



SPARTA TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MARCH 23, 2023 MEETING
7:00 P.M. @ Town Hall

This meeting was called to Order @ 7:01 pm.

Chairwoman Kimberly Noel read the Open Public Notice.

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

Not in attendance: Vice-Chair Neil Sauerwein, Robert Poles

Chairwoman Noel led the Meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentation: Chairwoman Noel introduced Hana Katz from ANJEC, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, who will provide a presentation of the New Jersey Great Waters Program of New Jersey. Ms. Katz gave an introduction about ANJEC which is an association of all Environmental Commissions in New Jersey, approximately 300, to which Sparta Township is a member. They provide municipalities with the best information and resources to help the Commissions to make the best decisions for their local environment. Today's presentation about Great Waters is a project in conjunction with multiple local organizations such as the Musconetcong Watershed Association, NJ Highlands Coalition, etc. They work in collaboration together and funded by the William Penn Foundation in order to spread the good word of the great waters and value they have, more than just environmental but also recreational, economic, good for your mental health, etc. The purpose of working together is to create an inter-organizational collaboration to address the various different needs in our area, to where all the organizations work together to try to plug the gaps in our legislation in New Jersey. This presentation specifically focuses into the situation of our natural waters here in the Highlands and hoping that we could promote municipalities to adopt a non-binding resolution to signify that they care about the local bodies of water as well as would like the NJDEP to continue protecting the water and its benefits for the long term as the State grows in terms of development and population size. The Highlands is an incredibly important area with many significant bodies of water that benefit us in many ways. By protecting the Highlands, we are doing the work at the headwaters of the water sources located in New Jersey. The Highlands take up only about 15% of NJ, but provide water for over half of the State. Sparta being part the Highlands is essentially the front line in defense for water quality for the State with the watersheds that border the Township.

The public can listen to the recording of the full presentation, along with the question and answer segment, found at www.spartanj.org, under Agendas and Minutes, Environmental Commission, March 23, 2023.

Chairwoman Noel advised that the Commission will review the resolution and the timeline requested for returning it.

Minutes: No minutes to approve.



Correspondence: No correspondence to be reviewed.

Applications: No applications were deemed complete to be reviewed.

Public Comments: None

Reports:

Councilman Blumetti gave a brief report as the Town Council meeting scheduled for March 14th was canceled due to inclement weather, but there have been conversations taking place for a Proclamation and Town Hall lights recognizing Earth Day.

Ms. Dunbar attended the Planning Board meeting and stated that she will let the Board know of this presentation being recorded so that all Boards and Commissions have common understanding of our Sparta's natural resources.

Unfinished Business:

Earth Day Fair: Chairwoman Noel reported that there are 7 to 8 confirmed exhibitors at this time but do not have a fully-committed food truck yet. We do have Sparta High School and Pope John kids to volunteer for the activities, set up and clean up. The kid activities and crafts are all planned including Freddy the Fish interactive demonstrations scheduled each half an hour during the event, as well as Sam Rush reading her book "The World Slowed Down" with three story times scheduled. The Exhibitors will be sharing educational information with their exhibits for all ages, as well as live music. The Exhibitor Agreements did get finalized and sent out and we are receiving them back from Exhibitors. The posters have been placed in several places throughout the Town; here at Town Hall, Sparta Library, grocery stores, etc. It also was placed on the Township's website which also went to the social media platforms. The formal press release is being worked on and will be sent out shortly.

Ms. Noel advised that this is the last Environmental Commission meeting prior to the Earth Day Fair event as April 13th is during Passover.

Ms. Noel also advised that she did reach out to Landon, the representative that gave a presentation a couple of meetings back, about the SC Rail Trail Plan and that we would support the expansion of the trails in Sparta per the motion made at the last meeting that was passed.

Ms. Noel advised on the Battery Recycling-Call2Recycle, we did look into this but there are a couple of challenges about having recycling collection within the building due to those fires caused by those larger lithium batteries. We need to have a different solution, possibly a metal mailbox type of structure away from any municipal building(s), therefore we will have to take a further look into it.

