

Environmental Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

Meeting Date/Time: March 27, 2007 at 7:30 pm

Meeting Location: Hutchinson Educational Center, Historical Society

Attendees: Roger Cook (Chair), Susan Bottino, Paul Byrne, Ann Fischbach, Gary Grubb, Ryan Rosenberg, Chris Toelg, Yan Troizier, David Zaiser

Absent: Barbara Jones, Kristin Waller, Chayna Wilson

Public: Jeff Bond

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

David Zaiser moved to approve the agenda and Yan Troizier seconded. Agenda approved.

Chairman Cook 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.

Ann Fischbach moved that the minutes of the February 27, 2007 meeting be approved and Troizier seconded. Minutes approved.

Discussion Summary

Old Business

Pesticide-Free Zones – Discussion continued over the designation of certain areas of Hightstown as “pesticide-free zones.” The EC has agreed that the four town parks should be included. At issue is whether the greenway could be maintained without the use of herbicides to kill weeds. Fischbach stated that 7th and 8th graders participating in community service at St. Anthony's are a resource that could be tapped to help with weeding along the greenway. Susan Bottino presented a number of herbicide alternatives including hand-weeding, weed-whacking and mowing over the greenway, all of which are being used in the Burlington County Parks and trails. She pointed out that the Burlington trails run along the Rancocas River, just as sections of the Hightstown greenway run along the lake and stream. She also suggested vinegar or soap-based (fatty acid) weed killers or flaming, a process whereby a propane-fueled weed flamer steams plants; the plants collapse and dry out in a few days. These were all suggestions from NJ Environmental Federation. Several members of the EC and the public member present stated their beliefs that the use of Round-up is necessary and not dangerous to curtail weed incursion and maintain the greenway.

In the end, a motion was put on the table by Troizier and seconded by Fischbach to finalize a resolution denoting the four parks as pesticide-free zones and a section of the greenway as pesticide-free. Keeping a section pesticide-free will allow testing of environmentally-friendly products and methods so that the effectiveness of these measures can be compared to areas of the greenway treated with herbicides. It was

suggested that this pilot section be at an area that is very visible near a park (Dawes Park suggested) so the public can view it and participate in its maintenance. It was also suggested that a small subcommittee be created to address implementation of greenway maintenance in both the pesticide-free and the remaining sections of the greenway. **Chairman Cook will create this committee.** The motion was approved unanimously. **Chairman Cook will submit the resolution to the borough council with these recommendations stated.**

Buttons – Concern was raised about the political leanings of the organization that we are considering ordering buttons with environmental logos from. Ryan Rosenberg's offer of designing a button and having it produced locally was discussed. His button proposal would cost between \$0.72 (one color) to \$0.92 for each button. **Since Barbara Jones was absent from the meeting, it was decided to table discussion of what option to pursue and perhaps suggest that she re-survey the group via e-mail to see what they prefer.** This will in all likelihood mean that buttons are not available for Earth Day but would be available for the Hightstown Fair in the fall.

Re-review of Mercer Street Revitalization Plans – Zaiser met with the borough engineer several weeks ago. She has decided that nothing will be planted between South Academy and Mercer Streets due to fear of contamination in that area. Carmela agreed that the number of planting will meet the redevelopment plan and two trees were added to the plans. The strip of land in front of the diner on Mercer Street is not available for plantings because the owner has made an area of West Ward Street available instead. There will be an annual bed at the point formed by these two streets with an irrigation system. There will be a knee-wall installed near the autobody shop on Mercer Street. The project application has been received by Trenton and some modifications to the lighting element of the plan have been made.

Jeff Bond's Mercer Street Property Plan – Jeff Bond explained the schematics depicting the development he is working on on Mercer Street. He said it will be restricted use, low-volume retail. He hopes to have it completed by August. He explained that there will be maples, black pine and azaleas planted.

