Environmental Commission

January 9, 2025 7:30pm – at Boro Hall and via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Paul Yarin called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm with the Open Public Meetings Act announcement.

2. Attendance

Present: Paul Yarin, Shelagh McCaffrey, Krishna Rege, Conway Wong, Councilman Cho
Absent: Rachel Suter.

3. Approval of Minutes (December 12, 2024) Ms. Rege had a correction. Ms. Rege moved to approve as amended, second Ms. McCaffrey. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments The meeting was opened to the public. Discussion about working toward Silver Level of Sustainable Jersey.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

Budget update—the budget has been submitted at the same level as last year.

Mr. Yarin gave updates on seminars he attended. One was on electrifying homes. He encouraged others to join him in trainings. Another meeting was on rooftop solar. He and Ms. Rege attended a meeting about redesigning the portion of the Interstate Palisades Park being returned by the Boy Scouts to the State of New Jersey. There were participants from several towns.

Ms. Rege gave an update on Buzzoni. Also, people are reaching out with interest in creating at-home pollinator gardens.

6. Unfinished Business

Composting update Ms. McCaffrey shared that 12 of 14 of the original composters were sold. Selling has been paused until more have been purchased (to ensure that there is sufficient inventory). It would be good to have more before the spring cleanup. There is no net cost to the Commission or Town. Rain barrels are also available. Demarest is starting neighborhood compost and is having a meeting on January 22. Discussion of the need to follow up with people who

purchased the composters. Maybe a zoom call would be good. Perhaps have a demo bin at MacBain,

Community Energy Planning Grant update—tabled until next meeting. Mr. Yarin spoke about the benefits of a home energy audit.

Website and social media update

7. New Business

Mr. Yarin created a document of the accomplishments of 2024 and will share it with the Mayor and Council. He congratulated and thanked the members for all of their work.

Goals and ideas for 2025. Group brainstorming included the following:

Work on open space preservation, including community education
Agricultural education
Farmers market
Bees
Increase locally grown foods
De-carbonize/increase renewable energy
Increase influence on other groups
Increase green construction/green certification
Reach Silver Certification of Sustainable Jersey/be environmental leaders

Discussion about motivations/rewards, resources, constraints

Resources include open space, farmland, water, forests, capable and motivated citizens, contacts at the Closter Nature Center, Audubon Society, beekeeper.

Discussion about adding members to the Commission. The Commission is limited to a certain number. The only open space at the moment is the Planning Board spot. There is also a Green Team, which could be revitalized.

Members are asked to make a list of Sustainable Jersey actions for discussion at the next meeting.

8. Plan Review and Comment Mr. Wong made site visits to the following addresses and took photos, which were shared.

a. 61 Sherman Ave. The trees in the backyard are being removed. Water runoff from the higher property behind is a concern.

b. 80 Taylor Drive There is a large tree on the property that does not appear on the plan. Mr. Wong brought this to the attention of the Planning Board and Building Department.

c. 120 Hickory Lane

Mr. Yarin suggested organizing a monthly call with the Shade Tree Committee. Mr. Wong suggested making regular recommendations to the Planning Board. Discussion of how to work with builders on green building.

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body
b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

10. Adjournment