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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
April 17th, 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 April 17th, 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: Olga Metaxas; Emilie Stander; Tony Sacino; Christopher Gussman; Heath Hofmeister; Ryan Bellinger; Ben Harris
   - Not in attendance: Juan Alvarez; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from March 20th

   The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council
   Councilman Armahizer was not in attendance, so there was no report from Borough Council.
   Mr. Hofmeister will attend an upcoming Council meeting to read our annual report into the record.
   The group discussed rotating commissioners to attend Council meetings in the future.

6) Report from Planning Board

   - 57/59 LaGrange Ave
     Mr. Gussman shared a map of the property. They will build three groups of townhouses, 14 market units and 2 low income units. All the units except the low income units have garages. No basement due to high water table, but they have attic space. The developer will be presenting to the Planning Board again next month. They did not fill out the green development checklist, but there is not much space to do stormwater management.
   - Mr. Gussman will be taking the Planning Board training on Apr 26 at RVCC, so he will not be able to attend the tree planting.
   - No updates about the Raritan Mall.

7) Public Comment
   There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items
   - Debrief from stream/community clean up, April 12 (Emilie, Heath, Tony, Ryan)
     - Despite the bad weather, we collected a record amount of trash. RHA supplied the materials and did the advertising. The only wrinkle with partnering with RHA is that we

can't plan for a rain date. Otherwise it worked out well.

- Cardinal Woods tree planting event, April 26
    - The holes are already dug for 15 trees. Volunteers just need to get the trees in the holes on the day of. Top of the soil line should be even with the top of the natural root zone.
    - We will need to ask DPW if they can deliver some piles of mulch next to each hole. We should also check if they will provide shovels and watering bags. We'll need to check if we need a hose and buckets to get water into the bags.
    - Councilman Agrawal made a flyer which Mr. Bellinger posted on social media. He will bring some donuts; let's check if he can bring a case of water.
    - We should bring the canopy and a sign in sheet.
    - At the event we'll want to talk to neighbors about adopting trees and making sure the bags get filled periodically. Councilman Agrawal may be able to help facilitate that.
- Planning for rain barrel workshop, May 3
    - Mr. Bellinger put the flyer up on social media and it's on the website too. Mr. Hofmeister will check with the borough to see how we can get an ad in the Patch.
    - Mr. Hofmeister will talk to DPW about getting the barrels moved over to Frelinghuysen. We will need to get the conversion kits from Mr. Alvarez.
    - Mr. Hofmeister will go over to DPW to check how many barrels we have and will let Ms. Stander know so she knows how many people to accept into the event.
- Update on grant proposals
    - Green Communities (Adam): Councilman Armahizer was not present so no update, but Mr. Bellinger has not seen that an application has been started in the grant database.
    - Trees for Schools (Heath): The school district has to apply, not the EC or the municipality. They have to go through their own grantwriting contract. We can assist in terms of writing the project narrative and coming up with the project design, but they have to apply and manage the grant. Mr. Hofmeister will update his contact at JFK to see how they want to proceed.
- Budget request update (Heath)
    - Our budget was approved for $4600; items not covered in our budget will be covered by the Clean Communities grant.
    - Consultant line was reduced to $2000.
    - Borough will cover legal fees on behalf of the EC.
    - The funding is not available to us yet.
- Updating impervious cover assessment conducted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension (Emilie)
    - Technical assistance program: Ms. Stander will reach out to the contact provided by RU Cooperative Extension.
- Community garden
    - Door hanger design update (Juan): Still a good idea to get input from the community, but first let's get an update on the site from DPW and/or the engineer.
- Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment
    - Status of borough master planning process? (Adam): This item was tabled until next month since Councilman Amahizer was not present.
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
    - Did the previous lawyer hand off the revised bylaws to the new lawyer? (Adam): This item was tabled until next month since Councilman Amahizer was not present.
- Status of ordinance review proposal from potential consultant (Heath)
    - Ms. Stander will reach out to Ms. Knowles to see when she's available to work on this and if she can invoice after the work is done.
    - In the meantime we can develop some questions for her.
- Social media update and planning (Ryan)
    - Mr. Bellinger will be moving out of town at the end of the month. Mr. Harris volunteered

to take over the social media accounts. Mr. Bellinger provided the Instagram info; Mr. Gussman will add Mr. Harris as an admin on the Facebook account.

- Brownfields technical assistance from NJIT update (Emilie)
    - Ms. Stander was able to connect with Cailyn Bruno, an LSRP with NJIT's brownfields team. They have funding to provide free technical assistance to municipalities. She was able to track down documentation on the Raritan Mall site, including the reports from the developer's LSRP. She is looking for groundwater data and will check back in soon regarding next steps.
    - Ms. Stander will ask if NJIT can add other members of the team to the Google Drive so they can see the documents shared by Ms. Bruno.
    - Our goal should be to develop questions that the Planning Board can ask the developer when a plan comes before the board.
- RVCC tree/forest health communication materials (Ryan and Heath)
    - Mr. Bellinger and Mr. Hofmeister met with the RVCC students and provided resources to them. They are working on an infographic that we can share online.
- Compost workshop with partner organization
    - Mr. Harris volunteered to organize an event around worm composter boxes. The group is thinking fall timing.

9) New Business
- Mr. Harris shared that Ed Carrington from Duke Farms will come to an upcoming meeting. Duke Farms is looking to make more connections to local municipalities.
- Ms. Metaxas asked about organizing a tree planting in the Elizabeth Ave park. Mr. Gussman has two trees that have grown up from small seedlings and are a decent height for planting. We will organize an event.
- Mr. Gussman will invite Borough engineer Mr. Brosnan to an upcoming meeting so we can discuss the enhanced stormwater ordinance and other stormwater related issues.
- Mr. Hofmeister briefed the group about the scout that asked questions about what Raritan is doing to address pollution in the borough. Ms. Stander will share Councilman Armahizer's fantastic responses with the group. We should respond and invite the scouts to an upcoming meeting and the Apr 27 tree planting.
- Mr. Hofmeister will invite a potential new member to our next meeting to see if she's interested in joining.

10) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:25. Mr. Bellinger seconded the motion.