



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

March 20th, 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 March 20th, 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; Ryan Bellinger; Ben Harris; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison
- Not in attendance: Heath Hofmeister

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from February 20th

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

5) Report from Borough Council

Mr. Armahizer relayed concerns related to splash park runoff. Mr. LoMedico shared that the borough plans to partially fill in the existing pool at Basilone Park and build the splash park over it; the original drainage will be maintained. The question has been the water source. The borough explored a well, which wasn't feasible. Instead the borough will use potable water from the street. NJ American Water will put in the line to connect to the street, and the borough will have to pay for the water. No chlorine will be added, so there's no water quality issue, but the group raised issues related to water quantity and erosion of the receiving stream. It would be useful to look at the specs to see how many gallons per minute will drain to the stream when the splash park is in use. The park should be ready for use in July.

The new municipal building will hopefully open this summer.

The municipal budget was presented and should be approved soon.

Frelinghuysen tennis court construction has started, should finish up in June/July.

The new borough lawyer is available to meet with us.

The group discussed participating in the Adopt-A-Road program for municipal roads. This would involve a scout troop cleaning it up periodically. It was unclear whether the EC or the municipality could accept those funds. Mr. LoMedico suggested the Clean Communities grant could be used for signage.

6) Report from Planning Board

The documents for 57 and 59 LaGrange are now on the borough website. The group should take a look. There is not much information about % impervious cover, and some of the tree information is incorrect.

Mr. Alvarez raised the issue about the DOT plan for the 1st Ave and 202 jughandle. The plans don't

include a traffic light at the end of the jughandle, which is what community members asked for at the meeting.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present

8) Discussion Items

- Coordination with DPW (with DPW director Vincent LoMedico)
 - Upcoming stream cleanup on Apr 12 and tree planting on Apr 26
 - April 12: Mr. LoMedico has acquired T-shirts, gloves, and bags
 - Recreation pass idea for the future to get people to turn out; DPW can provide buses to move people to different locations
 - Mr. LoMedico will order lunch for 30 and will bring it to the Basilone Statue at 11am.
 - Mr. LoMedico suggested sending groups out to the construction site on Orlando Dr on the outside of the fence and the rocks along the railroad tracks. The dog park is also a good spot that DPW often cleans out
 - Stormwater outreach and education through Clean Communities grant: funds remaining for this? DPW needs/requests?
 - There is still more funding available; Mr. LoMedico is open to installing another hydration station. The question is whether to locate it at Basilone Park for the new splash park or the second location at Frelinghuysen. Mr. LoMedico will price out the fountain and will locate it wherever it's easier/less expensive.
 - DPW surveyed and all inspected all the catch basins in the borough.
 - Next year borough-wide stormwater training will be required for all borough officials.
- Stream/community clean up, April 12
 - Volunteers needed for that day
 - Mrs. Bellinger, Sacino and Armahizer and Ms. Stander can be there that day to help run the event.
 - Flyer and advertising?
 - Mr. Bellinger will advertise on social media. Ms. Stander will share the social media toolkit from Raritan Headwaters with him.
 - Sponsorship payment to RHA
 - Mr. LoMedico made a donation to RHA to cover this.
- Cardinal Woods tree planting event, April 26
 - There is a potable water source there.
 - Logistics
 - Mr. LoMedico can provide the bags for watering and deer protection.
 - The plan is to purchase about 12 trees of at least 2" caliper. Mr. LoMedico will call the vendor to see how many trees he can purchase now with the shade tree grant funds that are available.
 - His crew will auger the holes the day before, cover with plywood, and put the trees onsite. He can provide mulch. Volunteers will just need to move the trees in the hole.
 - Mr. Gussman can mark out the planting locations, and Mr. LoMedico will get the utilities to do the markouts.
 - We'll plan to start at 11am.
 - Mr. Bellinger suggested we try for Tree City certification. This isn't too involved; he will share info with the group.
 - Mr. Bellinger may have a source for cheap tree seedlings that we could give away at the event.

- DPW and Mr. Brosnan have been working on the tree removal ordinance and establishing a permit system for removal on private property.
 - Flyer and advertising
 - Mr. Bellinger will make the poster to encourage residents in the Cardinal Woods neighborhood to participate.
- Planning for rain barrel workshop, May 3
 - Flyer and advertising
 - Mr. Bellinger will make the flyer.
- Update on Green Communities grant proposal
 - Mr. Armahizer shared that the grantwriters are working on the proposal. The prospects are good.
- Budget request update
 - ANJEC membership – logistics of payment; Mr. LoMedico will see if Clean Communities can pay for this.
- Updating impervious cover assessment conducted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension
 - Technical assistance program: Ms. Stander will reach out to the RCE contact and see what kind of assistance we can access.
- Community garden: surveying residents through property tax mailings: update from Borough Administrator?
 - The county (Parks Commission) is working on arranging for an easement to access the site.
 - Clean Communities could pay for door hangers; we could organize volunteers to hang them on doors.
 - We design them and Mr. LoMedico gets them printed at the county print shop. He will get a cost estimate for the door hangers.
 - The door hangers would have approximate dimensions of 4"x 8". Mr. Alvarez will draft something in one color. The question is whether we should include a QR code to a Google form. The form could ask people to indicate their interest in having a garden plot.
- Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment
 - Status of borough master planning process: Mr. Armahizer will look into this.
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
 - EC access to borough's new lawyer: Mr. Armahizer will look into whether the previous lawyer handed off the revised bylaws to the new lawyer.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant
 - Mr. Armahizer relayed that Ms. Knowles has completed her other contract with the borough.
 - Mr. Alvarez will check in to see if our contract with her is moving now.
- Social media update and planning
 - Follow Somerville EC and ask them to do the same; share each other's posts: This has been taken care of. Mr. Hofmeister and Mr. Bellinger will be sure to share their posts.
- Brownfields technical assistance from NJIT
 - Ms. Stander reached out to this group to see if they can help us gather information about contamination history at the Raritan Mall site.

9) New Business

- Communication materials on forests and air quality with RVCC students (Emilie, Heath, and Ryan)
 - Mr. Bellinger will point the students to iTree for statistics to include in their materials. An infographic would probably make the most sense. Mr. Bellinger will send the students his phone number.
- Trees for Schools RFP (Heath): <https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/grants/trees-for-schools/>: Mr. Alvarez will share the link to the program with the borough to notify the grantwriters about this opportunity. This item was tabled until next month.
- Mr. LoMedico suggested doing some public outreach related to composting and waste. Our bulk

pickup rates are higher than other towns of similar size. Plus getting organics out of the trash stream will reduce tipping fees for the borough. The group discussed holding a compost workshop, perhaps through Rutgers Cooperative Extension. We can also promote the Recycle Coach app.

10) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:27pm.