

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time:

Monday, November 13, 2023 – 7:45pm

Meeting Location: Zoom and Borough Hall**Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84007019428?pwd=N2JXdHFORWJzdGZqdHVDVEh3UVp4QT09>

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Open Public Meeting Statement:

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Bergen Record and/or The Ridgewood News, informing the public of the time and place according to the provision of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1976)

Roll Call:

Members: Lou Baldanza(P), Lisa De Pellegrini(P), Chairman Robert Hanrahan(A), Mairead Jensen(P), Randall Preston(P), Lisa Skoglund(P), Antonio Vozzolo(P), Michelle Zink-Jojic(P), Planning Board Liaison/Member Robert Zitelli(P)& Council Liaison Christopher Roche(A)

Approval of Minutes – October 16, 2023 - A motion to approve was made by R. Preston and seconded by M. Jensen.

Meeting Opened to Public Agenda & Non – Agenda Items - A motion to open was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by M. Jensen.

Meeting Closed to Public - A motion to close was made by R. Zitelli and seconded by L. Baldanza.

Communication/Correspondence:**New Business:**

- Thank you – Robert Zitelli for your years of service to Montvale
 - Montvale has been very lucky to have you as member of the Planning Board, Environmental Commission and resident. You were highly impactful in your work for the environment, and commitment to public service. You will be missed. Thank you Bob, it was an honor and pleasure to work with you!
- EC Commission members feedback on recommendation of Downes Tree Service (Huff Pond)
 - Would prefer the trees to stay rather than be removed, if able to do so safely.
 - Suggestion of a second opinion before any trees are removed.
 - Some of the trees look like they are leaning over the children's park.
 - Generations of children have played under the trees.
 - Suggest investigating a different mitigation than complete removal.
 - Some trees that look healthy have come crashing down after mild wind storm. There are things we can't see in the structure from the outside.
 - Suggestion to remove trees due to the location.

- Suggestion to look into shade structures, not just replanting trees.
 - The shade will be sorely missed and it will take generations for the trees to return.
- NJ Model Tree Ordinance and sub-committee
 - Statewide initiative
 - We need EC members to participate on a subcommittee.
 - More information to follow.
- Tree City Application
 - E. Riccardi will review the log on process and forward information to the commission members.
- NJ Parkway Authority sent Montvale the renovations plans for the rest stop.
 - The major component is the salt storage shed area.
 - Changes pertain to parking and parking spots..
 - Question of how they will handle water run off; specifically the lower area to the east.
 - Hopefully no leaching of salt.
 - Variance on close proximity to Bear Brook waterway.
 - The brook is across the parkway but still within the riparian zone.
 - Any extension is still between the north and southbound zones.
- Article on Montvale as a medical destination in local paper
 - Many doctors have moved their medical practices to Montvale.
 - Suggestion to request the Mayor's support for a walking trail path. This would lend itself to healthy living in Montvale.

Old Business:

- Community Project Update (Lisa De Pellegrini)
 - Update on Bat Education Project (Lisa De Pellegrini)
 - Will revisit in the spring.
 - We will start to work on an educational presentation for 2024.
- Pascack Trail/Huff Pond Update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - Update on Trail Entrance Project
 - The boy scouts were at the trail spreading wood chips as a community service.
 - L. Skoglund states the entrance to the trail is stunning. Thank you Steve Rich Environmental Contractors. You did a great job.
- Montvale Plastic Bag Recycling Update (Randy Preston/Mairead Jensen)
 - Wind down
 - We need to get the message out to the public that the program is ending.
 - L. Skoglund states that the work led to a huge accomplishment and milestone. This project has been impactful on residents and how they think about recycling.
- Electric Vehicle Update (Antonio Vozzolo)
 - Currently working on application for charging stations.
- Community Garden Update (Robert Hanrahan) Absent
- Open Spaces and Recreation Plan (Mairead Jensen/Robert Hanrahan) No news to report.
- Summit Avenue Open Space Land Purchase/Trail (Robert Hanrahan/Chris Roche) Absent
 - The town has purchased this property and it is likely that Veolia will put a water tower in to help water pressure.
 - We would give the water company an easement to put the tower on it, assuming it passes the planning board.
 - Intention is to put a walking path there as well.
- Environmental Resource Inventory – update (Robert Hanrahan)

- R. Zitelli states that the planning board is finishing the master plan and incorporating environmental resources into the plan.
- Bicycle and Walking Plan (Antonio Vozzolo)
 - Currently working on putting together an application for a walking plan.
- New Community Center discussion (Robert Hanrahan/Chris Roche) Absent
- Repair of Environmental Learning Center, trail discussion (Robert Hanrahan/Michelle Zink Jojic)
 - Lou spoke with R. Campenelli of the DPW, and marked trees for removal. DPW will take care of cutting them down.
 - There are a few trees that can't be cut down safely.
 - The wood planks that make up the trail need repair. We need start to start replacing them.
 - L. Baldanza suggests to have a map made of the walking trails and accessible via a QR code on signage near the entrance to the environmental area.
 - L. Baldanza states that R. Hanrahan has a map of the environmental area.
 - L. Skoglund suggests this is a good project for chamber of commerce as it will showcase Montvale retail.
 - R. Preston spoke to the local scoutmaster about a trailhead project as an opportunity for an Eagle Scout project. More information to come.
 - M. Jensen suggests adding another entrance to the environmental learning center from Phillips Parkway.
- Educational Placards
 - M. Zink-Jojic states that scouts could assist with the placards.
- Category One, Riparian Zone and Wetland Protection Ordinance Discussion (Robert Hanrahan)
 - Question if this is governed by the borough or the DEP.
 - R. Preston states that the rules will be more visible if we have an ordinance that mirrors DEP regulations.
- Sustainable Jersey (Lisa Skoglund)
 - Requests other commission members to look into the process of achieving Sustainable Jersey status and provide input to the commission members.
 - Achieving status is complicated and multilayered.
 - We need to decide as a group if we should devote our efforts into achieving this status.
- Tree Ordinance – update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - There will be a 12 month lookback.
 - The penalty for violating the ordinance will be increased to \$ 750.00 per tree.
- Natural Resource Damage – update – no news to report

Council Liaison Report – Chris Roche – absent

Planning Board Report – Bob Zitelli

- Activity has dropped off significantly to mainly use permit applications.

Adjournment - A motion to close was made by R. Zitelli and seconded by M. Jensen all in favor stating aye.

Next EC Meeting will be on Monday, December 11, 2023