

Environmental Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

Meeting Date/Time: January 23, 2007 at 7:30 pm

Meeting Location: Hutchinson Educational Center, Historical Society

Attendees: Roger Cook (Chair), Susan Bottino, Paul Byrne, Gary Grubb, Barbara Jones, David Zaiser

Absent: Ann Fischbach, Ryan Rosenberg, Chris Toelg, Kristin Waller, Chayna Wilson

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm by Chairman Roger Cook.

A unanimous vote elected Barbara Jones as Vice-Chairman and Susan Bottino as Secretary for 2007.

David Zaiser moved to approve the agenda and Gary Grubb seconded. Agenda approved.

The Chairman announced that the meeting had been publicized and was in conformance with the Open Meetings Act, having the date and time advertised in the Borough's newspapers of record.

Jones moved that the minutes of the December 26, 2006 and January 4, 2007 meetings be approved and Zaiser seconded. Minutes approved.

Discussion Summary

Old Business

October 24, 2006 minutes – Some members did not receive electronic copies of these minutes. The Chairman distributed hard copies.

Pesticide-Free Zones – The EC's recommendation has not yet been forwarded to the Borough Council. It was previously voted that the resolution include the four parks and the Greenway. However, the Chairman has some concerns about including the Greenway as there can be incursions of weeds on the gravel path and he believes Round-up may need to be sprayed to combat this weed growth. **Jones suggested that maybe a local group of boy scouts could be tapped to weed problem areas instead of using herbicide. She will contact Harold Mulleavey to see if his troop or others might be interested in doing this as part of their community service. Bottino offered to check to see what other towns that have implemented PFZs have done in similar situations and report back to the EC at the March meeting.**

Re-review of Mercer Street Revitalization Plans – Zaiser presented a letter from the Borough Engineer which listed several issues. He pointed out that the plans call for the removal of eight trees with only six new trees to replace them. The borough ordinance requires a 1:1 replacement. The engineer wrote that tree grates will be used at the Rogers and Mercer Streets intersection due to the pavement. A question was posed regarding who is responsible for clean-up if tree sites are found to be contaminated, in particular the

NJDEP monitoring sites on Mercer Street? This could be avoided by planting trees in a container or box. The engineer said that the parking lot for the diner cannot be used for tree planting near the curb but this is believed to be borough property so why not? The engineer also wrote that there could be another tree site on Mercer Street (which is part of the total number of six new trees). **Zaiser will contact the engineer to discuss the EC's comments and concerns.**

Solar Power Initiative – Nothing new to report. Public Works is working on plans.

SBMWA – Nothing new to report. Acceptance information sent to SBMWA. Work has not started yet.

Litter on Trash and Recycling Days – Chairman Cook wrote a draft article for the *Hightstown Crier*. Members suggested adding information about paper litter as well as plastics and glass. **Chairman Cook will revise the draft and submit it to the Borough Clerk.**

'07 Budget – Temporary so far. Nothing new to report.

Street Shade Tree Committee – Money for the trees has been encumbered and the trees have been ordered. Growing Concern Inc. of Cranbury was chosen as the lowest-bid supplier of the trees at \$445/tree.

Downtown Tree Planting – Larry Blake will determine placement of trees as Public Works will be removing some sidewalk for the trees. Zaiser said Hightstown has the permits needed with some latitude regarding exact location.

Oak Lane Trees – Funds of \$2,400 now available. **Zaiser will send letter to residents to see who wants a tree.** Possibly five trees can be placed anywhere on Oak with this amount of funding.

Shade Tree Officials Report – Zaiser met with Nelson Tree Service, a vendor of JCP&L, and was told that only small areas of town would be subject to tree-trimming. Also, only primary upper lines would be considered by the Tree Service, not distribution or secondary. Streets where work may occur include Maxwell, Ward, South Main, Taylor, South and Prospect. JCP&L offered to remove any trees we wanted taken down on those streets but Zaiser checked and no removals are necessary.

Street Tree Management – **Zaiser is working on this.**

Street Tree Maintenance - No maintenance was performed in December.

