COMMERCIAL TOWNSHIP

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF September 12, 2023

Prior to the meeting the commission met with a member of the community and her father to discuss their efforts in tagging and raising monarch butterflies, and explained some more about what the Environmental Commission’s role is.

Meeting called to order at 7:20pm by Chairperson Peter Manzelmann. He announced that the meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Present: Peter Manzelmann, John Dayton, Katie Dayton, Dustin Piccolo, Dale Schweitzer, Pat Smith and Lorraine Shourds. Also present: Mayor Mike Vizzard

Minutes of July 11, 2023: no corrections needed motion to approve by Peter, seconded by Dustin. The team agreed to receive the future minutes via email in order to prevent unnecessary printing.

**Old Business**

ANJEC Report- There is 35 million dollars of grants given to the Delaware river watershed, 2 million dollars of which are going to the American Littoral Society for restoration of habitat for Red Knot birds and horseshoe crabs at Fortescue beach and Thompsons beach. The goal will be to reduce erosion and increase resilience to climate change. ANJEC is giving out trail maintenance and signage grant money, so we could look at applying for those as the trail gets finished.

Sustainable Jersey- continues to sail along. The opportunity to apply for new certificates has stopped for now but will reopen in a couple of weeks. They did grant everyone an extra year to renew their status, and we have projects coming up that should provide us with some points.

Osprey Project Announcement- We have received the $5000 grant to purchase an Osprey sign and hold an event to unveil the sign. The sign will need to be customized to recognize Atlantic City Electric as providing the funds. Katie and John will accept the check on behalf of the township. There was some discussion about what can be done for the additional funds received from this grant and what else can be done.

TerraCycle Collection- we have 9.5lbs returned to TerraCycle so far, but there are probably some additional materials to be collected out at the various donation spots. It has been a pretty seamless process so far. The hardest part is collecting from the different sites due to work hours. Pat offered to go to the library to collect from them, and then there was discussion about some additional locations in order to collect from additional locations. Dustin will talk to Dave about finding out if there is a way to begin this project in the schools.

Bluebirds /Purple Martins- Peter read his annual report into record. Please see attached.

Facebook and Community Outreach- There has been a lot of activity on the Facebook page regarding some posts made about the spotted lantern flies and some various ways to help control the spread and what the life cycle of the lantern flies is to help raise community awareness. The current reach for Facebook posts now is about 28,000 people. We have also been contacted about people interested in volunteering and finding out more information. There have been some people who also reached out regarding some concerns in Port Norris but will be covered more in new business.

Land Use Board Update- There are two new people on the land use board, The Bayshore center/Meerwald is repurposing one of the buildings to house employees and there is a change of use for a building that is being used as an auction house to a crew member house.

Resiliency Report - Commercial/ Maurice River Townships Partnership- Mike and Peter have attended a couple of meetings regarding the resiliency project. The program is called Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities. FEMA is providing assistance to help take care of some priorities that need to be fixed to help mitigate climate change and rising sea levels. The committee came up with 5 projects that were thought of the be essential to help make Commercial Township and Maurice River Township more resilient.

Single Use Plastic Update- Peter saw Chris Finch and he may have a couple of bailers coming that could be used to collect single use plastics.

**New Business**

US Silica Issue - recap from July meeting- Peter met with Justo and he put in a new camera at the entrance so he can track trucks come and go so they can contact the trucking company to ensure the trucks follow the correct routes. They have been doing more watering and have ordered new trees in order to replace the ones that died. There does need to be more work done about the sand on the street, and the commission will continue to monitor. The employees also seem to be taking the intersections with far more care than previously.

Mauricetown Riverfest Table- The commission will be tabling at Riverfest. Made a poster for the table as well as some informational handouts for TerraCycle and Spotted Lanternflies. We also have some Bamboo toothbrushes and toothpaste to hand out. We will also collect names and email addresses for a possible mailing list, and for a drawing for a TerraCycle flowerpot.

Trash Issue- There have been concerns raised on Facebook regarding the trash collection and the Pinelands company leaving trash in bins or having trash fall off their trucks as they are collecting. Mayor Mike will reach out to Pinelands and state that there have been concerns raised. Katie will send complaints to Mayor Mike for them to be addressed.

Shade Tree Commission Creation Update- Dustin talked to people in West Cape May, and there was a conversation about forming a shade tree commission, since the state will be requiring each township to have one formed. There is not currently a shade tree commission, but there are ordinances in place to provide guidance to how trees may be cut down. The commission will maintain and expand tree canopy throughout the community in a manner that is safe and beneficial to the environment for migratory wildlife, preserve and protect trees in the community on both public and private properties and oversee use of public parks, be a resource to the community and municipality for all tree related issues. Some commissions also require a permit and get permission to remove trees and must be replaced or pay for them to not be replaced. These funds will go to the township which would then be used to green public spaces. It is unclear what the current ordinance covers and who can address these concerns. A shade tree commission has a governing authority, such as land use board, that has the ability to say yes or no to cutting down and planting trees as it comes to development. Dustin will look at the current ordinance in place and the environmental commission will follow up and determine if a shade tree committee is needed.

**Open to the public- none**

**Correspondence- none**

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:15 made by Dustin seconded by John.