

April 24, 2023, Environmental Commission Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: E. Duerr, M. Duerr, Link (at 8:40 pm), McCarthy (at 7:45 pm), Stippick
MEMBERS ABSENT: Brandt, Kohute
ALTERNATES ABSENT: Cavone
LIAISONS PRESENT: Marsh
LIAISONS ABSENT: Keen
GUESTS PRESENT: Debbie Barsotti, Mindy Curran, Roger Duerr, Barbara Halpern, Bill Petravich, and Al Wheeler.

The April 24, 2023, meeting of the Township of Franklin Environmental Commission was both a live meeting in the municipal building conference room and a virtual meeting on Zoom. It was called to order by Mr. Stippick at 7:34 pm.

I. Minutes: Upon a motion by Ms. M. Duerr, seconded by Mr. Stippick, the minutes of the March 27, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved.

II. Emergency Response and Management Report: There were no emergency reports.

III. Applications: There were no Zoning or Planning Board applications to review.

Mr. Stippick reported that the applications for the last (March) meeting were not received due to changes in personnel. Desiree will be handling the applications from now on, which should solve that problem.

Mr. Stippick then briefly reviewed the applications that were scheduled for review in April.

1. The Buyers Industrial Services app was tabled to the May Planning Board meeting because their engineer was not available. Our comments on it pertained to stormwater and the vegetative buffer next to farmland.
2. The other application, from Newfield National Bank, was reviewed and approved. Our concerns were about the stream on the property border and the cutting of the trees in front of the building. According to their engineer and our planning board engineer, an LOI is not required for this app. They have agreed to leave the 3 large pin oak trees at the front. However, two of the trees do not look very healthy and may not survive, especially with a parking lot going in at the front over their roots. The bank is approved to add parking spaces at the front but was not required and did not offer to remove any of the spaces at the back of the building despite the fact that their justification for the additional parking was to remove a safety hazard with the rear parking spaces.

IV. Old Business:

A. Piney Hollow:

NJDEP Green Acres Trail grant: Ms. Halpern spoke to the CME engineer. There has been no reply from the Pinelands Commission on the approval of the project and we are now past the 90 day time period. We need an answer by the next Planning Board meeting. After that, we must go out for three bids on the project and, if there's no reply by then, we will pursue the boardwalk alternative.

B. Malaga Lake Park:

Mr. Stippick reported on the park cleanup on April 22. There were only a few attendees, despite the Township Alert about this. Mr. Stippick and his wife and son were there, along with Ward Bolan

(Ms. McCarthy's brother), and another couple who came to visit the park. However, there was not a lot of trash to clean up in the park itself, although there was a lot along Malaga Park Drive. A large television and a tire in the lake were removed before the event by Public Works, which does a good job of staying on top of the park's condition. There are numerous trash cans as well. Public Works has graded the parking lot and put new mulch in the playground. There is caution tape on the sliding boards, which are broken.

C. Township-owned properties:

This topic was discussed at length in March. A question was asked by Mr. Stippick as to whether we want to start up again the process of reviewing the properties. If the Township Committee was willing, the Environmental Commission could advise on any list of properties for sale. Mr. Stippick will send to Mr. Marsh the property lists and the criteria list that Ms. McCarthy forwarded to him and to Mr. Keen after the last meeting. A discussion occurred explaining the process, the basis of the lists, and how adding them to the Recreation and Open Space Inventory (the ROSI) preserves properties permanently without any cost. Ms. McCarthy advised that it is only worth reenergizing this project if Township Committee actually asks us to do so.

V. New Business:

- A. Bird Quest:** This Gloucester County event, sponsored by the Gloucester County Nature Club, will be held on Saturday May 6. Mr. Stippick will attend. Participants identify as many bird species as can be found between 7 am and noon. We have always focused on doing this in Franklin Township only. Attendees will then meet at the Wheelabrator Nature Preserve at noon for a free lunch, many door prizes, a t-shirt for each participant, and sharing the data. There is a \$15 fee per attendee. Ms. McCarthy plans to attend as does Ms. Barsotti and three others. Mr. Stippick will send in the registrations.
- B. Bioblitz:** There will be a BioBlitz at Alcyon Park on June 10. It's a full-day event from 7 am to 12 am (June 11), sponsored by the Pitman Environmental Commission. Mr. Stippick will be doing a nocturnal insect count. Franklin Township's EC is a supporter and partner of this. Anyone who wants to participate may do so. Identification of species of plants and animals is done using the free application, iNaturalist. Mr. Stippick will send the Bioblitz flyer to everyone.
- C. Franklin Township Nature Notes Facebook page:** Ms. Barsotti reported that the response to this page has been expanding nicely.
- D. Franklin Township Communications Commission:** The Commission is planning to videotape meetings of Franklin Township committees, which could then be posted on YouTube. Bill Morris of the Commission asked if the Environmental Commission wants to be filmed? Members agreed that this would be acceptable. Ms. McCarthy will have to send the link of the recorded video to the Communications Commission. We will start this with the May 2023 meeting. Mr. Stippick will send an email to Ms. McCarthy and to Bill Morris so they can communicate directly.
- E. Glassboro Wildlife Management Area:** Ms. McCarthy reported on the NJ Fish and Wildlife Division's clear cutting of acreage in the WMA in order to create habitat for woodcock on 22 acres of this

undisturbed forest. They also pulled out stumps and chewed up the soil. Four groups protested to DEP – NJ Conservation Foundation, South Jersey Land & Water Trust (for which Ms. McCarthy was a founder and sits on the Board), the Pineland Preservation Alliance, and Citizens United for the Maurice River – because this project disturbed wetlands, wetland buffers, habitat for endangered/threatened species (red-shouldered hawk and barred owl), habitat for an endangered plant, and some archaeological sites. Fish & Wildlife violated its own (DEP's) wetland rules. It has been stopped but the story of an agency being chastised by its own agency was picked up by the NY Times and then went national. The state has a task force that has generated guidelines for management of NJ public forests that it is hoped will be adopted by the state legislature as regulations. These guidelines, too, were violated. Ms. McCarthy will send the guideline document to everyone.

VI. Mail: There was no mail.

VII. Adjournment: Upon a motion by Ms. M. Duerr, seconded by Ms. McCarthy, and approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne McCarthy, Vice-Chair and Acting Secretary.

The next meeting of the Environmental Commission is on Monday, May 22, 7:30 pm. It will be both a live meeting in the Municipal Bldg. conference room and a Zoom meeting.