

Minutes of the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission - DRAFT

March 11, 2019

Meeting called to order at 7:33pm

Attendees

Members: Richard Leister, Kim Diamond, Kinan Tadmori, Kevin Hall, Renee Ciesla, John Leo, Angus Chen

Guests: Alvaro Medeiros, Robert Muska (former Environmental Commission member)

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from February 18, 2018 (latest revised version) approved

Old Business

Community Garden

- Richard has requested quotes from four companies. The estimate is \$2600 to \$2900 for the boards. If the desired vendor is not an approved vendor, then you have to get the vendor on the vendor list.
- Richard met with the Eagle Scouts and they are shifting focus to building the shed. Mitchell Gayer also wants to work on the shed.
- The beds are still open as a project. Richard met with gardeners at a meeting and they may be able to build the beds.
- Walkway between entrance and first set of beds could be ADA compliant.
- Richard is looking into the possibility of raised beds that are ADA accessible from Union County.
- Richard is also looking into a grant with Union County, so we should be able to keep within the budget needs of this project.
- Renee asked about weed prevention methods. Richard suggested landscape fabric or heavy cardboard.
- Richard needs to make the final report for the Sustainable Jersey grant by March 15. Township administrator must certify it. The township needs to provide what bills will be paid with the grant.

Environmental Movies

- Kim stated that during the February 27 Mayor's Recycling Task Force meeting, it was suggested that it may not be worth have a film festival because we may not reach new people, since the expected audience is already environmentally concerned.
- Renee suggested showing movies in schools, since students are a clean slate. Perhaps tie-it to Earth Day and have it in science class or an assembly. Columbia Middle School has a environmental club. Reach out to PTOs. Movies should be shown to fifth graders or older.

Scout Projects

- Rich gave Kim a list of possible projects, so she can share it with the Girl Scouts.
- Kim recommended posting projects on Environmental Commission website.
- Alvaro stated the list of projects went to the two coordinators Sherree Park and Francois Arcasedda.
- Angus stated that he spoke with resident Nicole Mauriello about her Girl Scout daughters' interest in reducing single use plastics as a project. He will speak with Nicole further.

Stormwater Ordinance

- Berkeley Heights ordinance will be based on one of three ordinances the commission is reviewing - Cranford, Sustainable Jersey, and previous ordinance that Robert Bocchino made commented on. The Cranford ordinance seems very straight forward with easier language rather than legal language.
- Guest Robert Muska asked if we are differentiating underground stormwater management solutions. Richard recommended encouraging above ground solutions such as rain gardens or bioswales so that it can be visibly verified as functioning.
- Kim stated that Rutgers has a program that will build a demo rain garden project for someone who volunteers their home. Kim and her husband are willing to volunteer their home. Richard will also reach out to Rutgers.
- Richard mentioned that Fanwood and Cranford have put in rain gardens in front of houses. He also suggested driveways sloped toward the grass as another solution, but Belgian blocks cannot be used for this to be effective.
- Alvaro reached out to the League of Municipalities about the stormwater utility bill, but he has not received a reply.
- Angus asked about a previous township program back in 2016 that offered \$450 for residents willing to build a rain garden, but it wasn't successful .
- John asked if this ordinance will be effective toward reducing overall township impervious coverage when reviewed on a per site basis. Is it better for Berkeley Heights to update its Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) and reduce coverage on an overall basis? Richard stated that overall approach is for major developments and would be directed toward the Planning Board. There is already have a stormwater ordinance for major developments, but it could be amended to include green infrastructure. The ordinance the commission is working on is for non-major developments, including residences. He asked that the commission review the sample ordinances for the next commission meeting. Renee requested other township ordinances to review and Rich stated he reached out to ANJEC about this. He also stated that we can get 30 points from Sustainable Jersey for enacting a stormwater ordinance.
- Kevin said that before the ordinance is voted on by Township Council, it needs to be reviewed by the Planning Board and Zoning Board.

Sustainable Jersey - There is an action worth points for assembling a meeting to brainstorm green issues. Other towns have done this. Kevin suggested that this meeting needs to be actionable items. Berkeley Heights does have a green team and it is chartered to work efforts toward Sustainable Jersey. Members come from different areas in town. The list should be updated given the changes in the Environmental Commission. It will need to be approved by township council.

Master Plan - Richard learned that there should be a planning committee for the Master Plan. He said the Environmental Commission should be involved, either through Kevin Hall or through another member. Kevin will reach out to Township Administrator Liza Viana about who will be doing it. Michael Mistretta is not doing it. Alvaro stated it will be the new planner, but the process is in limbo.

