



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

May 15th, 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 May 15th, 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; Juan Alvarez
- Not in attendance: Ben Harris; Adam Armahizer, Council Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from April 17th

The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

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

6) Report from Planning Board (Mr. Gussman)

- 57/59 LaGrange Ave updates

This project was conditionally approved at the last meeting with some minor changes related to boundary shrubs, traffic study, and some drains for stormwater.

Mr. Gussman will ask if Borough Engineer Brosnan can attend the next EC meeting in June.

7) Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

8) Discussion Items

- Debrief from Cardinal Woods tree planting event, April 26 (Heath, Tony, Emilie, Chris)
 - We should specify a rain date on the flyer if we run an event like this again in the future.
 - We should also put together some basic directions for planting to avoid mulch volcanoes in the future.
 - DPW will continue to fill the watering bags moving forward.
- Debrief from rain barrel workshop, May 3 (Juan, Heath, Tony, Emilie)
 - The event was a success; about four people attended and took five barrels.
 - We are down to our last three barrels, so need to find a new source.
- Update on grant proposals
 - Green Communities (Mr. Armahizer)
 - This item was tabled until next month.

- Updating impervious cover assessment conducted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension (Emilie)
 - Technical assistance program
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Community garden
 - Update from DPW/Council on plans for site?
 - We need more information about the easement for access. Perhaps Mr. Brosnan will have some information if he's able to attend our next meeting.
- Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment
 - Status of borough master planning process? (Mr. Armahizer)
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Update and status of proposed revision of bylaws
 - Did the previous lawyer hand off the revised bylaws to the new lawyer? (Mr. Armahizer)
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Ordinance review planning
 - Brainstorm questions for consultant
 - Which environmental-related ordinances are out of date and need to be updated?
 - What ordinances are missing and should be proposed?
 - Consider a wide range of environmentally-related ordinances, not just stormwater.
 - Perhaps Ms. Knowles could do an initial review of existing ordinances and come to one of our meetings to report back (Phase 1).
 - Then we could task her with preparing model ordinances or language for proposed revisions (Phase 2).
 - Ms. Stander reached out to the consultant regarding timing and payment logistics and is waiting to hear back.
- Social media update and planning (Mr. Hofmeister)
 - Handoff to Mr. Harris
 - Mr. Gussman will get the admin info for the Facebook account to Mr. Harris, since he has offered to take over running those accounts.
 - Mr. Hofmeister has been posting and advertising the borough's e-scrap recycling date.
 - The group discussed coordinating with Councilman Agrawal to suggest that Cardinal Woods families take some photos of the trees with their kids and we can post them on social media. Some families seemed excited to adopt a tree; it would be good to engage them and also have some additional eyes on the trees.
- Brownfields technical assistance from NJIT (Mr. Gussman and Ms. Stander)
 - Begin brainstorming questions for Planning Board to ask owner.
 - EC members will continue to review the materials gathered by NJIT.
 - Ms. Stander will reach out to NJIT to schedule a check in Zoom for EC members that are able to attend and try to record for people who can't be there.
- RVCC tree/forest health communication materials (Emilie)
 - We can make some modifications to the flyer Ms. Stander's RVCC students created and post on social media.
 - We need to remove the student names and replace with the EC logo; also shrink the URL onto one line.
 - Mr. Alvarez suggested using the borough's print contract with Staples to print color copies and post around town. He also offered to convert it to an 11x17 format and laminate for outdoor posting. Ms. Stander will share the pdf and Google doc with the group.
 - There may be other events in the future where we can disseminate these, including future tree seedling giveaways.
- Planning new outreach events
 - Composting workshop (tabled until next month)
 - We could combine this with a tree planting event at Elizabeth Ave park.

- Tree planting at Elizabeth Ave park
 - It seems like we could put in a handful of trees on the park side of where the road right of way.
 - We could potentially use our budget to purchase some trees large enough to be deer resistant.
 - We should check in with Mr. Sibilia in the Recreation Dept to make sure this would align with the parks/recreation master plan.
 - Let's consider a fall event; we could reach out to the scouts to see if they want to organize the event with us.
- Future rain barrel workshops
 - Mr. Alvarez suggested we ask residents to source their own barrels, and then we come to their home with the conversion kit and assist them in installing the barrels. We could advertise the service on social media and in the Breeze. We would schedule installs with residents as our calendars permit. The group was very much interested in this model.
 - We should look into installing a rain barrel at the new municipal building as a public demonstration.
- Plans for upcoming visits to EC meetings
 - Ed Carrington (Duke Farms): We will schedule with Mr. Brosnan first and then schedule Mr. Carrington.
 - Borough engineer: Invite him to June meeting.
 - Potential new EC member: Mr. Hofmeister asked a contact but that person declined. Mr. Hofmeister will try to track down the contact info for the young man who connected with us at the Cardinal Woods planting.
 - Outreach to scouts: Ms. Stander will track down the email chain with the scouts to share with Mr. Hofmeister.

9) New Business

10) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 8:30am. Mr. Alvarez seconded the motion.