Environmental Commission

December 12, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Called to order at 7:33 with the Pledge of Allegiance and the Open Public Meetings announcement.

2. Attendance

Paul Yarin-present	Council Liaison Cho-present
Krishna Rege-present	Conway Wong-present
Rachel Suter-absent	Shelagh McCaffrey-present

Also present: Yeony Hong (NVD student), Flynne Wiley (resident, 322 Harrington)

3. Approval of Minutes (November 14, 2024) Mr. Wong moved to approve, second Ms. Rege. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments
Flynne Wiley of 322 Harrington explained her interest in food scraps and environmental conservation. She said that the website looks wonderful. She learned about the Commission from Todd Bradbury and then Shelagh McCaffrey.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update- the same budget the Environmental Commission requested in 2024 has been requested for 2025.

Mr. Yarin has been attending classes offered by the Sierra Club concerning energy. A session on rooftop solar will be offered soon.

The Palisades Interstate Commission will host a meeting about the future of the Scout Camp.

Sustainable Jersey is offering webinars concerning community energy planning.

6. Unfinished Business

a. NJLM update Councilman Cho shared information about the New Jersey League of Municipalities Convention. He attended 5 or 6 courses on the

environment; many of the classes discussed federal tax credits towns can receive, as well as challenges that municipalities are facing.

b. Composting update – BCUA event—was a comprehensive and clear discussion of commercial and school composting. There is a website about composting for newcomers. Topics were food audits and waste, compost collection, quality control, and regulations that make small composting difficult. Ridgewood has a well-run, mature program. Flynne shared that the food waste at schools is about 50%. Neighborhood composting would need a minimum of 22 participants in order to have a pickup. Ms. McCaffrey shared that the Demarest Environmental Commission is interested in launching neighborhood composting. Perhaps Closter and Demarest could work together. Mr. Yarin encouraged people to keep date records to support future arguments. He also asked people who have connections to school personnel try to find ways the EC could talk to students. Flynne shared that there are credits schools can earn through food audits and food rescue. She offered to work on that if it's wanted. She asked about a survey. Ms. McCaffrey spoke about the way that information has been collected so far. Ms. Rege asked whether produce grown at school gardening programs could be included in the composting program. Mr. Yarin spoke about the town's leaf composting and the hybridizing of composting at home. Mr. Yarin also shared that Closter's new tipping fee is $95 per ton for mixed waste; this high cost means makes composting more competitive.

c. Grants update – Community Energy Planning Grant meetings
Automobile emissions are a big factor in the quest for decarbonization. Once the contract is signed with BPU a consultant can be hired to help with the process of assessing the Borough's current energy situation in an effort to improve it in the future. Mr. Yarin shared a survey that was created for a New Jersey town similar to Closter. He asked for help in connecting with all local leaders.

d. Alpine Scout Camp update

e. Website and social media update

7. New Business

a. EC meetings for 2025 – vote on virtual vs. in-person meetings. Discussion. Hybrid meetings should also be possible. The group members felt that in-person meetings were more effective and preferable; they liked the idea of a hybrid possibility for instances of travel or illness.

8. Plan Review and Comment The Environmental Commission does not currently have a Planning Board liaison. Mr. Wong shared photos he has taken of properties before the Board.

a. 44 Halsey Lane-seems to be planned for a knockdown. The grade does not seem too steep. Some trees will be removed.

Flynn asked what the Environmental Commission's role is in terms of the Planning Board. Mr. Yarin spoke about the EC's advisory role. Discussion. Mr. Yarin spoke about the need to intervene to help solve climate change and the differences between the environmentalism of the 1970s and that of today. He also spoke a bit about pushing for more green and sustainable building.

b. 18 Williams St. Two houses are currently on one lot. If they are both knocked down, the current law would prohibit building two new houses. Two two-family houses are planned. Councilman Cho stated that the application before the Zoning Board was approved.

Ms. McCaffrey wondered about the possibility of giving incentives to builders for using more sustainable methods. Perhaps a discussion with a group of developers would be helpful.

At the next meeting, a date for the Spring Cleanup can be chosen.

Commission meetings will remain the second Thursday of the month.

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body The Mayor and Council is discussing changing street lighting. A company gave a presentation, but it is based in California. Also, the Council is looking cautiously to make sure there is money saving. He has spoken with Councilwoman Latner and Chung; they suggested that the Environmental Commission make a very short presentation to the school boards. This first presentation could lead to a longer presentation.

Discussion about light pollution and light fixtures that can help to some extent. Timers can also make a big difference.

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

10. Adjournment Ms. McCaffrey moved to adjourn, second Councilman Cho. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm