



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

November 21<sup>st</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 November 21<sup>st</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

- In attendance: Juan Alvarez; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Ben Harris
- Not in attendance: Olga Metaxas; Ryan Bellinger; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison; Cathy DeBellis, Planning Board Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from October 17<sup>th</sup>

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

5) Report from Borough Council

There was no formal report from Borough Council as Councilman Armahizer was not present. Ms. Stander shared that she attended the recent Borough Council meeting where the Raritan Mall redevelopment project was brought up for rezoning for the third time. Borough Council will hold an open public hearing on the ordinance on Tuesday, November 26. EC members should plan to attend and speak during the public comment period.

6) Report from Planning Board

7) Public Comment

8) Discussion Items

- Visit from Nandini (Dini) Checko from ANJEC
  - Ms. Checko provided an overview of what ANJEC does
    - She mentioned the upcoming dark skies webinar; there are ordinances that can be adopted with common sense actions to reduce light pollution
  - EC strategic planning
  - Support, advice, and news from ANJEC
    - Annual membership fee is \$425
    - Member EC's get their publications, like annual report
    - Members get access to YouTube channel with archive of webinars

- Advocates at the state level on behalf of municipalities
- ANJEC working on state legislation called “Skip the Stuff” to get takeout bags to not include extras like plastic utensils, condiments, etc.
- Annual ANJEC Congress conference – good opportunity to network with other commissioners
- Ms. Checko could provide examples of surveys that have been put out to residents in other towns; get those bundled into tax and sewer mailings; or get them into the backpacks of school kids
- Find 10 stakeholders and have discussion with Council to find shared interests; example of a town that helped mayor with waste reduction program to reduce tipping fees, look for that win, and when you get it, celebrate that; trying to connect with groups that are active in town and just having conversations with them to find out what they think the challenges are
- Timorie is the new EC chair in Somerville; Hillsborough is also a very strong EC (Obropta); send Dini some info about the Raritan Mall site that she can send to Obropta, maybe we could get him to come speak at a hearing; ask Obropta to update the Impervious Cover Assessment
- Suggested initiatives:
  - Look at development applications that have been approved, even small ones like driveway extensions, add them all up and show the additional amount of runoff that’s been created, use GIS to show impervious cover from 30 years ago, 15 years ago, today, and talk about where this is going
  - Climate change vulnerability assessment – automatically triggered when town updates land use part of master plan, you assess the vulnerable places and vulnerable communities; part of DEP’s resilience planning; Raritan Borough – does it qualify as an overburdened community, even if only a few blocks qualify, that triggers additional DEP protections, doesn’t have to be the entire town
  - Help with enforcement – make sure the owner is doing the groundwater testing, that they’re planting the 10 trees
  - MyCoast app – MARCO, NOAA led group, consortium among five states, citizen science related to water quality, not only along the coast, starting in 2025 they will post what fish are good to eat locally, should be in multiple languages, good resource to share with the community
  - Microforest – methodology to build a small forest of native species, everything planted in a specific way; Summit has one (Donna Patel, EC chair) on a quarter acre of land, 600 plants, really good success rate, contains a medicinal garden, Kean students are studying bird songs as the forest ages over next 30 years, open to the public, used by schools
  - Clean Communities – up to 25% can be used toward stormwater education and outreach; use the watershed improvement plan as a trigger for outreach; EC can offer help to borough engineer in stormwater outreach
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
  - This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
  - This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- Social media update and planning
  - Ms. Checko suggested that we follow and tag ANJEC on our posts; they will repost our stuff
- Continued discussion of community garden pilot project ideas
  - Ms. Checko suggested putting a question on a resident survey about whether they’re interested in a community garden

- Continued discussion of future tree planting and Green Communities grant opportunity
  - This item was tabled until the next meeting.

9) New Business

- Public input session for Washington School Park redesign
- Budget request
  - Include ANJEC membership in our budget request for next year
  - Also include line items for legal, consultants, etc.
- Mr. Harris shared that his colleague at RHA, Tracy Gordon, has done a number of rain barrel workshops and can help us with that, including the painting

10) Green Team

11) Adjournment

Adjourned at 8:59pm