

**Readington Township
Waterwatch Advisory Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2023**

OPEN MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chair Orlandi at 7:01 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

Mario Orlandi – Chair
Steve Foster
Jonathan Heller
Marlene Orlandi
David Owen
Rene Rao

Absent

Lauren Huelsebusch
Richard Geissler

Guest Speaker:

Tatiana Hlinka – Tatiana, a junior at Hunterdon Central High School, introduced herself to the committee and gave a description of the diverse groups and clubs she participates in. Tatiana expressed her interest in facilitating collaboration between the student body and the Waterwatch Advisory Board. She discussed options to get students involved including advertising towards a particular club looking for speakers, Passion Projects, community service hours, students interested in research and publication. She also stated that students are installing a National Green School Society Chapter at Hunterdon Central. Tatiana spoke on the benefits of engaging students via social media. Members discussed the benefits of outreach to another age group, connecting people to water in different ways, and previous outreach methods used to increase volunteer participation. Committee members will provide a definition, identify objectives and goals, and activities for Tatiana to bring back to the dean of students to discuss which groups would be interested. Members discussed options for students' participation and representation in meetings as well as not limiting participation to student residents of Readington Township. Options for making Tatiana a junior member on the committee to allow her to act as a liaison to other students were discussed. Chair Orlandi will send a nomination to the Township Committee for Tatiana to be a member of the Waterwatch Committee. Legal ramifications, if any, of having her being a member vs. junior member. Members explained details and steps of multiple projects to Tatiana such as the Chambers Brook project, tree planting event, well water testing, stream clean up, rain barrel workshops, as well as new projects that could spur from student's ideas. The township has limited social media and discussed efforts to date and limitations made but stated that students can create posts on their own. There is a lot to talk about in that regard and will be revisited

after we conclude the information gathering stage. Tatiana was invited to the November meeting.

Minutes

It was moved and seconded, a motion to approve the minutes for August 15, 2023, as written, with corrections to the spelling of members' names. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee Member Updates

- Mr. Foster - Mr. Foster reported that the Environmental Commission is doing well, and Neil appreciates everything this board is doing. Mr. Foster provided to members a sample that he found at CVS which he would like to emulate and hand out at all events including well testing, ball games, and in the lobby of the building to promote upcoming events. Eventually a month-by-month calendar of projects and activities will be created. It will increase participation, get people to visit the website, and join the email list.
- Ms. Rao - Ms. Rao respectfully requested to make note that she was not involved in the Three Bridges project, that was Marlene and Steve, and she does not want to take credit for other people's actions. This is the last Waterwatch meeting before well testing begins. Most of the volunteer spots are filled with the exception of two days but they have sufficient help. Ideally, they aim to have 5 volunteers per day in case anyone is sick or unable to attend. Saturday, October 14, 9-12 pm will be kit sales and preorder pickup only at the Readington Municipal building. Kits will also be available for purchase October 17 and 24 from 7-10 am. Sample returns are accepted October 17, 24 and 25 from 7-11 am. Three Bridges Fire Company will have kits sales on October 18th from 7-10 am and will accept sample returns from 7-11 am. The Checklist provided for the review session October 2 at Darts Mill is a great review sheet but too wordy. Ms. Rao will narrow the information into a table checklist to be simple and direct. Ms. Rao will print out the list on water resistant paper and will use smear-proof pens. Members discussed additional items needed such as chairs, tents, etc. Types of signage and location of signs were discussed. The Township email went out and the Raritan Headwaters email is set to go out on 10/2 to residents who have previously tested. To date, there are 34 residents signed up. The Township's webpage is set up to post the flyer in October. Ms. Rao mentioned adding in the "&" to Well Water Testing to encourage non-well water residents to test also.
- Ms. Orlandi - Reached out to Will Daly who will include the well water testing flyer in the student's digital backpack. She is also awaiting a response from him regarding his 8th grade civics class volunteers which all ties into Student motivation discussion. Nothing further to report at this time.
- Mr. Owen - Asked for an update on the Lazy Brook Road PFAS situation. Mr. Orlandi said he will mention that in his report. Mr. Owen reported that all trails are open. There has been a tremendous amount of volunteer work. Summer Road Trail cleanup was successful. Garbage, debris, and dog poop bags were removed.

DPW is working hard to maintain the trails by mowing and removing trees. Hunterdon County Commission objected to weight increase of trucks 80,000 lbs. to 91,000 lbs. due to the predicted EV trucks heavy batteries. A brief discussion of different state regulations and requirements occurred. The Commission approved 2 properties to be purchased for open space. The properties are 14.4 acres and 12 acres both on Route 12 adjacent to other open space. Darts Mill is finished. Mr. Owen negotiated with the occupant of Hick's House, the blue building in front of Darts Mill, who is offloading furniture such as a beautiful table, 10 custom made chairs, a bookcase all Donated and moved to Darts Mill by the DPW workers. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approved three further small updates for the mill. Mr. Foster recommended a "Nature Therapy Walk, a Shirin-yoku experience" at the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. Mr. Owen shared his experience. Mr. Foster said it is a way to view our trails from a different perspective other than horseman, hunter, hiker, runner, and see possibilities of our trail and the benefits of forest bathing on mental health. Schools are actively looking for outdoor classrooms with easy access and wheelchair access. This will also get more people to use the trails and different opportunities. Physical chemicals put out by trees protect us and the good feeling you get out in nature is real. Members discussed incorporating trails into the curriculum and will be revisited.

Mr. Heller – Nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Orlandi – At the last Environmental Commission meeting PFAS was raised as an issue. Kits were provided to get a baseline. Data from Raritan headwaters shows it is not that bad yet, but something to keep an eye on. Recently PFAS was added as a required testing when selling your home and the 2021-2022 data is available. The EC is currently working with Deb Vaccarella to put together a request to the DEP without names or block and lots. The PFAS test is \$299. A discussion occurred on the multiple possible sources of PFAS and just like arsenic and lead it causes permanent damage. The Chambers Brook project is being led by Robert Lucas, Raritan Headwaters restoration expert, who just returned from paternity leave in September, is focusing on this project. The property we have been working with was put on the deer management list and assigned to a hunter. A description of the property was provided. It will minimally impact the hunter. There is a lot of tree planting to be done so they will wait to blaze the trail until after hunting season. Adjacent homeowners gave access to their driveways for the project and volunteers. Tree planting days will be 10/11, 10/12, and 10/13 for spillover. Tree delivery and hole digging the week of 10/4, 10/5, 10/6. The company Sanofi Pharmaceuticals has 60 employees volunteering for this project in addition to Readington Township volunteers. 1,000 trees will be planted. It was recommended to document the process with photos at all stages of the project.

New/Other Business

None

Comments

None

Adjournment

It was moved and seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Monaghan
Advisory Boards Secretary