

**West Deptford Environmental Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**17 March 2014**

**Present:** Dave Sileo, Dave Keller, Ed Komczyk, Ernest Kraus, Bob Waller, Miriam Reichenbach, Sam Cianfarini and Public: Gina Carola, Carl Ford, Joe Rhyner and Kathy Sherf.

**Call to Order:** Dave Sileo called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Ernest moved and Bob seconded the motion to accept the minutes. Dave Sileo reported that Carl Ford and Joe Rhyner's names have been forwarded to the mayor for approval as member and alternate, respectively, to the Environmental Commission. Miriam agreed to send the approved minutes of each meeting to LeAnn Dehart in the Administrator's office.

### **Old Business**

ERI Sub-committee Report: Ed reported that the committee met to discuss the contents of the upcoming ERI. Dave Keller stated that he intends to review the content of the RFP to see if there are any modifications necessary. Ed spoke with Don Evans (Deptford EC) and Mark Camp (Paulsboro EC) and asked about the time frame involved with an ERI. Additionally, Ed spoke with Suzanne McCarthy, who was instrumental in creating the template for the DVRPC ERI model. Dave Sileo asked about the community forestry plan, and Dave Keller responded that information from our new ERI will be helpful in developing a forestry plan in West Deptford.

Sam reported that budgeting for the ERI and an updated Master Plan are in the process. Miriam reported that, according to the news gleaned from a recent ANJEC workshop, the process should be ERI first, then Master Plan (based on content of ERI). Dave Keller asked if the work could be done in phases. Phase 1, ERI; phase 2, Master Plan – perhaps by the same company. Ed pointed out that utilizing the same firm for both projects may not be in the best interest of the Township.

Also, Ed asked Sam if the commission could have a small operating budget from the Township. Sam suggested that we come up with a figure.

Geiger Property: Ed reported in detail that the meeting of the SJLWT rep (Christine Nolan), Township reps (Sam Cianfarini and Brandon Umba (Jeff Hanson, absent)), the township attorney, and Environmental Commission members (Dave Sileo, Ed Komczyk and Miriam Reichenbach) discussed the pros and cons of accepting a piece of property being offered by the Geiger family. Currently, the U.S. Humane Society oversees the property, and inspects the property once a year. The owners pay about \$800 in taxes to WD each year.

Due to current deed restrictions, the property is not open to the public. Ed and Christine will investigate the possibilities of easing the deed restrictions. In the meantime, Linda winter of the Humane Society, is planning an inspection walk this spring. Commission members are invited to go along.

Ed informed the group that the Westwood Golf Course may be available for preservation. This is an item for future consideration. Another reason to have a current ERI and Master Plan in place. Dave K suggested that the old Poly Res grounds might be available for parking use. At the moment, Poly Res still owns the property, which may be toxic. Ernest asked about Township responsibility for clean-up if dumping takes place on the property. Sam responded that the Township would be responsible for clean-up if WD owned the land.

Ernest expressed a concern that the current ERI proposals don't appear to have a "feet-on-the-ground" component; all information will be data mined. Ed explained that some of the work would most likely involve walking various tracts. He also reminded the group that the DRVPC proposal was a package with a big discount, and would seek expertise from local residents.

Sam asked about the possibilities of using the Geiger property as an exchange for "Green Acres" areas. This is not likely because of the deed restrictions that keep the lands closed to the public. Bob remarked that it would be helpful if we could get the owners to loosen the deed restrictions.

Adopt a Park: no report. Still waiting to hear from the Mayor.

Open Seats on Commission: Dave Sileo reported that Carl Ford's name has been given to the mayor and he believes Carl will be approved at the Township meeting on 20 March. Joe Rhyner is interested in serving as an alternate, as is Rich Geiger.

Solvay Updates: There was extensive discussion about the Township FAQ and who had input and how it got there. Following lengthy discussion Dave S said he would form a sub-committee to come up with a response that reflects the

beliefs of this group. There were questions about timeliness, conflicting opinions and the impression we might be making in the public by not all being on the same page. Ed asked if we could avoid some of these problems if we had representation at meetings between Solvay and the Township. Sam pointed out that there is a danger in disseminating information that is incorrect. After more detailed discussion, Dave S. said that he is in conversation with the mayor and he believes things are smoothing out. Sam explained that, in the future, he won't respond to environmental concerns from the twp. until he has a consensus response from the commission. Ernie informed us that that there is no science that indicates that PFCs or PFNAs are harmful. He reminded us that the DDT materials reported to the public by Rachel Carson were "flawed science". It is Dave K's opinion that we should rely on the judgment of the experts regarding PFCs and PFNAs.

