



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

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

August 27th, 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 August 27th, 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, MLUB Liaison, Olga Metaxas, Vince LoMedico, Juan Alvarez, Tony Sacino, Emilie Stander, Jake Martinez, Council Liaison

3) Flag Salute

4) Approval of Minutes from July 16th

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

5) Report from Borough Council

Councilman Martinez reported that after the tree removal ordinance was discussed at the last Council meeting, and he believes revisions were made to the ordinance that the EC agreed to. At Council the EC had raised an issue about a provision in the ordinance that said hazard trees can be removed without being replaced. The EC advocated for requiring replacement of removed hazard trees. The compromise that was struck was to require developers to replace hazard trees but that this would not be required of residents. We'll look to see that those changes are in the revised ordinance. The public hearing will happen at next Tuesday's Council meeting and then Council will vote on the ordinance. EC members are encouraged to attend and express their support for the ordinance. If the ordinance passes, Mr. LoMedico will draft a permit and send it around to the group for our review before our next meeting.

6) Report from Planning Board

- Cortese application, 19 E. Somerset St
 - The applicant is seeking to put in a driveway on the property of the two-unit residential building. They will still be within the maximum allowable impervious coverage for that zoning, but we could recommend that the owner voluntarily put in stormwater control measures like a rain garden or similar. Also, one street tree will need to be removed to construct the driveway, so we might recommend that the tree be replaced. Ms. Stander will begin to draft some comments, but we will be able to discuss it again at our September meeting. EC members should review the plans on the Planning Board website before our next meeting.
- 25 Somerset Realty application, 25 E. Somerset St
 - The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing building (the current location of

Bagelicious) and replace it with a four-story mixed use building (two storefronts and 2 1-bedroom apartments on the first floor, plus four 1-bedroom apartments on each of the three floors above). The applicant will need variances to build four stories (three stories is the maximum in that zoning), have residences on the first floor, and to put in only 20 parking spots when 52 are required. The parking variance is likely to be a big issue as street parking is limited in that area. Mr. Alvarez raised a question about whether the existing sewer system can handle the additional demand. Ms. Stander will begin to draft some comments, but we will be able to discuss it again at our September meeting. EC members should review the plans on the Planning Board website before our next meeting.

7) Public Comment

Ms. Brown shared that she saw the Colfax property that is being developed was all flooded out after one of the recent large rain events. The next day there were crews on site pumping the water directly into the storm drain without any filter. Mr. LoMedico had Mr. Brosnan go out to investigate, and the Soil Conservation Service was contacted and will request that they put a filter on the storm drain. Mr. Gara and Mr. Brosnan were both out at the site requesting that the builder install the storm drain filter and reduce the depth of the basin on the site to avoid ponding during construction.

Ms. Brown also noted that the tarps covering the soil mounds at the LaGrange site are blowing off and the fence was falling over. Mr. LoMedico is working on getting the developer to correct these issues. The group noted that a fence went up around the Raritan Mall site. Mr. Gara is expecting that demolition permits will be submitted soon.

Mr. Timms mentioned that he and Ms. Erickson are considering attending the League of Municipalities meeting this fall. Mr. LoMedico described his experiences attending in the past. He will be attending the meeting this year through funding from Somerville.

8) Discussion Items

- AARP grant: planning and next steps
 - Mr. LoMedico will need to purchase concrete (to put in platforms for the benches) plus river rock, geotextile, and piping for the rain garden underdrain. He will get estimates on the river rock. There is a good chance that we will go over budget, in which case we may have to use some of the EC's budget to cover the extra costs. Mr. LoMedico will check what's left in the EC budget to make sure that's possible. Another possibility is to delay some of the planting until next spring and use EC funds then.
 - Mr. LoMedico will get a sample of compost made from yard waste made from. If it's not too woody, and there's enough of it, we could avoid having to use grant funds to purchase compost.
 - One way to make the project more manageable for DPW would be to put in the underdrain and stub out the pipe just beyond the rain garden. Then we can monitor the amount of ponding over the winter to determine if the full outlet pipe out to the catch basin is necessary. We will need to site the shade structures and benches out of the way of the outlet pipe in case we need to put that in later.
 - DPW will need to schedule rain garden excavation for the week of Sept 21 (exact date dependent on weather), after the Basilone Parade. Ms. Stander will relay this information to Rutgers and double check that they won't charge us to send an engineer over to monitor rain garden installation.
 - Ms. Stander will send Mr. Gussman the info for the SiteOne contact so he can ask about seed source and ecotype. In the meantime, Ms. Stander will get a quote from Pinelands to compare to SiteOne. Mr. Hofmeister will reach out to the Soil Conservation Service to ask if they would be willing to provide some of the plant material.
 - Mr. LoMedico can get the sign made by county shared services. Let's look for an existing sign design and add the Clean Communities and AARP logo. Mr. Alvarez offered to look for

