

Rahway Environmental Commission

MINUTES

Thursday, September 8, 2022
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m.

ROLL CALL

On a call of the roll, the following Commissioners and Officials were present:

Mr. Jeffrey Robinson, Chairman
Mr. Joseph Paszek, Commissioner
Ms. Clea Carchia, Commissioner
Ms. Denise Rolong, Commissioner
Mr. James Keane, Commissioner
Mr. Alexander Parker, Commissioner
Mr. Eric Hausker, First Alternate Commissioner
Mr. Jordan Parham, Second Alternate Commissioner
Ms. Gina Holmes, Clerk

Absent:

Ms. Michelle Gil, Commissioner
Ms. Joanna Miles, Council Liaison

FLAG SALUTE

MINUTES

Approval of minutes of the Regular Meeting on Thursday, June 9, 2022

Motion: Commissioner Paszek

Seconded: Commissioner Carchia

SPEAKER

None

HEARING OF CITIZENS

Pranita Bijlani – 103 Princeton Ave., Rahway, NJ – pranita.bijlani@gmail.com

COMMUNICATIONS

NY Times Article on Tree Extinction Study
Audubon Report on Loss of Birds

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

UC Air Traffic Noise Advisory Board - (Chairman Robinson is the EC rep to this Board)
No Meeting but received an email from the Chairman of the Board in reference to the PANYNJ ISO study – noise from Newark airport/impact and mitigation noise ideas (noise mapping). They are waiting on the FAA approval of this report then can implement noise mitigation ie...planes leaving Newark fly east over industrial areas and planes flying in also fly over water and industrial areas.

Bayway CAP – (Commissioner Paszek is the EC rep to this Board)
Meeting scheduled for 9/13/22. If anyone has anything they would like Commissioner Paszek to pass on at the meeting, let him know.

Letter to UC Chairman of Open Trust Fund Al Mirabella – Bazega Park – Victoria Durham would like a letter from the Mayor requesting to have the house taken down. Chairman Robinson spoke with the Mayor about sending a letter and he agreed and said it would go out the 2nd week of September, 2022.

Letter to UC Parks Director Ron Zuber – Bramhall Road County Park site – Chairman Robinson spoke with Mr. Zuber and he stated that there would not be a playground installed at this location but there would be some sort of garden or a tiny forest. Councilman Brown works part time for Mr. Zuber and he would like to see a community garden. Chairman Robinson spoke with Councilwoman Parsons who agrees that this is not a good location for a community garden. Mr. Zuber plans on meeting with Chairman Robinson and Councilman Brown the first week of October at the Bramhall Road site.

Rain Garden – Resubmitted plan to DOT to get the approval for the curb cuts. Commissioner Keane has the schedule for volunteers to help with the rain garden.

Sustainability Jersey Application – City Engineer, Daniel Lee is working with the City of Rahway's grant writer, Millennium Group to complete the application. Chairman Robinson

spoke with Mr. Lee who stated that they submitted paperwork for the 2nd deadline on 8/28/22. We have 250 points which would give us a bronze level certification.

Opportunity to tour Waste Management food waste recycling facility in Elizabeth – Tours are available 10/11/22 and 10/26/22 and the tour lasts 1 hour. Chairman Robinson will send an email to the HUB members to see if anyone wants to join our group. Chairman Robinson and Commissioners Hausker, Paszek, Rolong and Carchia are interested.

Protecting municipal stormwater rights – ANJEC has reached out to ask for help to adopt a Resolution opposing strong stormwater rights.

NJ Sustainability Summit – Chairman Robinson attended at Bell Works. He attended a class on How does your garden grow and how community gardens give food to food pantries.

Irving St. Bridge Update – County replacing bridge - Chairman Robinson saw the plans and they are architecturally attractive – waiting for DEP approval.

Rahway Review Spring/Summer – Chairman Robinson is hoping that the Environmental Commission will be mentioned in the Fall/Winter issue.

Rahway River Park Lake Cleaning Update – County removing organic debris and the lake is starting to look better. There has been a new shed installed for the equipment.

