



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### 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 January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025. 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; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison
- Not in attendance: Olga Metaxas; Ryan Bellinger

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from November 21<sup>st</sup>

Mr. Gussman noted that Mr. Bellinger should have been listed as not present. Mr. Hofmeister made a motion to approve with this revision; Mr. Sacino seconded that motion. The minutes were approved with the revision.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Armahizer noted that the Raritan Mall redevelopment plan was approved by Borough Council. Mr. Armahizer encouraged the group to share our concerns about the contamination at the site with NJDEP. Mr. Armahizer suggested the group review the Agway and downtown redevelopment plans.

Councilmen Agrawal and Armahizer discussed a tree planting at Cardinal Woods around Earth Day. Mr. Armahizer will ask Mr. Agrawal how much could be spent and if he has specific locations in mind. Then we could put together a proposal for number and species of trees. Mr. Gussman suggested we should get an order in soon, because nurseries will start selling out. Mr. Harris suggested engaging the AmeriCorps volunteer at Duke Farms to help us make it an educational event.

The Green Communities grant proposal is in progress by the grant writing team.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mayor Cara asked Mr. Gussman to serve as the liaison to the Planning Board. He will begin reporting back after the next meeting.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items

- Review of proposed meeting schedule for 2025  
The 2025 schedule includes meetings on the third Thursday of each month except December. The

- group approved the meeting schedule.
- Follow up from Dini Checko (ANJEC) visit in November
    - ANJEC membership
      - The group agreed to pursue a membership for 2025 and to add the necessary amount to our budget request. Ms. Stander will determine the logistics for payment.
    - Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment (CCRHVA)
      - NJ amended the Municipal Land Use Law such that the CCRHVA is required when the land use element of the master plan is modified during the master planning process. This assessment would identify areas in the borough that are particularly vulnerable to climate change-related hazards, such as flooding, excessive heat, etc.
      - Mr. Armahizer will find out where Raritan is in the master planning process. Ms. Stander will find out who the new contact is at NJ Future who works on these assessments to determine what kind of assistance we might be able to obtain. She will also ask her contact at the Somerville EC if they have done one of these assessments.
    - Local climate action webinar series in January
      - Ms. Stander shared some key points from the 1/14/25 ANJEC webinar, which included information about the CCRHVA, as well as Maplewood's new stormwater utility and Princeton's revised green development checklist
      - The next webinar is on Jan 28.
    - Updating impervious cover assessment
      - Ms. Stander will reach out to Rutgers Cooperative Extension to see if they can update the original plan and if there is a fee.
    - Stormwater outreach and education through Clean Communities grant
      - Mr. Alvarez will ask Mr. LoMedico about the status of the grant and how much funding will be available this year.
    - Surveying residents through property tax mailings
      - Mr. Armahizer confirmed that there needs to be an easement for public access for the proposed community garden near the tennis courts. Somerset County Parks will help arrange the easement, but it's unclear who will fund that. Mr. Alvarez will ask Mr. Colvin about what a mailing included in the tax bills could look like. The idea would be to survey residents to determine interest in a community garden in that location and what residents would want in such an installation.
  - Planning for rain barrel and community clean up events
    - We could try to include our clean up in the larger watershed-wide Raritan Headwaters stream clean up event on Sat, April 12. They will help us advertise for participants. Mr. Harris will talk to his contact at RHA.
    - Rain barrel workshop: tentatively planned for Sat, May 3; plan to schedule again for the pavilion at Frelinghuysen, 10am-12pm. Mr. Alvarez indicated that there are plenty of barrels and kits remaining; he will purchase additional if needed. Mr. Harris will reach out to his colleague at RHA to look into barrel painting and providing info on other green landscaping practices during the event.
  - Items to highlight in annual report; Ms. Stander will work on a draft version that the group will review before finalizing.
    - Photos from social media
    - Fish stenciling
    - Two cleanups in April and September
    - Rain barrel workshop
    - Collaboration with DPW on Clean Communities grant to install water hydration stations
    - Effort to amend bylaws
    - Recommended adoption of enhanced stormwater ordinance

- Green Communities grant application in progress
- Recruited new member
- Outreach to Somerville EC
  - Ms. Stander will be meeting with Timarie Diehl, the new chair of the Somerville EC. She will ask about:
    - The tree planting grant they received to revegetate the Peter's Brook corridor.
    - Progress on enhanced stormwater ordinance
    - Have they done a CCRVHA? Flood hazard committee
    - Have they gotten any swag made? What vendors have they used?
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
  - This item is currently on hold until the attorney can be retained for this purpose.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
  - This item is on hold until Council makes progress on its contract with Ms. Knowles.
- Social media update and planning
  - This item tabled until Mr. Bellinger attends.
- Continued discussion of community garden pilot project ideas
  - This item was addressed above.
- Continued discussion of future tree planting and Green Communities grant opportunity
  - This item was addressed above.

#### 9) New Business

- Budget request: The group reviewed the draft budget request that Mr. Alvarez prepared. Mr. Armahizer shared that the borough fired the borough lawyer. A new law firm has been hired; Richard Wenner is the new lawyer. Mr. Alvarez will invite him to a future meeting. Mr. Alvarez made a motion to approve the budget request. Mr. Gussman requested that the consultant fee be increased. The group approved the budget request with the increased consultant fee.
- Webinars: Raritan Headwaters will be hosting a webinar on brownfields redevelopment with an expert from NJIT; tentative date is February 20 at noon.
- Mr. Armahizer shared that Mr. LoMedico came to talk to Borough Council about bulk pickup. Our pickup rates need to be reduced either through sticker program or reduced number of dates. A borough-wide yard sale could be an option. This is an area where the EC can help the Borough.

#### 10) Green Team

#### 11) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:51pm.