Tree Ordinance - Nothing to report

Peppertown Park - Nothing to report

Smart Cities - Kim is awaiting news on the ten finalists for the grant. If Berkeley Heights is a finalist, we will receive Smart Cities Council support for strategy implementation. If Berkeley Heights is not a finalist, we still have access to their software just for applying.

Recycling

● **Mayor's Recycling Task Force**

- Angus stated that members have been tasked with asking different townships and counties about what they are doing. The Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority will be asked. Mayor will establish what the law states about recycling. The next meeting will be March 13.
- Kim stated that she is following up with Repeve about linking with them regarding converting plastic bottles into Unifi thread for clothing, after the mayor's directive toward use and reuse.

● **Recycling Styrofoam and Electronics** - Program is already underway. The styrofoam must be clean white packing material only. No food Styrofoam is allowed.

● **Resolution on Plastic Bags**

- ANJEC is willing to help us with an ordinance on banning plastic bags
- The law enacted by Little Silver NJ should be monitored and the ordinance reviewed.
- Someone from the commission should attend the Restricting Single Use Plastics meeting on May 16 in Madison NJ

● **Trex Thin Film Plastics Recycling**

- Kim made a presentation to Dr. Pat Smith's Berkeley Heights Business & Civic Group regarding adopting Trex bins. Two businesses were initially interested, but one rescinded after learning of the pickup frequency.
- 4,100 lbs have been collected in Berkeley Heights since the program began.
- Pat Smith is willing to pick up at Pet Supplies Plus once a week. Kim will speak with Pet Supplies Plus about storing the bags between pickups.
- John suggested adding second bins in some locations, but space is limited. He suggested asking Trex to pick up in Berkeley Heights, maybe at the DPW. Kim said Trex isn't interested in adding a pick up location and our leverage is limited because other towns generate more. The process is an aggregator picks up from stores, then Trex picks up the collective total from the aggregator. The only nearby drop-off

- locations are ACME in New Providence and Whole Foods. Kim will reach out to Trex representative Stephanie Hicks again.
- After speaking with other Commission members at the recent ANJEC meeting, Richard said Berkeley Heights seems to collect the most. Other townships are picking up less or just starting.
 - Angus suggested bringing this up this initiative at the next Joint Meeting for Union County Environmental Commissions, to hopefully establish a county wide effort to achieve better pickup terms.
 - John suggested combining this program with the styrofoam and electronics program. Alvaro will ask DPW Director Joseph Graziano about whether the bags can be stored at DPW.
 - Richard suggested researching Bigbelly bins and asked Alvaro to see if the grant money can be used toward them.

Clean Ups

- Kim created a 501(c)(3) non-profit named Berkeley Heights Innovation & Sustainability Alliance (BHISA). Its mission is to develop, promote, and implement solutions that will leverage the Berkeley Heights community's strengths to improve the environment, accelerate innovation, actualize sustainability measures, foster collaboration among community members, and transform the Berkeley Heights community into a smart city for future generations. The BHISA will partner with local government entities, schools, and businesses to effectuate this mission. As a non-profit, the BHISA will be able to apply for grants for which the Environmental Commission is ineligible to apply.
- Reminder about Adopt A Park clean-up events on March 17 and March 24
 - Sunday, March 17, 1pm to 3pm, Passaic River Park
 - Sunday, March 24, 2pm to 4pm, Snyder Park
- Richard suggested asking Tom Barton to advertise them on the digital billboard on the corner of Plainfield and Springfield Avenues. Kim stated that has already been done.
- Clean up events proposed for April, but exact dates to be determined.
- Renee asked where we are regarding the StormX netting trash traps. Richard stated that if we put any system in our streams, it will require township and NJDEP approval.

Vegan Fest

- Vegan Fest is scheduled for September 20 to 22, 2019
- Kim applied for a \$2000 ANJEC grant and submitted a township budget request. Alvaro stated that the budget request was not well received by the public. CFO recommended setting up a trust for Environmental Commission to acquire funds.
- Commission will partner with BHISA on this event. Kim said people may be more willing to donate to a non-profit rather than a government trust.
- Reach out to Overlook Hospital and Summit Medical Group for sponsorship opportunity. Kevin has a family contact at Atlantic Health (Overlook Hospital)
- Alvaro will be meeting with Board of Health on March 20 about public food sampling.

Community Adopt-A-Project

- It should be advertised on the Environmental Commission website and township website by way of Communications Committee and Downtown Beautification Committee
- **10K Race**
 - BHISA proposes a 10K race for Q1 2020. This distance is sought after and there are few races of this distance locally. Kim made a motion for the Environmental Commission partner with the BHISA to sponsor and get certified for the 10K. Motion was approved by all members.
 - This would fit well with the Mayor's Wellness Campaign
 - Reach out to Overlook Hospital and Summit Medical Group for sponsorship opportunity. Kevin will talk to his family contact at Atlantic Health about this.

