



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

August 15th, 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 August 15th, 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; Olga Metaxas; Tony Sacino
- Not in attendance: Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Ryan Bellinger; Michael DeCicco, Planning Board Liaison; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from July 18th

Mr. Alvarez made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Stander seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Armahizer was not in attendance so there was no report from Borough Council.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. DeCicco, the Commission's liaison to the Planning Board was not present, so there was no report. The group discussed making an attempt to have one of the EC members attend each Planning Board meeting which take place the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items

- Bylaws revision
 - Bill Robertson, the Borough Attorney, attended the meeting to discuss the bylaw revisions with the group.
 - The Environmental Commission (EC) is a statutory body, meaning it's created by a statute, so it has no more powers than the statute grants it. Mr. Robertson's goal in reviewing the proposed bylaws was to make sure the language in the bylaws matches what's in the statute.
 - Regarding the proposed bylaws section titled "Additional Powers": The Municipal Land Use Law says that if an EC is created and has prepared a natural resources index for the Planning Board, then the board makes available to the EC an informational copy of land use proposals. Mr. Alvarez shared that the Borough's zoning officer Mr. Garra has not

been forwarding copies of Planning Board proposals to the EC lately because none of them have proposed “land use” changes. If the EC wants to include a section that describes the powers of the Commission, the bylaws could be written to cite two sections from the statute that allow for the establishment of the commission (NJSA 40:56A). In particular, the EC could cite sections 56A-2 (Commission’s Powers) and 56A-6 (Powers of Commission).

- Regarding the “Nonvoting Members” section of the proposed bylaws: The statute clearly defines membership as no fewer than five and no more than seven voting members plus two alternates. We can propose some language referring to nonvoting members as associates and saying the purpose is to encourage volunteers to attend meetings and provide their expertise and participation to assist the Commission in achieving its mission. Mr. Robertson is willing to help the EC revise the language as needed.
- Regarding members being homeowners but not necessarily residents: Mr. Robertson feels including homeowners in addition to residents is within the spirit of the statute, which is to include property owners who have a stake in, and pay taxes to, the borough.
- Ms. Stander will send Mr. Richardson a copy of the Hamilton and Morris Township EC bylaws for context along with the EC’s proposed language regarding powers and nonvoting associates, and will copy Mr. Alvarez, Mr. Colvin, and Mr. Armahazer on that communication.
- Planning for upcoming events
 - Rain barrel workshop on Sept 7
 - Mr. Alvarez purchased 12 more conversion kits. He confirmed with Mr. LoMedico that the barrels are still being stored by DPW. He will check in with Mr. LoMedico before the workshop to arrange for them to be delivered to Frelinghuysen prior to Sept 7.
 - Ms. Stander submitted a press release to TapInto for Bridgewater-Raritan to announce the rain barrel workshop and community cleanup. That announcement will run online at the TapInto website and on Facebook. She will follow up with Audrey Blumberg from The Breeze to find out if the press release will be published in the print version of the paper in addition to being posted online. So far four residents have registered for the workshop.
 - Mr. Alvarez will look into having the borough print up flyers for to see what the process is. If the flyers don’t get printed in time, EC members can print them. It would be a good idea to post a flyer on the community board at Duke Farms. Ms. Stander will see if we can bring flyers to the farmer’s market in Somerville.
 - Community clean up on Sept 28; rain date Sept 29.
 - Mr. Alvarez will contact Mr. LoMedico to find out if the food offered by the food truck will be free or if attendees will need to pay.
 - The EC will send clean up participants to the usual locations as well as have them walk up and down the Basilone parade route (Somerset St from gas station to the statue)
- Ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
 - Mr. Alvarez sent the proposal to Mr. Colvin on July 20. Mr. Colvin replied on July 23 and asked to have Mr. Armahizer bring the proposal to a Council meeting. Mr. Alvarez will forward the email to Mr. Armahizer. The next Borough Council meeting is Tues, Aug 20.
- Social media update and planning
 - Mr. Bellinger has posted the event flyers on Instagram.
- Raritan Mall redevelopment site
 - Mr. Alvarez and Ms. Stander both raised the idea of a sports complex, a commercial recreational space like Supercharged, or similar. Mr. Alvarez also suggested an arts/cultural facility. The other possibility is for open space with passive recreation.

9) New Business

- Ms. Stander shared a report from Mr. Bellinger about the Cardinal Woods neighborhood meeting held by Councilman Agrawal. The group discussed issues like lack of police presence and poor signage as well as desired park amenities like tables, swing sets, benches, and trees. The group can discuss the park further at September's meeting.
- Mr. Alvarez raised the question about using our budget and potentially some DPW funding to purchase 10-15 foot trees and do some street tree plantings. Ms. Stander will ask her RVCC colleague about doing a street tree inventory to figure out where the gaps are that could be planted. It would be nice to start this initiative even before the Urban Community Forestry program is available.

10) Green Team

- The group can revisit the Green Team if some nonvoting associates are able to attend meetings.

11) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:38pm. Mr. Alvarez seconded the motion.