



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

February 20<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 February 20<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; Olga Metaxas; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Ben Harris
- Not in attendance: Ryan Bellinger; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from January 16<sup>th</sup>

The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Armahizer was not present, so there was no report from Borough Council.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. Alvarez distributed the redevelopment plan for 57 and 59 LaGrange Ave. The hearing was postponed until March 26. The group will have time to discuss the proposal at the March meeting. Hopefully by then the full plans will be available on the borough website. The group noted that the proposal does not include the green development checklist, and that the area is less than 1 acre, which means that meaningful stormwater management is not triggered for this project.

7) Public Comment

8) Discussion Items

- Coordination with DPW (with DPW director Vincent LoMedico)
  - Stormwater outreach and education through Clean Communities grant: funds remaining for this? DPW needs/requests?
  - This item was tabled because Mr. LoMedico was not able to attend.
- Coordination with Recreation (with Recreation director Andy Sibilgia)
  - Apr 26: Holi celebration, 1-3pm Frelinghuysen, free Indian cuisine, music and dancing; want to incorporate a town cleanup/Arbor Day planting in the morning; both would be spring/fertility festivals; rain date May 3 (same day as townwide yard sale)
    - Mr. Sibilgia recommended putting proposed tree planting locations on a map
  - Mr. Sibilgia wants to plant wildflowers on the hill along the river greenway – hollyhocks, zinnias, cosmos

- Mr. Sibilía let the group know there is a budget for purchasing trees; there's about \$5K per year (estimated); Mr. LoMedico can get the safety bags for the planted trees
  - The splash park is going in at Basilone Park; they'll fill in the pool and put the splash park in on top; the tennis court at Frelinghuysen is being redone with pickleball courts behind
  - Thur, May 22, Washington School: Proud to Be American day, military celebration for Memorial Day, organized privately by someone from VoTech; not yet approved
  - Mr. Sibilía suggested looking for trash behind where the golf range used to be along the river greenway
- Invitation to table at Somerville EC Earth Day Fair, Apr 26, 11am-2pm
  - Most likely this event won't work for us this year if we arrange a tree planting that morning
- Stream/community clean up, April 12: coordination with Raritan Headwaters
  - Mr. Harris coordinated with Rachel Garcia at RHA; we can sponsor a site, costs \$250, which can be paid through the Clean Communities grant; people can sign up through RHA and be assigned to our site; Mr. Harris will get more info on the sponsorship package so Mr. Alvarez can prepare the PO request
  - Mr. Harris will check to see if RHA will provide clean up materials; if not, we'll want to tap DPW's Clean Communities grant to purchase more bags, gloves, etc.
  - RHA will provide a head count so we can tell Vince how many lunches to pick up
- Cardinal Woods tree planting event
  - Councilman Agrawal indicated an interest in planting 8-10 trees this year, including native species that are deer and drought resistant
  - Mr. Gussman and Ms. Stander will go scope the site and provide info to Mr. Alvarez so he can put in a PO request
- Update on Green Communities grant proposal
  - This item was tabled until next month since Mr. Bellinger was not present.
- Finalizing annual report
  - Mr. Alvarez or his designate will read the report into the record at an upcoming Borough Council meeting.
  - If members have suggested changes, please send them to Ms. Stander in the next week.
- ANJEC membership – logistics of payment
  - They will accept a PO to pay the membership fee.
  - Ms. Stander will send the information to Mr. Alvarez; he will ask Mayor Carra if the borough will cover the expense so it doesn't come out of the EC's budget; we only have \$500 left for the year.
- Community garden: surveying residents through property tax mailings: update from Borough Administrator?
  - Mr. Alvarez will add this to the list of asks for Mr. Colvin
- Updating impervious cover assessment conducted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension
  - Ms. Stander reached out to RU RCE to ask if they update the ICA reports and if there is a cost; so far no response.
- Report out from outreach to Somerville EC
  - Ms. Stander will reach out to Somerville EC contact to find out which DEP grant they used for their tree planting program.
  - They are working on proposing the enhanced stormwater ordinance, currently seeking assistance from the Watershed Institute to figure out which numbers work for Somerville
  - They will provide information for their contact at the Arbor Day Foundation to look into getting tree seedlings for giveaways
  - We will follow each other on social media and repost each other's posts to get more exposure and engagement with our social media activity
- Planning for rain barrel workshop, May 3

- The date is set.
- Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment: next steps
  - This item was tabled until next month. The group is hoping Councilman Armahizer can advise on where the borough is in the master planning process.
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
  - Mr. Alvarez will ask Mr. Colvin if we can access the new lawyer to pick up this effort.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
  - Mr. Alvarez will ask Mr. Colvin if the borough's contract with Ms. Knowles, and if so, whether the EC can pursue its own agreement.
- Social media update and planning
  - Mr. Hofmeister will follow the Somerville EC on Instagram; hopefully we can start following each other.

9) New Business

- AARP Community Challenge grant program: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2025/2025-challenge.html>
  - Mr. Alvarez will share this information with Mr. Colvin. The deadline is too close to pursue this funding opportunity this year, but we could look ahead to this for next year.
- Mr. Harris and Ms. Stander attended a brownfield redevelopment webinar hosted by RHA; NJIT experts can provide technical assistance; the group agreed to find out what kind of assistance NJIT can provide, particularly for a privately owned site like the Raritan Mall.

10) Green Team

11) Adjournment

The group adjourned at 8:33pm.