee to partner with us on a picnic at the same time.
 - Crafts for kids, tree seedlings, etc.
 - Giveaways (reusable bags, etc.)
 - Cornhole
 - Hot dogs and birch beer (picnic/bbq theme)

- The Recreation Committee is not clear on what their budget is.
 - Mr. Sibilía may not be available that day, but that doesn't mean the picnic can't proceed.
 - Mr. Sibilía will work on getting his committee to volunteer to help out, as long as he has the budget; Mr. Alvarez will check with Mr. LoMedico to see if the Clean Communities grant funding can be used for the bbq.
 - Mr. Sibilía suggests we add an educational piece, for example, advertise the Recycle Coach App. Mr. LoMedico already made up a flyer that's up on the borough website: <https://www.raritanboro.org/News/View/2523/recycle-coach-now-available-in-raritan>
 - Other comments from Mr. Sibilía's visit
 - Mr. Sibilía and DPW Director Vince LoMedico are also working on an Earth Day tree planting at JFK.
 - Mr. LoMedico is trying to initiate a bin for grass and electrical cords/ewaste at the DPW facility where people can drive by and drop off (they had been doing this in Manville).
 - Advertising
 - Mr. Bellinger will make a flyer tomorrow.
 - Event logistics
 - We should make maps circling several locations where we would like to send clean up participants. All EC members should scout out locations with visible trash before our next meeting. Mr. Alvarez will ask DPW for suggestions of good locations for the cleanup.
 - DPW will acquire grabbers and waders.
 - Mr. Bellinger shared that Valley Wellness will provide swag, and he will reach out to a landscaping company to see if they're interested.
 - Coordination with DPW and ANJEC to use funds for installing hydration stations
 - Mr. Hofmeister got quotes for installing the hydration stations. The best quote is from Grainger, which is one of the borough's approved vendors, at \$6800 per unit. This is better than Elkay at \$7500-10,000 per unit. We are still waiting for the third quote. Mr. Alvarez will submit the two quotes to DPW.
 - The current thinking is to start with Frelinghuysen where the water service line already exists. JFK would be trickier because there's not an existing water fountain, so plumbing would have to be extended from the building. DPW may be able to do the plumbing work in house.
- Visit from Borough Engineer, Joseph Brosnan
 - Potential funding source for Environmental Resource Inventory update
 - Mr. Brosnan asked for a copy of the last ERI. Ms. Stander will send a copy of the 2013 Natural Resource Inventory to Mr. Brosnan.
 - Is any Tier A stormwater funding available for this purpose?
 - The majority of this funding is likely committed and will be used for mapping to support the Watershed Improvement Plan. Mr. Brosnan suggests that we coordinate with surrounding municipalities to submit a joint WIP.
 - Some of that funding has already been used to update the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
 - Does the existing contract with Van Cleef cover this type of activity?
 - The ERI is an aspect of the Master Plan, so the Planning Board would be the rulers of that document.
 - Mr. Brosnan suggested starting by emailing the secretary and chair of the Planning Board to request that they take up the issue and then attend a Planning Board meeting to follow up. Lou Gara is the secretary and Chuck

McMullin is the chair.

- We should make it clear that we are willing to help. We could start accumulating some of the shape files to support the mapping effort.
- Next Wednesday is the next meeting of the Planning Board. There's only one meeting per month.
- What are other possible sources of funding?
 - Mr. Brosnan suggested we reach out to the grant writing firm to seek a source of funding for this.
- Ordinance review
 - Is this something in Mr. Brosnan's purview? Or should we seek out an external consultant to assist with this task?
 - Mr. Brosnan is working with Council to approve an updated stormwater ordinance.
 - He is concerned about properly customizing the model tree removal ordinance for Raritan.
 - Currently he is proposing a fee structure that developers/homeowners would have to pay as an application fee before they can remove any trees; this wouldn't cover replacement cost.
 - He will add that the EC can conduct the site inspections and make recommendations to the Planning Board.
 - Ms. Stander will send the proposed Appendix A to Mr. Brosnan.
 - Mr. Brosnan is aiming to get the ordinance approved by July, when the entire stormwater package is due per NJDEP's deadline.
 - The Watershed Institute's model ordinance on redevelopment might be a good one for EC members to review and potentially bring to the Redevelopment Advisory Committee.
 - Revised stormwater master plan: Mr. Brosnan has a team of Rutgers students helping with the mapping. Pieces of this should go to the Planning Board and potentially may come to the EC.
 - Watershed Improvement Plan: Van Cleef will try to get one fully funded in Tewksbury, since they're at the top of the watershed so don't need to coordinate with anyone. They're also located in the Highlands so the process of developing the WIP will be funded.
 - Three phases, about a year apart: mapping and outreach, synopsis of TMDLs in the area; analytics, problem solving, and public involvement; implementation plan
 - No mandate that the plan actually has to be implemented
- Redevelopment Advisory Committee
 - Supposedly meeting next Monday, but no one has seen this advertised.
 - Someone purchased the Orlando Drive lot where the developer went bankrupt.
- Social media update and planning
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Latest version of tree removal ordinance
 - See notes above from the discussion with the Borough Engineer.
- Community Forestry updates
 - The grant writing firm is now on board. Mr. Bellinger will reach back out to the borough administrator to ask about using the firm to apply for grants related to this program.
- Status of bylaws revision
 - The mayor and attorney are still reviewing the proposed revisions.
- Status of invitation to Eugene DeStefano to attend RBEC meeting

- Mr. Armahizer is waiting for the new bylaws to be approved before inviting him to be a nonvoting member.
- Report out on efforts to reach out to JFK/school district.
 - Mr. Hofmeister talked to JFK Principal Russo about the tree planting program. JFK is interested and the superintendent is on board. However, they are about to do construction at the end of the academic year. They want to wait until that's done to pursue this opportunity.
 - Mr. Hofmeister reached out to the NRCS contact to inquire about sources of native wildflower seed mixes and was directed to Ernst in PA; he's interested in broadcasting them across the area that used to be the golf range. Mr. Gussman shared that the land would have to be prepared first. This land is owned by the county. Mr. Armahizer suggested that the county might allow us to use a portion of the land for this. Mr. Alvarez suggested we could look for a different property owned by the borough that we could till, prepare, and seed as a proof of concept. Mr. Alvarez suggested looking for a green strip around the new municipal building for a potential proof of concept location.
 - Mr. Hofmeister will get a quote to purchase about 100 1-oz. seed packs that we could give out at the Clean Up. We'll get stickers made up with the EC logo to put on the packs.

9) New Business

10) Green Team

- a) Report out from ongoing efforts and planning future activities

11) Adjournment

The group adjourned at 9:26pm.