New Business:

Open Space Stewardship Grant: Kristine Rogers advised this is an ANJEC Grant opportunity for Environmental Commissions throughout the State and would be eligible for up to \$1,500 in grant funding. The application is due by April 17th, if the Commission wanted to pursue this. The project needs to be for advancing local open space stewardship and helping raise the profile of Environmental Commissions



within the community. There is no specific match required except for the 80 hours labor by volunteers towards the project which has to be on municipal or other preserved open space. There is a wide variety of potential opportunity and they listed several ideas, which could also get us Sustainable Jersey points as well. Ms. Rogers gave some local ideas that this Commission either looked into or helped worked on in the past: signage at the Pope John rain garden; the Sparta Middle School bio swale planting opportunity with Rutgers; purchasing plants for a volunteer event with the Wallkill Watershed Management Group; pollinator gardens; and the Sparta Glen with regard to the maintenance of trails or improved signage around the trail network. She further explained that if we did a project next year as there is a one-year turn-around time to complete all the tasks, this Commission could plan an Arbor Day event and purchase trees with the funding and replant new trees in replacement of those that were infected and cut down due to the Emerald ash borer. We would need to complete a budget with a 900-word description of what the project will be and will need to submit a letter signed by the Township Manager endorsing the application. It sounds like they are accepting a wide variety of projects, so if we propose something it would have a good chance of getting the funding.

Ms. Dunbar liked the focus of the project being at the Glen but asked if we could create signage that talks about the 1,000 year storm that we had in Sparta in the year 2000 that wiped out the whole Glen and the efforts of those like Trout Unlimited; or a sign that we had to remove the hemlocks because of the woolly adelgid; or the most recent Emerald Ash Borer; or how the Glen used to be a forge at one point; all of this is important cultural and environmental history for that area.

Ms. Rogers advised that you can do signage, but one downside is the 80 hours of volunteer aspect; if we want to do just signage, then it would have to structure to be a design contest, something where we are encouraging people in the community to submit their proposals or their artwork that could be incorporated into the sign as we need to fulfill the hands-on volunteer aspect.

Chairwoman Noel asked if we could do Sparta Glen enhancements and include both planting of trees and signage. Councilman Blumetti added it would be nice to have the elements of both the planting and signage at any of those other locations and ideas Ms. Rogers mentioned as it would be nice to have the element of plant life also.

Ms. Rogers advised that Arbor Day is typically the last Friday in April and it would encourage people to get outdoors, or tied to another environmental type of day up to the project completion date. This application is due April 17th and we would be notified by May 13th; therefore, the project would have to be completed by May 13, 2024.

Councilman Blumetti also suggested that we reach out to other non-profits to get some additional funding and volunteers, especially with the planting of plants or trees.

A member of the public Kathy Ebbinkhuysen, Sparta resident, brought up the spotted lantern fly that Sparta has been dealing with, the nesting of eggs and damage to trees, asking if this Commission would consider an educational opportunity to bring awareness to the community.

The Commission agreed that for the Earth Day event they would have information for the public on the spotted lantern fly and thanked Ms. Ebbinkhuysen for the suggestion.



Vivian Perlmutter, Sparta resident, asked if signage for the Sparta Glen could be placed on both sides of the road, the road is challenging enough and there is no sign on the road itself saying where it is. Since this is a County Road, she is formally requesting that the Township ask for a sign on both sides of the road so that people don't drive by it.

Chairwoman Noel made a Motion to apply for the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant with Kristine Rogers seconding. Motion passed.

Chairwoman Noel wanted to remind everyone about the other ANJEC grant that this Commission had applied for Green Business Initiative and if they receive notice whether we receive this grant or not.

Chairwoman Noel asked if there was any other New Business, seeing none Ms. Dunbar made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Ted Gall seconding.

Meeting adjourned 8:09.