COMMERCIAL TOWNSHIP

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF January 17, 2024

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm 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, Dustin Piccolo, Pat Smith and Lorraine Shourds. Also present: Committeeman Mike Vizzard; Absent: Katie Dayton, Dale Schweitzer

Minutes of November 12, 2023: no corrections needed, motion to approve by John Dayton, seconded by Dustin Piccolo

The meeting began with a call for nominations for open positions

Chair- A nomination for Peter Manzelmann made by Pat Smith seconded by Dustin Piccolo; no other nominations made- all agree, motion passed,

Vice chair- A nomination for Dustin Piccolo made by Lorainne Shourds, seconded by Peter Manzelmann- all agree, motion passed

Secretary- A nomination for Katie Dayton made by John Dayton and seconded by Pat Smith- all agree, motion passed

Role of environmental commission read by Peter. Main points are to educate and advise the Township on various environmental problems and concerns.

**Old Business**

ANJEC Report- The state will be having more trainings in March and April for Environmental Commission rolls, Land use and other opportunities. There is also an environmental commission roundtable coming up as well. Land was just given in Cumberland County to establish a nature preserve in the Bridgeton area. There was also an article about horseshoe crabs. We should also remember to send information to ANJEC when we complete projects to try and get included in their publications. We have also paid the fee to renew ANJEC membership.

Sustainable Jersey- There has not been much progress with the holidays, but John will re-evaluate out projects and points to see where we can submit more points in the next few weeks/month. The annual summary can also be used to help with points.

Osprey Project- Hopefully can coordinate the unveiling of the sign in the springtime to coordinate with the Osprey’s return, but if not will look for other opportunities to plan an event with a good number of participants. Has been making progress with working with Seth on completing the actual sign and so far the price has been much less than was quoted by the original company. There were a lot of stumbling blocks to get the project started, but it does seem to be moving in the right direction. The plan is to have the sign placed in a way so a reader can be reading the sign and looking out over the river and at all of the Osprey nests. The additional funds could go to looking into putting some native pollinator gardens and other park improvement projects. We would like to coordinate with other local groups to do presentations and have speakers. We should also be able to get points for Sustainable Jersey through this project.

TerraCycle Collection- Currently at close to 30lbs dropped off for TerraCycle. We are now at a point where we can donate points for environmental projects. Slowly we are increasing the collection we are doing, but need to continue to get the word out to the community. Most of the collection has been coming from the two post offices. We still need to work to connect with schools to see if we can partner with them to increase our collections.

Bluebirds /Purple Martins- Working on a sign for the Mary Ella Morie park to educate about the bluebirds/purple martins. Are also looking to improve the park in other ways, such as improving the trash cans and additional signage for the park.

Facebook and Community Outreach- Katie has been able to post some things recently but there has not been as much action lately since the holidays, but is hoping to pick up more in the new year.

Land Use Board Update- There was not much of an update, but it was discussed that there was not enough money to put in a sprinkler system, but it was proposed to see if there were local groups that could donate landscaping, such as trees or shrubbery, perhaps they could install the sprinklers. Dustin will look into options and ideas that we as a commission could help.

Resiliency Report- The township successfully submitted a BRIC building code plus up application before the December 15th deadline. This application will be a 100,000 dollar grant to work on flood plain management, elevation certificates, building code trainings and public engagement workshops. The next step is another grant application as well.

US Silica- Peter has not talked to Justo recently, but there have been new trees planted recently. They are also helping with the park/bluebird project. Peter will continue to work with them on the air quality testing.

**New Business**

Eaglefest- Feb. 3rd from 8-4. Would like to have the commission volunteer again to help with the registration table. Members of the committee signed up for the various shifts needed. Peter will be willing to help with setup and the early shift.

Single use plastics- peter has been delivering 2 larges bags every two weeks. Most of it has been coming from Lalli’s and some from the post offices as well. Peter has been delivering them to Chris Finch for us again. It may be nice to look into getting benches again, but as of now that is not the process.

Year end report- Peter completed the year end report again and will submit it to Sustainable Jersey again.

New projects for 2024- Completing more beautification projects throughout areas of town to go along with the Osprey sign project and beautification of the police barracks. We should also look to plant things that bluebirds will eat in the winter at the Mary Ella Morie park to help with maintaining the bluebirds. We should also look at expanding into Port Norris and Laurel Lake projects as well.

We should also look to bring in more members, especially from Port Norris and Laurel Lake to expand options and opinions of different projects to do throughout the community. Members will reach out to people they know who may be interested in joining. We can have as many members as we would like, but we could also have a consistent amount of members with alternates.

Also discussed Pat Smith’s resignation from the environmental commission. Peter read her resignation letter at the meeting. Pat did state that she would love to remain involved and help with projects as needed.

**Open to the public**- Mayor Mike stated that they are pushing the walking trail again, and would like to see if possible to have the Trex benches completed for that trail. Peter will reach out to them to see if they can continue doing benches like we did. The environmental commission could work on the trail to see about planting native plants around it and maybe putting signage around. There is also a resolution to turn Haleyville Rd and North Ave into a 4 way stop to make it a safer crossing spot. This will determine if the walking trail can happen. Ken McGill also discussed #5 plastics and would like the commission to look into the plastics and see if there is a way to allow for recycling of those as well. If these plastics are identified in a bail they will be sent back to the states and will just get stored and nothing will be done with them, because there are very minimal uses. John will also look into whether TerraCycle could recycle these as well. Ken also asked about a walkway from Port Norris down to Shellpile that was knocked down by a storm, and would like to know if that it could be restored completely. Mayor Mike stated that this could be restored. Ken also offered to rejoin the commission and the commission agreed to have him back and would love for him to join.

**Correspondence-** received a letter about an application to reconstruct the Berry Ave drainage structure located along the Maurice River. Mike stated that this is the new flood gate that they are trying to build. The dates on the letter were for 2023, but there were no concerns from the commission with the project. Mike also stated that they are trying to take control of the gate that comes across Buckshutem Rd. so that they can rebuild that flood gate as well.

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:00 made by Dustin seconded by John.