Sam told the commission that he reached out to John Burzichelli of Paulsboro to talk about carbon filters on the wells, an interconnect with the two town's water systems and legislation to make water safer for public consumption.

Funding Grants: There is a \$1500 available through ANJEC to fund seedings and wild flowers at storm water basins or signage, trails at Strawberry Vale. The grant money won't be available on time for Earth Day Projects. Ernest moved and Bob seconded a motion to submit the grant application and use the money for storm water basin plantings.

Earth Day: We will do Earth Day projects on Saturday, 26 April. Dave K. will have students walk/clean up Strawberry Vale while he assists and provides education about the plants and wildlife species in the area. Dave would like to talk with the builder of the development at Jessup and Paradise Roads about planting the retention pond on that property. Joe Rhyner reminded the group to be aware of the site plans for the basin to determine what can be done. Miriam expressed an interest in another river bank clean up, perhaps with the help of local students and/or scout groups. Perhaps Wheelabrator would be interested in assisting in this project.

Local Ordinances: The first reading forbidding smoking/e cigarettes in front of public buildings took place. There will be a second reading before the ordinance is enacted.

Public Comment: Gina Carola thanked the commission for the Solvay update and she presented some ideas for utilizing the expected \$1500 grant. Perhaps we could use some of the money for additional bike racks around town, add rain gardens, change out the bulbs used in exit signs, etc. Carl Ford informed us about a Pinelands course he attended at which they were developing standards for mowing along highways. Additionally, there was information about meadow lands and existing standards. On Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> there is a class offered at Rutgers regarding open space. Sam requested that we consider moving the public comment to an earlier spot on the agenda. There was more discussion about mowing along highways and in open space areas. Joe Rhyner told us the Air Force has a 7" – 14" rule that gives coverage to birds and small mammals but not to animals as large as deer. Ed moved and Ernest seconded a motion to close public comment.

## **New Business**

Long-range Library Planning Meeting: Ed attended the meeting at the library with many other interested community members. There were attendees representing schools, churches, arts groups, the financial community, retirees, and many more. This once-every-five-years meeting looks at what the community wants and needs and how the library can be involved in attaining those goals. Library Director Marie Downes will share the final report at a later date.

ANJEC Workshop: Miriam reported that she and Ed attended a workshop regarding effective ERIs and the duties and responsibilities of an Environmental Commission. One item stressed at the workshop was the need for Commission members to examine all site plans submitted to the Planning Board. We need to examine our current protocol at the next meeting.

Ed told the group about the SJLWT annual dinner and silent art auction. At each year's dinner some person or group involved with environmental protection is honored; some past honorees are Wheelabrator and The Delaware Riverkeepers. SJLWT has been involved with saving Maple Ridge, the rain garden at our library, preserving the Urban Farm site and much more. All members of the Environmental Commission are urged to become members of the SJLWT and take advantage of the nature walks, plant identification, stream water analysis, etc. offered by the experts in SJLWT. Ed is leaving the SJLWT Board after many years and was presented with a photograph by Michael Hogan of a red-bellied woodpecker for his service.

Chairperson Report: no report

Vice-Chair Report: Dave K told us that we need a plan for Strawberry Vale. The document should outline the history of the property as well as a long range management plan for the future. Dave believes we should work with the Parks and Recreation departments to create a conceptualization for using this land. Dave K, Dave S. and Bob walked the property and they see a potential for trails and signage to encourage the public to utilize the property. Bob said that there is considerable dumping taking place – primarily yard waste, tree limbs, etc. Some homes whose yards back onto the Vale

are extending their back yards into the property. The walkers located vernal ponds and wildlife on their trek and noted that there are many areas of the Vale from which you cannot see a house in any direction. Ed pointed to Wenonah which is a one square mile town with 10 miles of trails! Dave K would like to look into Greenways – trails to connect one part of the township to another – as an idea for the future. Bob asked us to look at the web site hosted by the Wenonah EC. Sam suggested we ask reps from Wenonah EC to visit our commission or, alternatively, for some of us to visit Wenonah's commission. Dave K told us we need a forestry plan in order to be eligible for grants from the NJDEP forestry program. Dave will ask someone from that program to speak to our group.

For the Good of the Order: Ed asked the ERI sub-committee members to read page 20 of the EC Handbook which outlines what should be contained in an ERI. Dave K. responded that members had read this and that the information was there. Ed also pointed out that at the SJLWT dinner there were several comments from guests/attendees about the lack of meaningful communication between the Environmental Commission and the Township Committee. Joe Rhyner remarked that we need support from the township to accomplish anything meaningful.

**Meeting Adjourned** at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Miriam Reichenbach, secretary