



SPARTA TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF APRIL 27, 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, Lynda Tower, and Councilman Dean Blumetti

Not in attendance: Christine Dunbar-Planning Board Liaison, Robert Poles

Chairwoman Noel led the Meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: No minutes to approve.

Correspondence: DTH 15, LLC, 86 Blue Heron Rd/3 Laddey Lane, Sparta, NJ, Block 37001, Lot 1: Treatment Works Approval, the Applicant will be constructing an individual subsurface sewage disposal system. Councilman Blumetti gave a brief history that years ago they received approval to put a senior housing development but that area has a lot of fill from when they dug out State Route 15, and stated that it does border on protected land. He added that unless the applicant makes any changes to their original plans, they can start work again on the project as they have vested approval. He also shared that he checked on the Highlands ERI and there is a C-1 stream that is a tributary to the Wallkill River with 535 feet of it on the edge of this property.

Chairwoman Noel added that this Commission may want to consider advising them that there is a C-1 Stream as we are unsure what was submitted in the past for this project. The Commission will review the original plans before responding to the correspondence.

Ms. Tower mentioned that it is always helpful to talk to NJDEP directly and ask them to look at a particular item that we may be concerned with.

Applications: No applications were deemed complete to be reviewed.

Public Comments: None

Reports:

Councilman Blumetti gave a brief report from the Planning Board in Ms. Dunbar's absence, stating that there hasn't been many applications and the earlier April meeting was canceled, but shared that there have been subcommittees created. One subcommittee will be reviewing the zones near the Economic Development areas, focusing on some of the development risks and whether they fit the needs of those zones. There is a Site Plan Subcommittee that reviews all minor site plans, those that don't require engineering diagrams and analyses, more fast-tracked. There have been just under 20 reviewed this year that either got approved, denied or referred to the full Planning Board to make application. Examples are new signage or new tenants but won't affect storm water management or traffic.



Councilman Blumetti then reported on the most recent Council meetings. An Earth Day Proclamation was made where Cara Johnson accepted it on behalf of the Sparta Middle School along with Neil Sauerwein, Co-Chair of our Commission, and green lights on the front columns of the building during the week. The Town Council began live-streaming their meetings, explaining that it's not interactive but it can be viewed live and recorded on the Sparta Township You Tube Channel. Ordinance 23-04, Bond Ordinance for a salt shed, passed 4-1, stating that he was the no vote, but he did share this Commission's concerns and best practices for salting with the Council and the public. With regard to recent train derailments, Chief McCarrick gave an overview the Township's existing emergency response protocols that are in place with regard to hazardous materials and communication channels. Kate Chambers retired and Roxanne Landy was appointed as the Municipal Clerk. He explained that in prior years, the Planning Board has participated in the New Jersey State Plan Endorsement for our Town Center and in order to maintain this designation, the Township State Plan Endorsement Committee, along with the Township Planner, must continue certain steps and keep up with the visioning originally documented in order to receive grants for Town Center beautification and as well as other grants aligned with improvements to the Town Center. The search for a new Township Manager has begun, Council will be working with a consultant that knows the Township well. Council appointed a new Zoning Board Member, Landon Tanyeri, as an alternate for a 2-year term. The Mayor appointed Lynda Tower to fill the second-year term of Mr. Tomko's alternate position on this Commission.

Ms. Noel asked if the Planning Board is still reviewing the Master Plan, Councilman Blumetti advised that they are and are finalizing the scope, timing and who will serve on the subcommittee.

Unfinished Business:

Earth Day Fair: Chairwoman Noel reported that the Earth Day Fair held on Saturday, April 22nd, in front of Town Hall went very well. She asked the Commission Members what their thoughts were about for next year, any changes or keep the same, or any lessons learned, also if another site should be chosen since only 2 to 3 more exhibitors could fit in front of Town Hall.

Kristine Rogers shared she was pleased with having different non-profit and educational organizations represented rather than vendors selling items, more in-line of Earth Day, incorporating students from the Sparta Middle and High Schools volunteering in the Kids' Corner, and stating overall it was a great first year with good turnout. She suggested planning, picking the date and advertising earlier as there were vendors and organizations booked already for the day.

Councilman Blumetti advised that he received a lot of compliments on how this Commission ran the event, people sharing they learned a lot with all of the interaction. He enjoyed watching the smaller kids interact with the school students, absorbing and listening, as well as the excellent music creating a festival feel, as well as suggested another food truck for variety. He shared that having it at Town Hall worked well with the accessibility of all ages to use the bathrooms, taking a break in the air conditioning and use of the refillable water station.

