

**Readington Township
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes
October 3, 2023**

OPEN MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hendrickson at 7:03 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

Members in Attendance

Neil Hendrickson - Chair
Jeff Charney
Steve Foster
Mario Orlandi
Susan Masinda
Cassandra Ward
Robert Becker
Jerry Cook

Members Absent

Jonathan Heller

Guest Speaker

Paul Hamilton

Minutes

It was moved and seconded, to approve the minutes for September 12, 2023. Jerry Cook and Robert Becker abstain. Steve noted the contract requires a report where they go with the garbage, and if the town chooses, they can direct the recycler to the facility desired by the township. However, what is not required is once it gets to the facility, how much of the material actually gets recycled. The minutes were accepted as amended.

Guest Speaker

None

LOI/Freshwater Wetlands

The LOI extension letter submitted was reviewed. A concern was raised unanimously that wildlife and wetlands are mentioned, but no further information was provided. It also appears incomplete because not all pages are attached, and part of the letter ends mid-sentence. The secretary will request a completed report and send out the full report and letter via email to members. Hyannis property submitted their original project plan, since then nothing has come before the board. They are currently trying to define wetlands areas and wetlands buffer areas to determine if they are encroaching and determine where they can build. The history with a Hyannis development behind the spinning wheel diner without permits was discussed. Hyannis was reported to the DEP at the time of the findings. Members asked what the result of the reporting was and what disposition or action was taken if any. Neil requested an update from Christina Schwartz. Hyannis is currently waiting on sewer capacity to become available.

AOC (Areas of Concern)

None

Correspondence

None

New Business

1. School Green Committee Projects:

The School Green Team Committee has met to gather objectives for education participation and leadership qualities. An advisory council in Hunterdon County has a sustainability committee investigating food waste recovery. There are 2 locations in Mercer County and one in Warren County that accept food waste for composting. Door pick-up for food waste can be scheduled if desired and paid for privately. The county plans to do a survey to see how many people are serious about food waste and if they should take a stronger role or leave it up to individual communities. Multiple options were stated and discussed. If done in the schools, expenses would need to be shared with surrounding districts in order to be cost effective and make economic sense. Lobbying to include community colleges would be beneficial. About 30% of the waste stream is recyclable and the public should be educated on composting bins and other options to reduce food waste. The walk in the woods event is held every October with the 7th grade. Students planted seedlings, investigated spots on the leaves and figured out the causes using reasoning/critical thinking to diagnose and research. Log splitting to make outdoor seating for outdoor classrooms and other broad goals for future were discussed. The grammar and middle school students presented passion projects on environmental topics with an emphasis on climate change. It was noted that in 2020, 4 state standards on climate change were made. The Environmental Committee should be an available resource to provide authoritative information to students for environmental projects.

2. ANJEC's Environmental Achievement Award:

Princeton Hydro won the Environmental Achievement Award for the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI). The first ERI was done in 2002. The new ERI digitized our information and includes more data. There will be a meeting held where Princeton Hydro will have the opportunity to present the ERI to the township.

Other Business:

1. Well testing

Training was held yesterday. No video was recorded but a complete packet of information can be found at Fairview Farms or Darts Mill, or you may reach out to Samantha for a complete packet. An average of 150 families participates in testing. Most families choose the basic package. The annual event helps get the message out, but testing can be done year-round at Darts Mill. All volunteer spots are filled, but anyone is welcome to shadow and help.

2. Recycling Contract Update

Two bids were received and will be discussed at the next Township Committee meeting. All options will be reviewed. Currently the cost of garbage is included in taxes. The new proposals are significantly more expensive and if a bid is accepted, it will increase rates by 5 tax points. A discussion occurred regarding garbage and recycling being an environmental issue and very important to all members. Members discussed what neighboring municipalities do with their garbage subscriptions and/or contracts. The existing programs make it easier, and the major concern is if residents are left with the choice they might not recycle.

3. Deer management update

There have been 35 Deer harvested to date. A report was requested on how this year compares to last year and factors influencing numbers such as weather. Raritan Valley deer count data report was circulated.

4. Community solar programs

Ground mounted solar energy is permitted in the township and community solar programs should be looked into. It was noted that members don't want to see our farms turn into solar farms. Green Acres' land cannot be touched, but Readington owns land they are not using that could be considered. Robert will speak to consulting companies to give a presentation on a simulated conversion of open space to a solar field to assess what the value would be to the community.

Site Plan Review and Comment

Camelot at Readington Urban Renewal LLC, Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan, Preliminary Major Subdivision and Variances for Multi-Family Housing Development was reviewed. Any comment from the Environmental Commission is reserved until more information is received. Members would like a report from Rob Obrien and questioned if this has gone before the Township Committee yet.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Chair Hendrickson, seconded by Susan Masinda, and carried by all. Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Monaghan
Advisory Boards Secretary