Greenway Project – Chairman Cook stated that Gary Rosenweig, an attorney working for the borough, has sent a letter to the Turcos and will be talking to them about the easement. Also, the engineer has received the EC's request for more signs and will try to get them. The Railroad Avenue section has been rebuilt by Princeton Pool and Public

Works has removed some brush. The Greenway area near the Enchantment was discussed. Byrne wondered who would take care of large limbs dropping in the wooded area. Chairman Cook responded that the association is responsible for the boardwalk area.

Omni Report – Jones is going to make one last attempt to find out if Harold Mulleavey is able to procure this report. Otherwise, this item will be dropped from the agenda. Grubb asked if the SBWMA Watershed report could be used instead of the Omni report. **Grubb is looking for grants for this and will stay on top of this issue.** He received a letter from SBMWA dated 1-18-2007 which explained several potential projects for the Hightstown area, including the StormWatch Program, the River-Friendly Resident Program, and restoration projects. **In this letter, SBWMA has asked that the EC list and prioritize any potential restoration projects for the Hightstown area so that they can include them if they do a revision of the *Characterization and Assessment of Rocky Brook Watershed* report.**

Parks and Recreation – Byrne said that since there hasn't been any ice yet, there hasn't been any skating on the lake. He also explained that a local group is looking for more active areas in the local parks, possibly at the Bank Street park. Right now, most of the parks are passive without a lot of playgrounds, basketball courts, etc. **Byrne will invite the leaders of the local youth basketball group to come and participate in a Parks and Recreation meeting.**

Clean & Green Team – Nothing new to report.

High School Landscaping Plan – Nothing new to report.

Jeff Bond's Mercer Street Property Plan – EC still does not have these plans. **Byrne will follow up with Planning Board Secretary.**

JM Sorge Inc. Inquiry – EC was asked again about any concerns for the property at 397-413 Mercer Street (Michael's Plaza). **Chairman Cook will reiterate the concerns/suggestions we already discussed at a prior EC meeting.**

New Business

NJDEP Grants – **Chairman Cook believes we should apply for a grant for Greenways maintenance.** He may want some assistance with this.

2007 EC Goals – Jones suggested that large, task-able goals be assigned to particular individuals and those individuals should devise benchmarks with due dates. The goals (here abbreviated) were divided as follows for now, although assignments can change:

1. Street Trees, Municipal Maintenance Plan and Survey – Zaiser
2. Greenway Development – Chairman Cook
3. Brochure of Greenway – Byrne, Rosenberg
4. Greenway Maintenance Grant – Jones, Chairman Cook

5. Lake and Stream Pollution – Grubb
6. Noise Ordinance – Bottino, Grubb
7. Site Plan Review Coordination – Byrne
8. Clean and Green – Rosenberg, Waller
9. Community Awareness – Jones

Members listed are asked to develop phased goals and deadlines and bring these to the next meeting. Members not listed who want to participate are encouraged to get involved.

New Items

Jones discussed ordering buttons promoting the environment for distribution at community events and on environmental holidays. A discussion of the budget for buttons ensued. **Jones will bring information on the buttons to the February EC meeting and members will decide what to order.**

EWEC minutes - Chairman Cook distributed copies of the 11/15 and 12/20 meeting minutes.

Bottino asked about the resolution passed by the Planning Board in January regarding the proposed subdivision of the property on South Main. Byrne said this was just to formalize what had already been decided.

Zaiser will write a letter to a Sunset Avenue homeowner to answer tree questions.

Jones suggested that new EC members be given some information on what is expected of an EC member. **Chairman Cook will inquire from ANJEC as to getting new commissioner books. Zaiser will download the ordinance that describes the role and duties of the EC.**

The new trees will be planted in April or May and locations will need to be picked. **Grubb will speak to a resident on Summit Street who has a tree very near the curb that is a candidate for removal because a large branch is hanging over the street.** Zaiser concurred with this decision.

Chairman Cook will continue to work on getting e-mail addresses for new EC members.

Next Meeting – February 27, 2007 at the Historical Society. Chairman Cook will be away.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan J. Bottino