

Millburn Township Environmental Commission

Wednesday, May 11, 2021 @ 7:00 pm
(virtual meeting via Zoom)

MINUTES

Members: Joe Barbanel, Edward Hilzenrath, Mark Hubertus (MHS), Reade Kem Jorge Mastropietro, Wendy Minocha, Priya Patel (chair), Odarka Stockert and Elizabeth Vollavanh

Township Committee Liaison: Tara Prupis
Secretary: Carolyn Scannelli

Call to Order: 7:01 pm

Commission Business:

- a. Open public meeting statement: *This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6-10: 4-21. Notice of this meeting has been published in the Item of Millburn and Short Hills, and on Tap as filed by the Environmental Commission and on bulletin board at Millburn Town Hall*
- b. Master Plan Environmental Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations:
 - i. Protect and manage critical environmental resources in the township.
 - ii. Improve the quality of life for residents.
 - iii. Minimize the environmental impact of the township on the environment.
- c. Acceptance of April 13, 2021 minutes - Jorge Mastropietro motion to accept, Elizabeth Vollavanh 2nd with all others in favor.
- d. Treasurer Report – Treasurer position open.

Public Comment: Mark Robison, a resident and landscape architect and Rene Paparian, co-chair, Millburn Green Team, spoke regarding the construction of the Whittingham Triangle pollinator garden. The proposed schematic was emailed to MEC members before the meeting to review. The plan consisted of plants, signage, a bench, and birdhouse with an estimated cost of \$910.50. The garden will be a northeast pathway for monarch butterflies and other pollinators. The garden will be low maintenance and will tolerate hot/dry conditions. The Garden Club of Millburn donated \$500.00. Looking for additional donations.

The garden will not only be educational for students but the community as well.

Wendy will contact the high school Green House Club and Scout Troop 215 to help with the planting.

Mark will contact the high school EC club members to help with planting. Mark will also check with advisor regarding planting left over pollinator plants at the high school rain garden.

Priya Patel motioned for the EC to donate \$410, which is the remaining balance of the pollinator garden cost and Joe Barbanel 2nd with all in favor.

Communication:

- a. Millburn Green Team liaison (position open) – No report.
- b. Millburn High School E-Club (MH) –
Earth Day contest consisted of entering a picture of doing an environmental activity, winner received a gift card for Millburn Deli.

Rain garden doing good, has some invasive onion plants. Hopefully, there are left over pollinator plantings to add to rain garden.

Aquafest group is creating a list of activities for the 5th grades.

Election for the new high school Environmental Club president is soon.

c. Millburn Township Green Schools Team (JM) – No report.

d. Pedestrian Safety Advisory Board (TP) – Last meeting was April 28. Mayor Prupis has not received the approved meeting minutes yet and will update MEC once she receives the minutes from that meeting.

e. Bike Walk Millburn (JM) – Bike week: 40 participants at Saturday's bike drive. Other events had a decent amount of showing.

f. Downtown Area Vision Plan (PP) – Taylor Park Gateway Subcommittee and DPW site Redevelopment Subcommittee continue to move along. Final vision plan is on Township webpage. Business Advocacy final hearing is June 1. Two-way traffic consultants will present plan to Township Committee on June 1. There is an FAQ for restaurants permitted use. Flex parking public input survey was inconclusive as there was no deciding factor. The matter is still in discussion.

Township Committee Report (TP) –

Memorial Day Parade will be held Saturday, May 29.

There will be July 4th fireworks, but no other events.

The Township Committee is forming a Development Review Committee for the Planning Board.

Odarka Stockert asked if there will be an Environmental Liaison on that committee, Mayor Prupis will pass that comment along.

Still negotiating affordable housing obligation numbers.

Planning Board report (JM) –

Jorge stated that there are no new applications for May 19 PB agenda.

Woodland/Chatham Development – It was recently brought to the attention of the EC that its proposed letter of concern, which was discussed at the March and April meetings, should have been submitted before the public hearing, which was around October 2020. Therefore, the proposed letter could not be submitted.

With that, there are questions as to when the proper time was/is to submit a letter of comments and concerns. This application was complicated from the beginning as it took the developer a while to complete the application, which made the process hard to follow. Odarka attended by Zoom the last Planning Board meeting, during which it was discussed that the Environmental Assessment Impact Statement document was not completed by the builder, as the builder felt it was unnecessary. Odarka also mentioned that Jorge did speak at the Planning Board meeting stressing the EC's concerns.