Garden Club

- Topic will be moved under Adopt-A-Project
- Peppertown Park is a Master Gardener approved project

Joint Meeting on Environmental Commissions - Next meeting is March 21 in Westfield, NJ. The topic is "The Scope of the Organic Waste Problem & Why We Need To Contribute To Some Solutions." It will be held in the Recreation Department's Community Room at the Westfield Town Hall at 425 East Broad Street.

Mayor's Wellness Campaign - Nothing to report, but Alvaro will follow up to see if there are any updates.

Township Newsletter

- Kinan stated that the two topics already slated for March are litter clean up events and fertilizer use. Add post regarding interest in adopting Trex Bins.

Municipal Complex and Stormwater

- Richard spoke with Liza about setting up a meeting regarding green infrastructure. Liza was trying to find out from Michael Mistretta.
- There is a grant available from NJ American Water that must be submitted by the end of the month. The work funded by the grant must be completed by the end of the year. If we can't add green infrastructure this year because the municipal complex isn't going to be ready, then submit for next year. Dates need to be established on when this green infrastructure could be installed. Alvaro will speak with Liza about this.
- If it isn't possible to submit for this year's NJ American Water grant for the municipal complex, Kim suggested perhaps submitting for rain gardens at schools. Robert said it was important to determine who was going to maintain them. Governor Livingston High School and Columbia Middle School both have rain gardens. Richard said some parents were somewhat involved with maintenance, but he needs to follow up with parents to see if they will maintain it this spring.
- Kim suggested reaching out to PTO. Renee will speak with the PTO about forming a committee for maintaining rain gardens because they are forming committees now.

- Kevin asked if the sewer plant wants a rain garden. The plant staff should maintain it.

New Business

The Berkeley Plaza - Riverbank Remediation (brought up at beginning of meeting after approval of minutes)

- Guest Robert Muska has complained over the years about continuous litter problems along the riverbank adjacent to The Berkeley Plaza site. This site is up for sale and he learned that Berkeley Heights Township owns the 50-foot easement between the river and the site, which is currently paved as parking spaces. The name of this paper road is Riverside Road. If the site is sold, could the parking area adjacent to the riverbank be removed and reclaimed as a green space, acting as a buffer zone to the river.
- Kevin said this will have to be looked at by Planning and Zoning Boards. If the space is reclaimed as green space, it could significantly reduce the value of the property. That said, riparian laws also need to be respected. The Planning Board may reject the application to keep this area as is if the public were vocal during the application process.

March 9 ANJEC Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions training in Bridgewater NJ (brought up immediately after The Berkeley Plaza discussion in the early part of the meeting)

- Richard, John, and Angus attended
- Angus attended the stormwater management session
- John made some contacts with Bridgewater, Warren, Clinton townships. He also stated Little Silver will be the first to enact single use plastics ban
- Richard learned that Environmental Commission meetings are public meetings, so discussions should occur at the meeting, not over email
- Kim asked that the PowerPoint presentations from the meeting be shared with the rest of the Commission.
- Richard stated ANJEC 2019 Environmental Congress will be held October 4
- The March 2 ANJEC training in Fair Lawn NJ that Renee and Alvaro were going to attend was canceled due to inclement weather, so it will be rescheduled

Earth Day - Lower Raritan Watershed steward asked Richard if Berkeley Heights was doing anything for Earth Day. Richard will reach out to schools about what they are doing for Earth Day.

Plans

Nokia Detention Basin

- **Findings of Fact** - State is objecting to copper from copper roofs of buildings in runoff.
- **Recommendations** - Propose retention basin instead of detention basin

611 Mountain Avenue

- **Findings of Fact** - Applicant wants to construct swimming pool, new addition, deck, and walkway. Existing impervious coverage is 23.46% but is requesting increase to 34.54%.
- **Recommendations** - Reject due to excessive impervious coverage.

105 Briarwood East

- **Findings of Fact** - Applicant wants to construct addition to home. Existing impervious coverage is 32.08%, but changes will reduce it to 29.23%
- **Recommendations** - Bring impervious coverage down to maximum allowance of 25%

100 Industrial Road

- **Findings of Fact** - Applicant will be re-tenanting building to convert to self-storage and resurfacing parking lot. Existing impervious coverage is 73.8% and changes will reduce it to 73.7%.
- **Recommendations** - Request letter of interpretation, remove encroachment of wetlands, add green roof or other green infrastructure

Meeting adjourned at 10:13pm.

Next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2019 at 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted by Angus Chen on March 21, 2019