



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

October 17th, 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 October 17th, 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; Olga Metaxas; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison; Cathy DeBellis, Planning Board Liaison
- Not in attendance: Ryan Bellinger

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from September 19th

5) Report from Borough Council

The potential contract with Angela Knowles is on hold because the borough is currently entering into a contract with her for the downtown revitalization work. Once that contract is finalized, then we can revisit our contract to make sure we're not doublepaying her, since some ordinances will need to be reviewed for the downtown work as well.

Mr. Armahizer congratulated the group on a successful community cleanup. Over a dozen bags of trash and debris were collected and the canal path looks much improved.

The swearing in for Mr. Harris is on the mayor's radar, so hopefully this will get on the agenda for Borough Council soon.

Agway property: The property will be redeveloped, likely into a 4-5 story apartment building. The new development will likely be mixed use commercial and residential. Every affordable housing unit that's within a certain distance of a transportation corridor gets counted twice. The owner of Espo's bought the property and is looking to put in a parking lot in between Espo's and the new development.

Community garden: 1st Ave tennis courts and Cardinal Woods have both been discussed as potential locations for a pilot project. 1st Ave would require making the area ADA accessible. The area is technically county property, but maintained by Raritan. The county won't put any money into it until the area is ADA compliant. Mr. Alvarez shared that Mr. LoMedico said there's no water source at 1st Ave, but Cardinal Woods does have a water source. However, Mr. Bellinger had previously told Mr. Alvarez that many residents in the Cardinal Woods area have their own private gardens, so that location may not be optimal. The 1st Ave location is more central and closer to where local residents don't have property, especially people in the Crossings apartment building. Everyone should go check out the 1st Ave and Cardinal Woods locations before our next meeting. Ms. Stander suggested inviting someone from the Somerville Green Team to our next meeting to provide tips on setting up a new community garden program. Mr. Alvarez will draft a short proposal for making the 1st Ave tennis courts area ADA accessible for Mr. Armahizer to present to Borough Council. The desired outcome is that

Council will task the borough engineer with studying the feasibility of that idea and the borough attorney with approaching the neighboring property owner about establishing an access strip.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. Alvarez shared a site plan for an addition to a property on the corner of Woodmere and Helene St. Because the proposed work would increase the impervious cover of the property and because the property is so close to the stream that runs next to JFK school, he suggests the EC recommend that a dry well or similar be constructed on the property, with the new gutters and downspouts from the addition routed to that dry well. This would reduce runoff into the stream.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items

- Debrief from community clean up on Sept 28
 - Mr. Alvarez and the members commended Mr. Harris for partnering with Duke Farms volunteers during this event. Their participation and enthusiasm was a key ingredient in the event's success.
 - One of the volunteers pointed out some tires and large debris in the canal. Ms. Stander suggested reaching out to the Central Jersey Stream Team to see if they're interested in helping. We should survey the area before our next meeting to identify potential locations.
- Update on status of Mr. Harris's EC membership
 - Mr. Harris is available to attend the next Borough Council meeting. Mr. Alvarez will contact Mr. Colvin and Mayor Carra to request that his swearing in be added to the Council meeting agenda.
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
 - The group shared that the meeting with the borough attorney was collegial and productive. The proposed bylaws have since been revised according to the attorney's suggestions and have been shared twice with the attorney for his review. Mr. Armahizer will request that this item be added to the Council meeting agenda.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
 - This item was addressed in Mr. Armahizer's report from Council.
- Social media update and planning
 - Mr. Bellinger was not present so this item was tabled until next month.
 - Mr. Hofmeister did get the administrator credentials from Mr. Bellinger and was able to share some posts about the Sept 28 clean up.
- Continued discussion of public meeting about Cardinal Woods
 - This item was addressed during the report from Borough Council
- Continued discussion of future tree planting
 - During the Sept 28 clean up Mr. Bellinger shared that the Green Communities request for proposals is now open. The grantwriting firm is aware of this opportunity. We will ask Mr. Bellinger to follow up. The program accepts proposals on a rolling basis, but we would like to make progress on this soon so that funding could potentially be available to plant some larger trees in the spring.
 - The group also discussed approaching Lab Corp about donating money for a tree planting program in town. Mr. Harris suggested planting trees in memory of beloved borough residents with small plaques, similar to the benches on the Nevius St bridge.

9) New Business

The group discussed canceling the December meeting since it is so close to the holidays. Mr. Alvarez made a motion to cancel the December meeting. Mr. Hofmeister seconded the motion. All members

were in favor.

Mr. Armahizer announced the borough is holding the Christmas tree lighting ceremony on Tues, Dec 10, probably around 7 or 8pm.

10) Green Team

11) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:26pm.