Ms. Noel shared another suggestion of potentially having it at the Middle school, which would be used as a back-up in case of rain, reminding everyone that the planning of the event was shared between this Commission and the Middle School.

ANJEC and Other Grants: Chairwoman Noel advised that this Commission submitted an application for a Montclair student to assist with this Commission in applying for grants, but advised that no one was



assigned. There has been no response as to whether the grant certifying Green Businesses within the Township applied for earlier has been granted. Chairwoman Noel thanked Kristine Rogers for the assistance in applying for the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant that will be used for planting trees and beautification in the Sparta Glen.

New Business:

Ms. Lynda Tower was sworn in earlier today and Chairwoman Noel welcomed and thanked her for volunteering for the open position.

Chairwoman Noel made a Motion for the Environmental Commission meetings to be live-streamed, Co-Chair Neil Sauerwein Seconded. Roll call was taken, Motion passed with Councilman Blumetti abstaining. Further explanation was given that persons must be present at a meeting in order to interact with the Commission, reiterating that the meetings will be live-streamed and recorded on the Township's You Tube Channel.

Co-Chair Sauerwein shared with everyone that it is easier to go to the Township's website www.spartanj.org and click on the Agendas and/or the article under live-streaming meetings rather than search Sparta Township on the YouTube Channel. Discussion was held on how to find recordings, minutes and corresponding documents on the Agenda Center page on the website.

Proposed Draft Great Waters Resolution: Chairwoman Noel explained that the last meeting in March, Hana Katz from ANJEC presented information from the Great Waters on the New Jersey Highlands. The request was made from ANJEC to present a Resolution to the Township Council to pass regarding protecting the drinking water and recreational areas and the Highlands areas as a whole. The Resolution form is in draft as we are researching some information needed.

Councilman Blumetti explained the process of getting it passed by Council, including legal review by Township Attorney.

Chairwoman Noel advised that she will make a Motion once the Resolution is finalized in order for this Commission to present it to Council.

Invasive Plant Discussion: Chairwoman Noel shared that she would like this Commission to discuss invasive plants and how to encourage residents not to plant invasive species that were included on the recent "Do Not Plant" list published by the State of New Jersey. The Township currently does not have any guidelines or Ordinances in place with regard to planting invasive species. This NJ list focuses on plants that are commonly sold to residents and she would like to assist residents understand the dangers of planting the invasive species as well as the possible responsibility on them if it crosses over onto the neighboring properties.

Ms. Tower added that this topic is hard to enforce, especially if there is existing installation that may be in control by a current homeowner, but to a new homeowner, it could get out of control as well as a lot of work involved in eradicating invasive plants. She shared that there are a lot of organizations that do presentations about invasive plants that could be considered for next year's Earth Day, as well as possibly held at the Library or ways to publicly share the information.

Discussion was held about retrieving information for our Township's website, Chairwoman Noel advised she will research Ordinances from different Townships and other resources and possibly come up with an educational program.



Chairwoman Noel asked the members if they had any other new business to share.

Kristine Rogers shared that registration has opened for the 5th Annual Northwest New Jersey Rivers Conference on Saturday, September 30th, at Centenary University, with the theme of Open Space and Recreation. Anyone can register on line at <https://www.northwestnewjerseyrivers.org>.

Vice-Chair Sauerwein had asked if anyone has read the NJ Highlands Council new Rules and Regulations on warehouses. Chairman Blumetti added that his understanding is that they have made changes to impervious coverage, which depending on if it's in the preservation or planning area as well as if a Town itself is conforming. In Sparta's planning area, we are not conforming, but preservation areas we are, but it has to do with warehouses and their proximity to major highways and roadways, and how close a resident can be to it, how big it can be as well as the impervious coverage. He shared that last year these were only recommendations by the Highlands and as of this year, they made them regulations. Chairwoman Noel encouraged all Members to review them and see if there are any actions this Commission could make.

Vice-Chairman Sauerwein asked if any photos were taken at the Earth Day event to send to ANJEC. Chairwoman Noel did add that photos were taken and that an article should be coming out from ANJEC, as well as TapIntoSparta and the Sparta Independent. Kristine Rogers asked if there is a place that we can compile all of the photos to be stored for when we applying for Sustainable Jersey Certification for reference. The Secretary advised that she will find out.

Vice Chairman Sauerwein asked if we could start to revisit the Sustainable Jersey goals with the Subcommittee consisting of himself, Christine Dunbar and Kristine Rogers, and asked to meet in the near future.

Chairwoman Noel asked if anyone had anything else to share, seeing none, she made a Motion to Adjourn the meeting with Ted Gall seconding with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.