



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

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting

May 21<sup>st</sup>, 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 May 21<sup>st</sup>, 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, MLUB Liaison Chris Gussman, Tony Sacino, Olga Metaxas, Vince LoMedico, Emilie Stander, Council Liaison Jake Martinez

Not in attendance: Juan Alvarez

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from April 16<sup>th</sup>

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

5) Report from Borough Council

Council voted to put our recommended ordinance changes in front of the borough attorney. The EC suggested asking the attorney to provide his input before our June meeting. Members discussed a question that came up at a recent Borough Council meeting about whether the EC and Fire Department are notified when projects come to Planning Board. Mayor Tozzi said he would reach out to the EC to check on this, but so far we haven't had any communication. Mr. Hofmeister will reach out to Mayor Tozzi. The EC has not been receiving notification of projects that are before the Planning Board.

Mayor Tozzi said at the last council meeting that groundwater testing will take place on the LaGrange property and that they will find out who the LSRP is.

6) Report from Planning Board

Mr. Gussman shared that LaGrange was a big topic at the last meeting. Multiple members of the board expressed frustration that the owner brought in large amounts of outside material, and concerns were raised about leaking 55-gallon drums that weren't properly tracked even after the Borough engineer noted this concerns in his technical reports.

The group discussed the Field property. The owner should have applied for a variance for impervious cover but did not, and the final inspection revealed that impervious cover rules were violated. The group discussed recommending that the owner install a rain garden or similar bioretention structure to mitigate the excess impervious cover. Ms. Stander will prepare a comment to submit to the Planning Board.

7) Public Comment

Mr. Brown shared a concern about the Raritan Mall resolution on the Planning Board agenda for next week. The language of the resolution has not been shared with the Board members yet, but Mr. Brown is afraid that the resolution will not include any language about requirements for environmental

testing or an industrial hygienist, requirements that were discussed for redevelopment projects on brownfield properties after the LaGrange fiasco. The group agreed to attend the Planning Board meeting to share our concerns.

## 8) Discussion Items

- Debrief from April events:
  - Clean up, Apr 18
    - Mr. Sacino reported that turnout was good. Mr. Harris noted that there was a discrepancy between Recreation's and RHA's start times; we should smooth this out or run separate events next year (RHA in spring, Recreation in fall). They did find some large items like a lawnmower and exercise bike. Mr. LoMedico needs to record the number of volunteers and estimates of how much trash was picked up in order to report to Clean Communities. Members estimated roughly 30 volunteers and 30-40 bags of trash. Members noted that although there were some hiccups with coordinating with both RHA and Recreation, ultimately partnering with Recreation resulted in much better turnout and more of a community feel.
    - The group discussed holding a refurbish day the day before bulk pickup. Mr. LoMedico starts working on the calendar and magnet in September; we could work on setting up one or more refurbish days – called Borough Bargain Day or similar – for 2027.
    - The group discussed a compost pickup program for seniors and other community members that can't compost at home; could get school kids and RVCC interns involved and engage RHA education staff.
  - Meditation workshop, Apr 25
    - The event was very successful, with great turnout.
    - The monk is interested in making it a seasonal program and tailoring his remarks for individual events.
- Ordinance review efforts
  - Councilman Martinez introduced the EC's recommendations at the last Borough Council meeting. Council tasked the borough lawyer with reviewing the proposed ordinance changes.
- AARP grant: planning and next steps
  - Record and submit promotional video by May 29; we will do this when we meet with Rutgers on May 28.
  - Register for account to receive the grant monies
    - The CFO is working on this now. The deadline is June 10.
  - DPW will do all the labor. Excavation and installing cement bases for benches and shade structure will be no cost, so just have to keep cost of supplies within the \$15K budget. DPW will take care of watering when the plants are established; volunteers should do the watering and weeding after that.
  - Grant agreement: members recommended two small changes to the deliverables: adjust three benches to two and change tree planter boxes to street trees.
  - The group discussed establishing a subcommittee that can meet outside of these meetings and report back to the larger group at monthly meetings. Mr. Gussman volunteered; Mr. Harris asked to be kept in the loop and will participate as his schedule permits.
  - Outreach to Recreation and seniors: We have been invited to give a presentation (no more than 20 minutes) on June 10 at the seniors meeting.
  - Borough Council will need to pass a resolution at the June 1 meeting to accept the grant.
  - Rutgers Cooperative Extension representatives will meet with us on Thur, May 28 at 9am to visit the site and determine feasibility.
- Update on collaboration with RVCC students on communication about flooding
  - This item was tabled until next month.

- Event planning
  - Compost or rain barrel workshop: see clean up section above
  - Fall clean up after Basilone Parade: see clean up section above
- Green Communities: next steps
  - This item was tabled until next month.
- Establishing grants subcommittee
  - The group agreed to table this for now. When the AARP grant is over, the rain garden subcommittee could be retooled to research other grant opportunities.
- Social media update and planning
  - Mr. Hofmeister and Mr. Gussman will coordinate with Mr. Alvarez on linking the EC Instagram and Facebook accounts and retiring and removing the inactive Facebook account.
- Tree removal ordinance
  - Mr. LoMedico wants to incorporate Somerville's tree removal ordinance language into Raritan's. This would require developers to put money into a fund to mitigate losses from removal. Ms. Stander will ask her Somerville EC contact for their tree removal ordinance, and then we can get it to the borough lawyer for review. Mr. LoMedico will see that it gets on the council agenda.
  - DOT will be planting 80 trees in the road island and perimeter to replace the ones they removed.
- Hydration station
  - There's \$12,000 left in the Clean Communities grant. The hydration station would cost about \$8,000 for materials and installation. Grant money could be used for educational signage, graffiti removal, street sweeper parts, educational programs in schools, etc. The group agreed to move ahead with the hydration station at Basilone, since the next tranche of funding will come through in September.
- Plans for upcoming visits to EC meetings
  - Borough engineer, Joseph Brosnan; we will ask if he's available to attend our June meeting

9) New Business: these items were tabled until next month

- Green infrastructure installations at Borough Hall
- Tree planting along Basilone Park greenway
- Communication with Board of Health
- Future of Green Team/Sustainable Jersey efforts
- Other?

10) Adjournment

Mr. Harris made a motion to adjourn at 8:57; Ms. Metaxas seconded the motion.