



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

January 15th, 2026

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 15th, 2026 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: Heath Hofmeister, Chris Gussman, Ben Harris, Tony Sacino, Emilie Stander

Not in attendance: Juan Alvarez, Olga Metaxas, Vince LoMedico

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from November 20th

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

5) Report from Borough Council

There was no member of Council present, so there was no report. The next Council meeting is on January 20.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. Gussman relayed that the demolition plan for the Raritan Mall will come before the Planning Board on January 28.

7) Public Comment

8) Discussion Items

- Update on ordinance review effort from Angela Knowles
 - Identify connections between environmental ordinances and public health, what can we do to improve the health of residents through strengthening environmental ordinances?
 - Performed a gap analysis on two borough ordinances (stormwater and design standards) to make sure the analysis is helpful to the EC – where are there gaps between what the ordinance says and what best management practices are for that topic, what’s the risk if the ordinance is not enhanced, and what would be the recommended enhancements
 - Should be an O&M agreement and an associated manual for green infrastructure practices
 - Redevelopment is where towns can get creative about what is required of developers, can redo the zoning and require that green infrastructure is part of that
 - Strengthening the language makes the ordinance enforceable
 - Also provide suggested language for public outreach and education to help build support for the proposed changes

- Next steps: look at master plan language – foundational language to recommend these changes in ordinances, master plan will be revisited in 2027; Ms. Knowles will talk to the borough engineer about the master plan evaluation, including the triggering of the climate change risk hazard vulnerability assessment
- Include the impervious cover assessment in ordinance standards so it gets referenced during projects, not necessarily required
- Health analysis (Plan4Health NJ) – social determinants of health and analyzing health data; Ms. Knowles created a mapping tool to look at wide range of public health data and overlay with land use, transportation, food and agriculture, health and medicine, social isolation, etc.; overlay them to see the disparities among census tracts; environmental ordinances can address some of these health outcomes
- Start with outreach so that Council can get behind this effort as something that improves quality of life and saves the borough money down the road; provide recommendations along with talking points as to why these things matter and how they will improve conditions in the town, save money in the future, etc.
- Collaborate as much as possible; run ideas past other committees, administrator, new mayor, make sure everyone is aware
- Ms. Knowles is about halfway through the hours allotted in the original scope of work, so she's on track; she can complete the same process for the other ordinances in the amount of time left in the scope
- Update from Raritan Mall redevelopment sub-committee
 - The sub-committee pulled together questions about the site that could be posed to the LSRP. The group agreed that the questions are appropriate.
 - Mr. Gussman will bring the questions to the Planning Board meeting on January 28.
- Review of OPRA materials from 21 Orlando Drive
 - Ms. Stander relayed that her contact at Somerset County Parks Commission worked with the contractor during the summer of 2025 to get the neighboring parks property cleaned of all construction materials and reseeded. The county is planning to replant that parcel with native vegetation so that the landscaper won't mow it in the future.
- Social media update and planning
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Plans for upcoming visits to EC meetings
 - Borough engineer
 - Ryan Bellinger, Green Communities municipal liaison
 - The group agreed to ask Mr. Bellinger if he can attend the March meeting.
 - Angela Knowles
 - The group agreed to bring Ms. Knowles back in February for another update on the ordinance work.

9) New Business

- Review and approval of 2026 meeting schedule
 - Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the schedule; Mr. Gussman seconded the motion. The group approved the schedule.
- Proposed rain garden project
 - The group thinks the AARP Challenge Grant would be a good funding avenue for a rain garden. Members discussed potential locations, including Frelinghuysen Park. Would it be possible to do curb cuts and route stormwater from the street into rain gardens on park property (similar to the design at Exchange Field in Somerville)? The group was excited about reaching out to the new Recreation director to see if she would be interested in working on a grant proposal together. Mr. Hofmeister will run the idea by Mr. LoMedico.

- Event planning for 2026
 - Meditation workshop
 - There is not a date for this event yet. Once the Recreation group meets on January 28 to discuss the idea, a date will be identified.
 - Spring tree planting and remembrance for Michael DeCicco
 - This item was tabled until next month.
 - Clean ups
 - Mr. Harris is in the process of signing the EC up for a clean up at the Basilone statue through Raritan Headwaters on April 18. Mr. Hofmeister agreed to be the site coordinator.
 - Rain barrel workshop
 - This item was tabled until next month.
 - Hydration station installation
 - This item was tabled until next month.
 - Others?
 - Annual report
 - The group agreed to pull together an annual report for 2025. Mr. Hofmeister agreed to read it into the public record at an upcoming council meeting.

10) Adjournment

Mr. Harris made a motion to adjourn at 9:16pm. Mr. Sacino seconded the motion.