The Salem Oak sapling is doing well and should be ready for planting in October/November. We will get a plaque made for the planting spot.

NEW BUSINESS

Shade Tree Committee – Update/Report from Commissioner Parham – The Commission would like 100 trees planted by the end of the year. The Commission hopes that the formal Commission will be formed by the end of the year. The tree survey should be completed by the end of October, 2022. Two members will be attending the Core Training by the NJ Shade Tree Federation. Paul Cowie was at the last meeting and spoke about the tree history in Rahway. He suggested that Rahway has not kept up with planting and suggested that we plant 1 species per street. The tree survey does not include City parks. Commissioner Keane asked who is going to water the 100 trees?

Proposed Keasbey Power Plant – Competitive Power Ventures wants to build another power plant next to an existing one. The Mayor and Planning Board of Woodbridge have approved this plan. Ms Bijlana had handouts about the proposed power plant. Ms. Bijlana stated that many townships have already opposed this power plant by resolution and has a sample resolution for Rahway to do. A Motion was made by Commissioner Rolong for the Environmental Committee to do our own Resolution opposing the power plant and put forward to the Rahway City Council to do the same. Commissioners Carchia seconded the motion and vote was unanimous.

Chairman Robinson, Commissioner Carchia and Commissioner Rolong visited the Tiny Forest in Summit. The City of Elizabeth has micro forests behind the Elmora Branch Public Library which are maintained by the Environmental Commission.

Campaign to Release NJPACT Rules – ANJEC needs help fighting to get the NJPACT Rules released by Governor Murphy. They were set to be published on 6/22 but have still not been released and there are 19 organizations that are lobbying the Governor. You can go on the ANJEC website and sign the petition that they will send to the Governor.

Native Plant Ordinance – Chairman Robinson will be drafting a letter asking that the plants being planted at the library be native. The contractor can purchase native plants at Toe Shade and Wildridge Nursery.

NJ Electric Vehicle Ordinance – Approval for letter and Ordinance to be drafted.

PFOA/PFOS – tabled to next meeting

Rahway Day will be held on Saturday, 10/8/22 from 11 – 3:00 p.m. We will have a table and will need volunteers to man it.

ANJEC Climate Mini-Series webinars are being offered. Please refer to ANJEC's website.

Household Hazardous Waste Day will be held on 9/20/22 from 9:00 – 2:00 p.m. at Union County College

Commissioner Carchia mentioned that in Rahway's Master Plan the open space that is referred to is vacant space and that this should be looked into.

Commissioner Carchia thanked everyone who helped with the huge success of Riverfest! The Rahway River Watershed Association is 10 weeks into the 18 weeks of water monitoring. On October 1, 2022, Spanktown Splash will be held.

SITE PLAN REVIEW/PLANNING & ZONING BOARD ITEMS

Corey & Ragan Building on Elm and Bryant – developer wants to make this into 5 apartments but the City says that is too many – has not been approved

Stone & Farrell Terr. – owner subdividing to build another house – has been approved

1204 N. Brunswick Ave. – empty lot that a developer is going to build a house on and will replace 1 tree with 2 new trees – approved

Iva St. – new house – approved

Monroe/Essex/Clarkson Pl. – Original developer wanted to build apartment building which was denied by DEP. Developer appealed and won but never built anything. A new developer has requested a special permit with DEP for building in a floodzone – no approval from DEP or Rahway Redevelopment.

1399 Lawrence St. – overgrown fenced in lot (used to be a gas station) – developer wants to clean it up and put in new gas station. Tap into Rahway just posted an article about this location being charged with environmental enforcement issues.

961 New Brunswick Ave. – Owner wants to redo building and make it into a doctor’s office with a parking lot.

Lawrence St. – subdivide back of lot – should be required to replace any tree’s that are removed.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

ADJOURN

The next Regular meeting of the Environmental Commission will be held Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at 337 E. Milton Ave., Rahway, NJ. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Motion: Commissioner Rolong
Seconded: Commissioner Carchia
Unanimously approved

At: 9:24 p.m.