existing signs that we can use. We agree that metal would be the ideal material for the sign.

- We will work on the logistics of the shade structure install and bench placement under shade structure after the rain garden goes in.
- We'll plan for a grand opening celebration in the spring when the plants wake up.
- Event planning
 - Rain garden planting dates: reschedule for Sat, Sept 26 with a rain date of Sept 27, with Sat, Oct 3 and rain date of Sun, Oct 4 as second planting weekend. Councilman Martinez will contact JFK PTO about getting volunteers. Ms. Stander will invite Duke Farms and Recreation Committee to mobilize volunteers. Mr. LoMedico will provide gloves and tools for the planting events. Ms. Stander will bring trowels.
 - Fall clean up with Duke Farms, Sat, Sept 26 (Rain date: Sun, Sept 27): We will repurpose this event into a rain garden planting event and plan to do a clean up next April.
 - Refurbish day before bulk pickup next year: Mr. LoMedico will form a committee after the Basilone Parade and rain garden install are over to discuss plans for bulk pickup next year. He suggests this committee should come to make a proposal to that group for the refurbish day idea. The EC should take ownership and make flyers, help publicize, etc.
 - Rain barrel workshop: We'll think about this for next year.
- Tree removal ordinance update: See notes above in the Report from Borough Council section.
- Ordinance review efforts: Mr. LoMedico discussed with the borough attorney and determined that Mr. Brosnan does not need to review the proposed ordinance changes. He will get it on the agenda for two council meetings from now.
- Social media account maintenance and use
 - Review and implement action items from July minutes; update account managers
 - Mr. Hofmeister and Mr. Gussman will set a time to get together to sort out the multiple accounts and administrative privileges.
 - Review social media posts about flooding created by RVCC students
 - This item was tabled until next month.
- Communication with Board of Health
 - Mr. Hofmeister has been in touch with the director of the borough's Board of Health. The BOH will put us on the agenda for their next meeting on September 9. Mr. Hofmeister will plan to attend, and other members are invited to join.
- Hydration station
 - Mr. LoMedico has the hydration station in hand. It still needs to be installed.
- Plans for upcoming visits to EC meetings
 - Borough engineer, Joseph Brosnan; Mr. LoMedico will reach out to see when he wants to attend one of our meetings.

9) New Business

- Data center discussion: The group discussed the environmental concerns associated with data centers (i.e., electricity and water usage, noise, and vibrations) and the potential for a data center developer to purchase the 65-acre Ortho Clinical Diagnostics property on Rt 202. The EC will put together a statement to share at Tuesday's Council meeting indicating that we support a moratorium on data centers in the borough, ideally for a year, to give the borough enough time to intentionally craft an ordinance regulating this usage. Mr. Martinez found a data center ordinance from Kingwood that appears to be one of the conditional types; he will send it to the group to inform future discussions. Ms. Stander will send an announcement from ANJEC for a data center webinar on September 9.
- Mr. Sacino asked about the remembrance for Mike DeCicco. Mr. Gussman has already planted four trees at the Elizabeth Ave Park. Mr. LoMedico had gotten a quote for the plaque that was prohibitively expensive for the EC's budget. Several members suggested soliciting donations to

cover the cost of the plaque.

10) Adjournment

Ms. Metaxas made a motion to adjourn at 9:14pm; Mr. Alvarez seconded the motion.