

September 27, 2021 Environmental Commission Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brandt, Doherty, M. Duerr, McCarthy, Stippick, Tinney
MEMBERS ABSENT: Mounier,
ALTERNATES ABSENT: Cavone, Link
LIAISONS ABSENT: Doyle, Flaim
GUESTS: E. Duerr, R. Duerr, B. Halpern, A. Wheeler, Coleen Blithe, Linda Turner, and Scott Sweigert

The September 27, 2021, meeting of the Township of Franklin Environmental Commission was a virtual meeting on Zoom and was called to order by Mr. Stippick at 7:35 pm.

I. Minutes

There was one change needed to the minutes of the August 23, 2021 meeting. The adjournment time was incorrectly listed as 7:29 pm. It should have been 8:29 pm. With that correction and upon a motion by Ms. Duerr, seconded by Mr. Stippick, the minutes were unanimously approved.

II. **Guests:** Coleen Blithe, Linda Turner, Scott Sweigert, Roger and Evan Duerr, Barbara Halpern, and Al Wheeler attended the online EC meeting.

III. **Emergency Response and Management Report:** There was nothing to report.

IV. Zoning and Planning Board Applications:

A. There was one Planning Board application: PB21-05, to be heard by the Board on Oct. 19, 2021. The application is by Ken Dorney Jr. for a minor subdivision of a property at the corner of Williamstown Rd. and Coles Mill Rd. – to subdivide existing block 1401, lot 1 into 4 lots for residential use.

The Environmental Commission’s comment on this application included advising that the property is adjacent to the Pioneer Metal facility that has been classified as a Superfund site and that purchasers of these properties should be aware of this. There could be issues with the viability of wells. Also, this is a 22+-acre wooded property and the EC advised that constructors of residences on the new lots should be encouraged to retain as many trees as possible and not to clear cut the property. Also, there are wetlands adjacent and possibly on this property. An LOI should be obtained regarding the potential wetlands on proposed lots 1.01 and 1.03.

B. There was one Zoning Board application: ZB21-06, to be heard on Oct. 5, 2021. The application is by Painted Desert, LLC (via approval of the landowners, who are Louis Schipani and William Hallissey) for a D1 use variance for block 1001, lot 73 to permit a 25.2 MW ac / 31.34 MW dc solar power system in the form of ground mounted solar arrays, on this 143-acre property. The property is on Main Rd. just below Tuckahoe Rd. This is not a permitted use in the R-A zoning district.

The review resulted in several concerns being expressed during the meeting. The EC comments on this application were:

Water Related Issues (e.g., quality; quantity; stormwater detention):

The NJDEP Stormwater Regulations will likely require stormwater control. A similar, but smaller, project at RSL was required to mitigate onsite stormwater at their solar facility. Stormwater regulations are triggered when 1 or more acres are disturbed during development.

Natural Resources issues (e.g., forest; protected species; cultural resources):

Clear cutting mature forest will lead to the destruction of Franklin Township's natural resources and release decades of stored carbon in trees and soil. All wildlife that use the site will be eliminated from Franklin's ecosystem.

Other Issues (e.g., air quality; hazardous waste):

Noise Pollution- solar panel installation can be very loud.

Soil Conservation- A soil erosion and sediment control plan is required.

Additional Comments/Specific Concerns: The FTEC determined that clear cutting mature forest is not a suitable tradeoff for renewable energy, environmentally speaking. There are many other suitable sites in FT for solar farms.

V. Old Business

A. Piney Hollow:

1. Ms. Halpern reported that the Engineer has not heard back from the Pinelands Commission concerning the amended plan that was submitted.
2. Mr. Stippick reported that he and Joe Arsenault plan to survey more in October. Currently the ticks and other insects are still numerous and problematic.

B. Malaga Lake Park: Mr. Stippick and Mr. Arsenault netted fish from the lake for display in the aquarium at the EC's booth at Community Day. Mr. Arsenault remarked that there were more species present than he had seen the last time he netted. The fish were a big hit at the booth. They were returned to the lake at the end of the day.

C. Community Day:

Mr. Stippick, Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Roger Duerr, Mr. Evan Duerr, and Colleen and Ella Blithe manned the booth. Mr. Blithe and Ward and Andrew Bolan assisted with break-down at end of the day. All their help was much appreciated.

In addition to the aquarium with live fish and all the display and touchable nature items, maps and books that were at the booth, there was also an exhibit about converting lawn to a wildflower garden that was put together by Mr. Stippick. It included illustrations and information panels on large display units and easels, along with a small "garden" display. The plants for the garden were lent by Triple Oaks Nursery, which was a generous and much appreciated assist.

Attendance at the booth was fair although the EC booth location seemed to be less traveled by visitors than the aisles more in the center of the booth area. Next year we should request a more central site. Given the amount of effort put into the booth and the exhibitry, better visitation is needed to justify our participation.

VI. New Business: There was no new business.

VII. Mail Review/Announcements/Conferences: There was no mail.

VIII. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Mr. Brandt, seconded by Ms. Duerr, and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne McCarthy, EC Vice-Chair, Acting as Secretary for the Environmental Commission