Solar Power Initiative – Plans are being held up in Trenton awaiting final approval. **The EC hopes to get to review and comment on the plans for the locations of the panels.** **Chairman Cook will speak to Larry Blake of Public Works about this.**

'07 Budget – Chairman Cook has submitted a temporary budget to the borough council. It has the same allotment as last year for tree purchasing.

Transplantation of Elm – Zaiser and Gary Grubb have suggested to Larry Blake an alternate location at Association Park for the Elm tree blocking a downtown sign.

Oak Lane Trees – Zaiser has received two requests for trees in response to the letters he sent out. **He will pick the additional locations.**

Shade Tree Matters:

Downtown Tree Planting – Five sites are needed for tree planting downtown. Larry Blake will open sidewalks for plantings. **Zaiser will meet with Larry to finalize the plan and make mark-outs.** Troizier has sent a list of previous tree plantings to the borough council as requested.

Comprehensive Tree Plan Status – no change in status. **Zaiser is working on this. He has all comments from the state on the previous plan. He is working on edits and will resubmit.**

Omni Report –Fischbach has been working on getting a copy of this. Grubb will ask SBMWA contact about it.

Greenway Project – There will be a meeting with the Turcos on Friday, April 6, to discuss the easement. **Chairman Cook will update EC with developments.**

Parks and Recreation – A skateboard park near Lucas Electric has been proposed. Sandy Bontempo has resigned. **Paul Byrne suggested a short blurb on each park be written and maybe be part of a brochure on the greenway either on paper or online. He will look into whether any such blurbs exist.**

Clean & Green Team – Rosenberg is planning a spring litter clean-up for April 21. **He will advertise it in the newspaper and through an e-vite. Bottino and Fischbach will hang up signs advertising the clean-up. Rosenberg will contact Harold Mulleavey to see about scouts' involvement.**

High School Landscaping Plan – nothing new to report. **The EC will need to pick a new student member and Kristin Waller will be asked for a recommendation at the next meeting.**

2007 EC Goals – Update on phased goals and deadlines. (Members not listed who want to participate are encouraged to get involved.)

1. Street Trees, Municipal Maintenance Plan and Survey – Zaiser reiterated that he is working on a plan which needs to be approved by the state. Then the town can implement it.

2. Greenway Development – Chairman Cook reiterated that there is an upcoming meeting with the Turcos. If all goes well, then we can see about adding Peddie's plans.

3. Brochure of Greenway – Byrne, Rosenberg – Rosenberg brought a prototype of a brochure he is working on for the group to peruse. **It was a tri-fold brochure which will include a logo, tagline and photos. Zaiser offered background graphics and will get those to Rosenberg.** Rosenberg is planning to have the brochure ready for the October community day with drafts for review by the EC along the way. Byrne suggested that the brochure be put on the website as soon as feasible.

4. Greenway Maintenance Grant – Jones, Chairman Cook

5. Lake and Stream Pollution – Grubb has an upcoming meeting with SBMWA.

6. Noise Ordinance – Bottino, Grubb – **Bottino will ask the borough clerk to add the pdf of the borough noise ordinance as well as a link to the state noise ordinance website to the EC's web page.** Upon completion, this goal will be met.

7. Site Plan Review Coordination – Byrne explained that Leona Baylor of the clerk's office is the new secretary.

8. Clean and Green – Rosenberg, Waller – clean-up day already discussed

9. Community Awareness – Jones – buttons already discussed

New Items

Zaiser and Troizier will review a write-up that is in process which describing trees on Morrison, Outcalt and Stockton Streets as part of the historic district.

Grubb noted that there is a bad infestation of cloth moth at the Historical Society building and a plan is being worked out to eradicate the moths.

Bottino will contact the borough clerk about changing the location of the meetings to the Historical Society building on the borough website and adding Troizier's name to the list of EC members.

Next Meeting – April 24, 2007 at the Historical Society at 7:30.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan J. Bottino