

# Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

## Minutes of Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 Meeting (conducted by teleconference)

### Attendees

Members: Renee Ciesla, Angus Chen, Kim Diamond, Kevin Hall, David Harris, Helen Kirsch, Richard Leister, John Leo, Chris Scalera.

Guests: Steve Carrellas, Alvaro Medeiros

Meeting called to order at 7:35 PM

- 1) Minutes from February 17<sup>th</sup> were approved. Minutes from March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting were not approved.
- 2) Hearing on agenda items only - 3 minutes per resident – no items raised
- 3) Old Business
  - a. Scout projects – Chris working with one scout from Troop 68.
  - b. Stormwater Ordinance – John working with Township Engineer on draft ordinance
  - c. Sustainable Jersey
    - i. Green Team members (Peppertown Park) – to join Green Team
    - ii. Mayor’s Wellness Campaign – Richard & Alvaro to coordinate offline. All prior objectives of this campaign are on hold. Volunteer support network has been established to support seniors during Covid-19 crisis.
    - iii. EC Members requested to review Sustainable Jersey spreadsheet, sent out by Richard.
  - d. Tree Ordinance – no update
  - e. Peppertown Park – no update
  - f. Recycling
    - i. Mayor’s Recycling Task Force – Kim noted that some of the pictures on the Union County website do not reflect our understanding as to what is and is not recyclable. The follow-up action was the drafting of a letter to JoAnn Gemenden on clarifying recyclable materials. Rich suggested that Liza Viana, the Township Business Administrator, write a letter on behalf of the Township to Union County, so that Union County addresses this. Liza will work with Kim to draft this letter, and will send to the appropriate Union County authority. Educational initiatives on hold at this time.
    - ii. Trex bins and pick ups – Rotary Club’s Trex bench has arrived and has been delivered to Tom Barton. We have received 7 of the 14 Trex benches that we have accrued. Total collected over 12,000

lbs. EC website subpage has been updated with most current information.

- g. Ordinance on Restrictions on Plastic Bags, Plastic Straws, and Polystyrene – Angus and Kim are working on creating an FAQ page with respect to this ordinance, in order to address questions residents and businesses may have. The EC webpage may not be the best location for this FAQ to reside, as the passage of this ordinance makes it a Township-based endeavor, not a purely EC-sponsored endeavor. Kim liaising with Township Attorney, Kraig Dowd, on where this FAQ document is to be posted online (location TBD); Angus to suggest alternative locations on Township website as well.
  - h. Topics for the township newsletter – Chris has drafted two articles, on native and invasive species, for forthcoming newsletters. Agreed that Angus will be the point person on EC to ensure these are submitted consistently each month.
  - i. Municipal Complex and stormwater – no update
  - j. Government Energy Aggregation – no update
  - k. Climate Action Plan Survey – no update
  - l. Passaic River Park – no update
  - m. Chemtrade – no update
  - n. Budget – no update; to be removed from agenda for future meetings.
  - o. Partnering with Rec Commission for DEP Grant Application re: Lower  
2. Columbia Park's Trails – no update
  - p. NJ Clean Communities Grant – on hold until clean-ups can be planned
- 4) New Business:
- a. Free technical support for SJ energy initiatives – Richard forwarded to EC members; TBD if we can make use of this.
  - b. Online poll for Green Team (email from Lauren Skowronski) – offering a tool to publicize role of Green Team and/or solicit community input. EC members thought that by the mere fact of soliciting this input, the EC would be more likely to receive community buy-in and support for the efforts it rolls out to the public. Members agreed that we may use this tool some time in the future. Richard to respond to Lauren.
  - c. Community Garden Rules – open for planting now; water to be turned on around beginning of May. Members to observe social distancing, avoid sharing tools, use disposable gloves, wipe lock after use & utilize sign-up sheet to minimize number of people present at one time. EC approved these plans.
  - d. 1,000 trees – on hold per State
  - e. Composting – Union County offers composting bins at reduced price although BH does not participate. Consider this as a topic for a future newsletter article. Leverage Union County or Rutgers Extension for fact sheets, to provide residents with guidance re: what items are or are not compostable. Hub meeting on composting, which was to be held in Rahway, now postponed.
  - f. Chris Scalera has not been receiving email forwarded from [ec@bhtwp.com](mailto:ec@bhtwp.com). Angus will reach out to IT for township to correct this.

5) Citizens hearing on any environmental issues -3 minutes per resident – no items raised.

6) Plans:

- a. 462 Springfield Ave. Coffee roastery. Remove garage. Change coverage. Not in flood zone or wetland. Property exceeds permitted coverages. EC to recommend the applicant consider installation of a rain garden, and ensure at least 50% of plantings to be native.
- b. 289 Chaucer: Install sunroom, increase coverage. Not in a flood zone or wetland; adjacent to riparian zone; recharge not known, but likely in region of relatively high water table. EC to recommend that drainage not be directed to the street.

7) Liaison with schools: reviewed priorities of EC with respect to the School District

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6, 2020, at 7:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted by David Harris on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020.