



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

April 16th, 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 6:00 p.m. on April 16th, 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, Ben Harris, Olga Metaxas, Tony Sacino, Vince LoMedico, Council Liaison Jacob Martinez

Not in attendance: Juan Alvarez, MLUB Liaison Chris Gussman

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from March 19th

The minutes were approved with no revisions.

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Martinez did not have any items to share.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. Gussman was not present, so there was no report from Planning Board.

7) Public Comment

Ms. Saunders asked to help prepare the baseline information for the tree survey via the Green Communities program. Ms. Stander will share the resources that Mr. Bellinger sent us. Also Mr. LoMedico agreed to a no-mow zone along the Basilone Park greenway, so she would like to engage the group in a planting event. Ms. Saunders and Mr. LoMedico also discussed installing a rain chain to address a stormwater problem from the backdoor overhang at Borough Hall. Mr. LoMedico is open to constructing a pervious pavement walkway from the parking lot to the back door at Borough Hall as a demonstration. Mr. Hofmeister made the point that constructing all these projects at Borough Hall and public open space can be a communication bridge and proof of concept. Mr. Harris suggested a school art contest and educational signage.

8) Discussion Items

- Report from Angela Knowles, ordinance review consultant
 - Ms. Knowles gave a presentation summarizing her recommendations for revisions to the stormwater management, floodplain management, and soil removal and disturbance ordinances. Key notes include:
 - Redevelopment plans and agreements are where towns can get creative and ask developers to do more than is ordinarily required
 - Floodplain management would be one part of a climate change risk hazard

vulnerability analysis, which is triggered when the land use element of a master plan is updated; coordination with the county's hazard mitigation planning and resources from the county can be accessed

- Introduce public health language into the soil removal and disturbance ordinance to reduce nuisances associated with construction and demolition
 - Arguments for why these changes matter
 - The recommended changes would not prohibit development, but rather make sure development is done in a way that promotes safety and resilience to protect public and environmental health
 - Recommended changes are in line with state regulations
 - Borough can adopt ordinances that are more protective than what the state requires, as long as they are not inconsistent with state requirements; Ms. Knowles did that analysis and found that the recommended changes are consistent
 - Plan4HealthNJ website is now live and has a lot of helpful resources, interactive mapping tools, data, etc.; Ms. Knowles would be happy to assist the borough with additional analysis associated with public health as requested
 - Ms. Knowles recommends coordinating with Borough health committee to review community health improvement plan and other health-related documents and goals; there may be other connections between environmental and health work that could be captured in a community health assessment, ex. asthma rates in a neighborhood could be improved by strengthening the soil removal ordinance
 - Ms. Knowles presented her recommended revised language for the stormwater management ordinance as one example; may require assistance from the borough attorney; showed where the proposed language is addressing either nonexistent or weak language in the existing ordinance
 - Ordinance language can put the burden on the developer to show why they can't install green infrastructure
 - Ordinance language can require developers to submit operations and maintenance agreement so that developers have to take care of stormwater control measures long-term; however, adding this language then requires the borough to enforce it
 - Addressing accountability for developers and redevelopers is key
 - In some cases she is recommending cross-referencing to other ordinances, such as the waste disposal ordinance to strengthen both ordinances
 - This analysis and recommendations were conducted for all three ordinances
 - Public facing summary: provides info about the purpose of this effort, what the new ordinances do, what the impacts are on different types of development, connections to flooding, emergency access routes, effects on homeowners
- Q&A
 - Mr. Harris asked about vague language, like "maximum extent practicable"; Ms. Knowles suggested adding in performance metrics for things like infiltration and runoff – reduce runoff by x amount in y number of years, but then requires borough to inspect and enforce. The EC could work with the borough engineer to develop those metrics.
 - Ms. Stander asked if Ms. Knowles knows of any towns that are requiring industrial hygienists to be on site for demolition/development/redevelopment. Ms. Knowles thinks it's a good idea, but doesn't know of any towns that are doing this.
 - Master Plan specifics are not enforceable until the language goes into an ordinance.
 - Mr. LoMedico felt that many of these concepts are existing in ordinances, but some of the language is stronger, and that could be useful. He does think adding language about green infrastructure would be helpful.

- Next steps: Councilman Martinez will share the documents with Mr. Colvin and the borough attorney.
- Event planning and logistics
 - Spring clean up, Apr 18
 - Mr. Hofmeister is not able to attend, but Mr. Sacino and Ms. Saunders will take over; Mr. Martinez will also assist. Mr. LoMedico identified multiple areas for volunteers to work in during the event; two staffers from DPW will be there. Little kids will be assigned to Frelinghuysen Park. Mr. LoMedico ordered gloves and bags. Lunch and music will happen at Frelinghuysen Park afterwards. Reusable water bottles and t-shirts will be handed out to volunteers. DPW and Recreation staff will be there to hand out shirts and accompany groups out to their cleaning areas. They have safety vests for people cleaning in more trafficked areas.
 - Meditation workshop, Apr 25, 11am-12pm in the Community Room. Mr. Hofmeister will give some opening remarks; then the Zen monk will lead the group through a meditation practice.
 - Spring tree planting and remembrance for Michael DeCicco?
 - Mr. LoMedico said to send him the language for the name plate and he'll get a quote. We can install it at one of the trees Mr. Gussman planted at the Elizabeth Ave Park.
 - Mr. LoMedico will talk to DOT to see if they have any plans to replace the trees they removed at the 202/First Ave jughandle. He would suggest planting in Washington School Park.
 - Rain barrel workshop: Mr. LoMedico suggested running composting workshops – anything to get heavy waste out of trash pickup. He will reach out to the county to see if they have resources or know of grant funding that could help people get their own tumblers.
 - Hydration station installation: Mr. LoMedico had to get the Frelinghuysen unit repaired; one of the lines broke after the super cold winter. He looked into other vendors such as Elkay, but Mr. Hofmeister noted that the other products are meant for indoor installations.
- Debrief from rain garden presentation to Borough Council on Tues, Mar 24
 - Council members expressed support and excitement for the project. Multiple council members suggested implementing additional green infrastructure measures at Borough Hall to address stormwater issues and to educate the public when they visit the building.
 - We should be notified about the AARP grant in May. We will wait until we hear from AARP before making more plans.
- Update on ANJEC open space grant
 - The EC was not able to take advantage of this opportunity this year. Mr. Hofmeister approached the principal of JFK elementary school to partner on a tree planting and maintenance grant, and he was very supportive, but because it was spring break, it wasn't possible to get any teachers on board in time to get the proposal in by the deadline.
 - It would be helpful to meet with the grantwriter to set up a calendar of all the environmental grant deadlines. Mr. Hofmeister suggested setting up a subcommittee to work on this.
- Air quality issues associated with NJ Transit railyard
 - The borough committee on this issue will meet on Thursday. The EC is willing to help access data or find ways to collect data on particulates if that would be helpful.
- Update on collaboration with RVCC students on communication about flooding
 - This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- Social media update and planning
 - This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- Plans for upcoming visits to EC meetings
 - Borough engineer, Joseph Brosnan: Mr. Hofmeister will suggest either May 21 or June 18 and let him decide to discuss the borough's Watershed Improvement Plan.

9) New Business

- Future of Green Team/Sustainable Jersey efforts
 - This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- Mr. LoMedico mentioned the tree replacement ordinance in Somerville that requires builders to either replace trees or put money into a fund (\$650/tree) that can be used to install green infrastructure and planting trees elsewhere in town. You can identify spots for shade trees and ask the homeowners if they would allow them to be installed.

10) Adjournment

The group adjourned at 8:06pm.