

West Deptford Environmental Commission
Minutes
21 July 2014

Present: Dave Sileo, Ed Komczyk, Carl Ford, Bob Waller, Ernie Kraus, Miriam Reichenbach, and John Keuler.

Public: Gina Carolla

Absent: Dave Keller

Guest: Matt Moore

Call to Order: Dave Sileo called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve minutes by Carl Ford, seconded by Dave Sileo. There was a question from Carl Ford regarding a mow vs do not mow list in the township. The corrected June minutes will reflect this issue. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report: no report.

Public Comment: no comment.

Old Business:

ERI Update: John stated that a township budget was adopted and that there is \$6,000 available to the environmental commission. Ed asked what our next step should be. Dave asked if we could use all the money for the ERI. Ed suggested we move forward with a two year program to obtain an ERI. We should pursue companies/organizations to give us quotes. We need to contact Brandon Umba and Jeff Totten for advice on the next step. Matt Moore asked what we were looking to accomplish. Ed explained that a variety of outfits are available to complete the ERI study. Matt said that many companies in the area do this kind of work – i.e. Marathon Environmental in Swedesboro (Matt's wife works there). Ed stated that he, Dave Keller and Ernie need to create a list of requirements for the ERI, then turn it over to the township for the next step.

Adopt-a-Park: no report.

Do Not Mow Areas: Carl reminded us that the township is mowing areas which might be mowed less frequently in order to create a meadow environment that would be good for both plants and animals. Perhaps mow these areas just once a year to control saplings and shrubs. When looking at Strawberry Vale – Matt says safety and aesthetics are at issue. The township wants to cut more back close to the highway and the turnpike. Dave asked if there could be gradient mowing. Matt responded that mowing up to the trees and then stopping might be a possibility. Carl asked about the possibility of not mowing along Riverwinds Drive. Matt explained that there is considerable pressure from local residents to keep the area neat and clean. Also, there are areas that look like they are growing wild, but they are actually too wet to cut. The local residents want their surrounding environment to look like their lawns. Bob suggested that, from the beginning stages, it is essential that work plans be done through the planning board. Dave reminded us that we need to find places to start a project and train youngsters and their families the value of wild areas. Perhaps disseminate information at West Deptford Day as a starting point.

Funding Grants: Dave told us that the sustainable NJ application will be on the twp. agenda on 7 August. Everything is quiet on other grant fronts. The ANJEC site is good and has loads of pertinent information. Ernie asked about donations to the environmental commission. He is going to work through Michelle Hack to get a spreadsheet from Brandon to account for all our finances. Carl mentioned a site called "grant station" which offers a wealth of information and opportunities.

Local Ordinances: no report.

ANJEC has an updated list of commission members. Ed asked if we have a meeting set to learn to read site plans for our best purposes. Dave said nothing has been set yet.

New Business:

Chairperson's Report: report from the planning/zoning committee. Johnson Matthey will build storage tanks and eliminate the 55 gallon drums currently in use. JM explosion resulted in one person being injured and decontaminated on site.

Bob, who is our liaison to the planning board, said things are quite slow at the moment. However, there are items pending for the future. Carl asked about what contaminants will be present due to recycling anti-freeze. No answer yet.

West Deptford Day: 9/6/14 -- the first Saturday in September. We will have a booth and info to pass out. Ed suggested we have SJLWT join us in our booth. Bob offered that he could create a little mock-up of a rain garden (use donated materials) that any homeowner could recreate. Ed will contact SJLWT. Dave suggested we introduce the decorated rain barrel concept at WD Day. Use would cut down on drainage. Gina stated that she has two which cost about \$30. She also reminded us that Rutgers has a program worth looking into. Additionally, someone from the Watershed Ambassadors might be able to help with a program that has kid appeal. Carl told us that we probably can't do the rain barrel project this September – time constraints. Miriam suggested we provide a give-away to the kids -- perhaps wildflower seeds or bird seed? Dave said we ought to look for donations from “green” companies. Bob will get bird seed. Miriam will get gauze or cheesecloth to make little packets. Additionally, she will create tags for the seed packs stating the content, use and purpose. To whom should the kids send their pictures, if they are lucky enough to get any?

Vice-chair's Report: no report.

Financial Report: no report now. Ernie will deal through Brandon and Jeff Totten as needed.

Ed asked about our group becoming involved in the move to get NJ back in RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative). The commission could: ask the township to pass a resolution; send a letter of support to the organization; send individual letters of support; write letters to the editors of local newspapers expressing support. Ed made a motion to send a letter supporting RGGI's efforts. Share the letter with the commission for input. Carl seconded the motion. Ernie asked if pollution produced by power plants really an issue? The cost of electricity is going up. Carl explained that the cost is rising because we live in a non-participating state. Dave said he is uncomfortable with the idea. This is a political issue, not an environmental issue. Write individual letters to papers if we so choose. After extensive discussion on the subject there was a vote on motion: ayes – carl and miriam; nays – Dave, Ernie and bob; abstentions – ed. Bob: question of Brandon – after the planning board approves the planting of trees, shrubs, etc. who does the walk through to see if items are actually in place? Brandon responded that it is the job of someone from code enforcement. Bob requested that we get Joe, from the planning board, to attend one of our meetings. Dave suggested we do some “flash” clean-ups in the fall. In addition, he said that the annual (2013) report to the mayor was sent.

For the Good of the Order: ed shared information regarding the testing of local wells and the groundwater reports from Solvay. Our deep (150 plus feet) well has clean levels; the original (4-5 feet) well has much higher levels of pollutants. Stan Carpenter of Colonial Pipeline, and the environmental officer for the entire mid-Atlantic region, looked back at company records and found no spills to explain the contaminants. He explained that these pollutants are airborne and that would explain the shallow well contamination. The clay level here protects the deep well water. Ernie asked Ed to walk him through the results, which Ed did. Bob asked if the creeks in the area have been tested. Ed explained that they are tidal, so testing the river may be sufficient. Solvay told us (Ed and Miriam) that our secondary well, the shallow one, is unsafe.

Public Comment: Gina told us that the newspaper reported that four wells are contaminated. Solvay is providing drinking water to homes with contaminated wells. John reported that the township is working with the D.E.P. to solve the problem. Gina asked what the recycling plant intends to do with the anti-freeze. Both John and Dave responded that the material will be rendered non-toxic and then shipped out of town.

Adjourn: Ed moved and Bob seconded a motion to adjourn at 8:50 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Miriam Reichenbach, secretary