



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

June 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 June 20<sup>th</sup>, 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

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

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from April 18<sup>th</sup>

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

5) Report from Borough Council

Mr. Armahizer reached out to the borough's grant writer about Community Forestry grant opportunities. The grant writer sent an update on the Green Communities grant program. The program is being revised at the moment so is not currently accepting applications. The communication from the grant writer summarized the requirements for Community Forestry certification. Any communication with the grant writer needs to go through Council.

Raritan Mall: The Planning Board has approved the proposal, but Council voted down the proposal to revise the zoning. Council is doing an additional hearing and redoing the vote. The developer has agreed to do \$3.2M in environmental cleanup.

Another redevelopment project is in the works to build two apartment buildings on Tilman St. near the train station and dog park.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. DeCicco was not present, so there was no report from the Planning Board.

7) Public Comment

Mr. Benjamin Harris attended the meeting and expressed his interest in joining the Commission as the second alternate. He is currently a surface water specialist with Raritan Headwaters Association in Bedminster. Mr. Alvarez will forward Mr. Harris's name and biography to the mayor.

8) Discussion Items

- Clean Communities April 27<sup>th</sup> clean up debrief
  - We had beautiful weather and were able to remove a lot of materials from the roadsides and liquor store area.

- DPW provided a lot of useful materials and assistance.
- Mr. Bellinger suggested we reach out to the schools (including parochial schools) to get young people involved in future clean up events.
- The Basilone Parade is scheduled for Sun, Sept 22; we could schedule another clean up for Sat, Sept 28 with Sun, Sept 29 as the rain date.
- The Clean Communities grant funding may be exhausted, so we may have to use the EC's budget.
- Mr. Bellinger suggested putting an ad out in the Breeze to get more participation in the Sept event.
- Mr. Alvarez will reach out to DPW to ask about getting a food truck.
- Ms. Stander suggested if we get a big turnout and there's not enough trash to pick up, we could have some volunteers remove invasive species from the stream corridor next to JFK.
- Wildflower meadow and community garden proposals (Councilman Armahizer)
  - Council did not like the idea of installing wildflowers in the area across from the Raritan Mall due to existing soil contamination.
  - Councilman Tozzi is more interested in a community garden at the tennis courts off First Ave; it's unclear if his vision is plots for residents to grow produce or more for pretty flowers.
  - The group raised concerns about the amount of effort required to set up and maintain a community garden with plots for residents to grow produce.
- Bylaws revision: discussion of feedback from borough lawyer
  - The borough's lawyer removed some of the key clauses, particularly the non-voting members clause.
  - The group would like to invite the lawyer to an upcoming meeting to ask why certain clauses were removed and to make a case to reinstate some.
- Community Forestry updates
  - See the Borough Council section above for information about the potential grant program.
- Rain barrel workshop planning
  - There are plenty of barrels in storage in a DPW trailer. Mr. Alvarez has a few kits and will request a few more with the Commission's budget.
  - The group discussed using the pavilion at Frelinghuysen to get shade for participants.
  - The group discussed Sat., Sept 7.
- Social media update and planning
  - Mr. Bellinger will start creating posts about the Sept rain barrel workshop and clean up events.
  - Mr. Harris will send Mr. Bellinger some photos and text about the organisms he identifies along the river for future social media posts.

#### 9) New Business

- The renovation of the building next to the current municipal building is underway. There are no erosion controls in place. People who have county contacts should reach out to them to voice their concerns.
- Mr. Harris was approached by an organization trying to sign him up for community solar.

#### 10) Green Team

#### 11) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:22; Mr. Bellinger seconded the motion.