There continues to be environmental concerns that need to be discussed and addressed. Priya has received several references for bird collision experts from the Arboretum, who could be consulted in the design of the building. She asked how this information can be shared with the Planning Board and if the Planning Board has the ability to require the developer to use these experts. Jorge will check into a possible condition that would allow this.

Old Business

- ⇒ Stormwater Management/Green Infrastructure Ordinance (EV/JM/EH) – Update Ed and Liz are working together to revise the ordinance. The ordinance needs to be more stringent and needs improvement. Ed is drafting amendments to the ordinance. Liz has been exchanging emails with Martha Callahan, Township Engineer regarding the amendments and comments, and is seeking to enhance the ordinance by adding minor and redevelopment construction. Liz and Ed will be meeting with Martha to discuss the draft, and Martha will review. Liz and Ed are hoping to present draft version to the EC at the June meeting. When approved by the EC, the next step would be to present to the Township Committee. Priya suggested to Ed and Liz that they compile a list of other towns that have successfully revised their stormwater ordinance (to make it more rigorous).
- ⇒ Green Building Ordinance (EV/JM/EH) – Jorge spoke regarding a draft document that he is working on for Green Buildings which includes environmental planning and analysis for future short and

long-term goals that could be implemented over many years. Focus areas include green building, parking, drainage, electric vehicles, building incentives, green density bonus, construction and rehabbing etc. Jorge shared this document and is looking for input from the EC members.

⇒ Open Space Trust Fund (RK/OS) –

Liz provided the following information that she received from the director of the Community Garden, they are unsure if there is a deed restriction on the property and how much the property is worth. They still want to use the garden as they have classes there. This parcel is owned by the nursery school, which rents out garden plots to help with finances for the nursery school. The garden does not pay taxes.

Reade formulated a top 10 open space list: Community Garden and the vacated gas station are a few properties to consider. Reade will share the list by email, and will forward more as directed by the EC.

⇒ Gas Powered Leaf Blowers Ordinance (JB) – Joe continues his research into gas leaf blowers. It is hard to compile a creditable costs analysis. There are many factors, such as lawn equipment costs, labor shortage. Mean Green company sells electric/solar lawn equipment. To get a quote, you need to be a Landscape Contractor, although they are very expensive. Also need to have consideration for the smaller “mow & blow” contractors. He needs quotes of lawn equipment to understand the costs. Agza.net American Green Zone Alliance, is a lawn care association in which Joe is trying to obtain information from. Joe does not think he will have credible information by the end of summer.

Odarka stated that leaf blowers are not being used for what they were intended for, therefore there are health concerns of workers and residents. There should be a licensing requirement.

Priya stated that a resident approached the town and wants to donate some electric equipment so that the town can lead by example.

When additional information is obtained the next step would be to review and discuss current ordinance, make revisions, and present to the Township Committee.

Current ordinance time frame for using lawn equipment by commercial contractors is M-F 8a-7p, Saturday 9a-5p, no Sunday. No decimal limit in ordinance.

⇒ Food Waste Recycling Pilot (PP)

Diverted 6,500 pounds of organic food waste, which has been collected since February 1.

Program runs through the end of July. Plans to discuss with township regarding further options.

New Business

⇒ Whittingham Triangle Pollinator Garden (EV/OS) – Under Public Comment

⇒ Energy Efficiency/Carbon Footprint webinar series (WM) –

NJ Clean Energy for a community education webinar, with tips for homeowners with regard to homeowner efficiency, energy use, carbon footprint, garden for sustainability, health home air quality and toxins. Publication information to follow.

May 25, 90 minutes, Q&A 7 PM. *As per an email received on 5/18/21 from Wendy, date change due to scheduling conflict, pending new date of week of June 6th.

⇒ Community Choice Energy Aggregation (PP) –

Hunterdon Area Energy Cooperative will present to the Township Committee at the May 18 meeting. This is a JCP&L energy aggregation group whose pricing is more favorable. Hopefully, an ordinance will be introduced and passed to join cooperative. All residents are opted-in automatically, with an option to opt out and opt up to 100% renewable energy, which is at a slightly higher rate.

- Next MEC Meeting: Tuesday, June 8, 7:00 PM.
- No July meeting. August meeting pending.

Elizabeth Vollavanh motion to adjourn, Jorge Mastropietro 2nd with all in favor.

Adjourn 9:01

Carolyn Scannelli
Minutes Secretary