



SPARTA TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MARCH 9, 2023 MEETING
7:00 P.M. @ Town Hall

This meeting was called to Order @ 7:02 pm.

Chairwoman Kimberly Noel read the Open Public Notice.

In attendance: Chairwoman Kimberly Noel, Vice-Chair Neil Sauerwein, Ted Gall, Kristine Rogers, Christine Dunbar-Planning Board Liaison, and Councilman Dean Blumetti

Not in attendance: Robert Poles

Chairwoman Noel led the Meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

- January 12, 2023, Minutes: A review was made by the members of the second edited version of these minutes, which included recent edits from the prior meeting but still had some outstanding questions that needed to be reviewed again. Chairwoman Noel asked if Ms. Dunbar could provide more detail on the Rutgers course “Champion Training”. Ms. Dunbar advised that this was the green infrastructure champion training and the first session was free but that it started in January and ran for 10 weeks. Chairwoman Noel made a motion to table these minutes one more time as there are quite a bit of changes in order for everyone to have time to review, Ms. Dunbar seconded, and everyone was in favor.
- May 26, 2022, Minutes: Chairwoman Noel made a motion to withdraw and repeal the approval of these minutes that was made at the last meeting as there were some people not in attendance. Mr. Sauerwein seconded the Motion and all were in favor with those abstaining that were not at the last meeting. Chairwoman Noel then asked to make a new motion accepting the May 26, 2022 Minutes, where Mr. Sauerwein made the motion and Chairwoman seconded the motion and all were in favor with Mr. Blumetti abstaining.

Correspondence: Sussex County Open Space Committee Minutes from November 17th, 2022.

Councilman Blumetti mentioned that under new business in the minutes, it was discussed with a motion passing to enhance their Open Space Acquisition Applications by asking more questions around history of environmental conditions; i.e. contamination on the site; is the site subject to any remediation actions; has it been subject to any DEP enforcement actions or violations; and has it been subject to any EPA enforcement actions or violations. Mr. Blumetti found it was interesting and could be a model for other jurisdictions for ordinances going forward.

Ms. Dunbar asked if we have applied for a trail grant in the past. Mr. Sauerwein stated that he doesn't think this Commission ever had. Mr. Blumetti recalls that this came up in the Fall of 2022 for Towns to apply, but doesn't recall if Sparta was approached, but not sure if this Commission or the Township itself ever had applied.



Ms. Rogers added that it was her understanding that this is a newer program and they facilitated the process to get it up and running where this may be the first round of funding that they were going to be offering for this specific program.

Ms. Dunbar questioned about the deadline for submitting a request for funding and asked the Commission to think about whether or not there are any trails in Sparta that could use enhancing that we could submit an application. Councilman Blumetti mentioned the Sparta Glen Trails. Mr. Sauerwein added the walking trail discussed earlier around the Wallkill River. Chairwoman Noel advised that both are on the list that this Commission created earlier of potential grants to apply for this year and to pay attention to the next round of funding, picking which trail in Sparta to use.

Applications: 409 Woodport Road, #06-23. The Members reviewed the copy of the plans that was provided to them for review, discussing the application; the comments will be summarized by the Chairwoman and put into draft form for the Members to review prior to submission.

Public Comment: Chairwoman Noel opened the meeting up to the public. No comments were made by the public.

Reports:

Councilman Blumetti gave some highlights from the March 14th Council meeting. There was a lengthy discussion around the proposed salt shed and the required bond ordinance that was introduced. He reported that he requested that the Council be provided with more information as well as other size options prior to the March 28th Council meeting. A question had come up with regard to the recent train derailment disaster in the Midwest and Police Chief was asked to give an overview of our established policies and procedures for handling such instances at the next Council meeting.

Ms. Dunbar advised that she was not present at the last Planning Board and could not give a report but advised that the trainings for volunteers serving on the Board are still going on. She did state that she is a member of the minor site plan site review subcommittee and they have looked at up to nine (9) applications and explained how the process works; either the subcommittee approves the minor site plan or it moves on to a Board if they require a variance.

Unfinished Business:

Chairwoman Noel advised that ANJEC has confirmed that March 23rd, the date of this Commission's next meeting, a representative will give a presentation regarding the safeguarding of water. Chairwoman Noel will write a press release to notify the community as well as asked to use the Township's website and other forms of notification to the public.

Earth Day Fair: Chairwoman Noel and Ms. Rogers gave an update with regard to the Earth Day Fair scheduled for Saturday, April 22, 2023, naming potential and interested vendors, as well as those who declined as some are already scheduled for other Earth Day events. Discussion was also held with regard with reaching out to local scouts and schools being interested in serving as volunteers. As far as the Kiddie Corner, there is a list of 3 to 4 activities available as well as readings from the local Author, Sam Rush, who wrote the book "The World Slowed Down" as well as discussed the budget for those crafts.



Lori Krieger, resident of Sparta from the Public in attendance, advised that she is representing the Sussex County Bird Club and the Sparta Historical Society and had a couple of questions about what is involved with being a vendor at the Fair. Ms. Noel advised it will be here at the Municipal Building out on the lawn with the building being opened for restrooms and will be held from 11 am to 3 pm, tents and tables to be supplied by each vendor, different activities for the Exhibitors to share with the public, hoping to attract families with young children, as well as music and food vendors. Applications will be made available once approved by Administration, there is no fee to be an exhibitor, and a map of where each vendor will be assigned will be available prior to the event. Ms. Krieger asked if it were like Sparta Day, but Ms. Noel advised that it's a little different as it is not meant for vendors to sell stuff, just exhibit who they are and what they do, only the food vendors would sell product. The event is rain or shine but in the event of severe weather, it would likely be canceled.

Rail Trail Plan: Ms. Noel advised that several weeks ago there was a presentation on the Rail Trail Plan as part of the Sussex County Open Space Proposal. The Sussex County Open Space Committee is asking for this Commission's support for Sparta's portion of trails. Some Commission members were asked to go to those sections to see how it currently looks. Ms. Noel was able to walk about a mile of it from behind Vo-Tech school and Veteran's Memorial Park down towards Route 15, but you can't ride a bike or a horse as there were many trees lying across the trail, and also has quite a bit of invasive plants including Japanese barberry and oriental bittersweet vines. The trails can use maintenance as well as markings for the trail. Ms. Dunbar made the suggestion of also creating parking spaces for people to get to the trails. Chairwoman Noel made a motion to formally support this plan and to submit our support to the SC Open Space Committee, Ms. Dunbar seconded, all were in favor with Ms. Rogers abstaining.

Battery Recycling: Call2Recycle, the next steps are to reach out to them and pick a place to do the recycling which will be primarily for lithium batteries. Ms. Rogers added that Call2Recycle has options where you can collect single use, rechargeable and cellphone batteries in the same box and further mailed out altogether. As to the fire concern discussed at a prior meeting, if this Commission can get permission to put a non-flammable type container to collect them, it can be mailed in one container and shipped back to them. Ms. Noel advised that the permission would have to come from Administration as well as the any costs budgeted with the Township.

New Business:

Ms. Noel advised that one of our members, Richard Tomko, has resigned his position on the Environmental Commission so we do have an open position. There are applications that are being reviewed by the Council and the Mayor will appoint a person for the alternate position. Ms. Noel formally thanked Mr. Tomko for his service to the Commission.

Councilman Blumetti gave an update about the accident of a tanker truck that overturned on Glen Road. Chief McCarrick did advise that it was a propane truck and there was no spillage of contents from the truck, just antifreeze and oil which is typical with any type of vehicle collision, and there was no need of neither NJDEP nor SC Hazmat involvement, therefore there were no environmental concerns.



Ms. Dunbar thanked Chairwoman Noel for writing the memo about road salt recommendations that went to the Township Manager and Council, and also asked if it could be shared with the Planning Board as they should also be aware of our concerns about the environment. Ms. Noel advised that it was a group effort and she wouldn't mind sending to the Planning Board as well.

Mr. Sauerwein mentioned that there was an upcoming ANJEC training starting March 21st on the Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions with multiple sessions. Mr. Blumetti also advised that the ANJEC training sessions are done every year at this time; they are not just for new Environmental Commission members but for anyone who wants to learn or get a refresher. They are on-line and if you sign up, you can watch the recording of a session if you can't make the day the session is live. Some of the courses include topics on evaluating site plans, different aspects of the Master Plan; he shared that he finds those tools to be valuable if anyone can make them.

Mr. Sauerwein also mentioned that he attended a webinar on community solar with Sustainable Jersey. They have a handbook available on their website for community solar and municipalities; the State Board of Utilities is revising the community solar program as there were two pilots and now they are finalizing the rules and taking public comment until April.

Ms. Krieger from the public asked if this Commission oversees plans for tree removal on certain Township properties. Ms. Noel responded that this Commission is an advisory board and that they do not oversee any properties directly.

She advised that she organizes a hiking/walking group through Sussex County and wanted to know what department or entity oversees such a mass removal of trees, specifically identifying the work over by the walking paths at White Lake.

Mr. Blumetti advised that it is an ongoing Township project to put in new fields, adjacent to White Lake fields. It went to Council last year and received approval to invest in those new fields, and he believes the Township Engineer would be the one overseeing the work progress.

Ms. Noel advised that if the project were a change in use to that property and it had gone to the Planning Board, this Commission would be able to advise on the environmental impact to those changes. This was a project that went directly to the Town Council and was approved over a year ago, therefore this Commission does not have the authority to weigh in at this point.

Mr. Blumetti advised that there is a Tree Ordinance and rules around taking trees down and clearing properties for private homeowners.

Chairwoman Noel asked if anyone had anything else to share, seeing none Ms. Noel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Dunbar seconded and all were in favor.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:15 pm