

# WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING

## February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

### Meeting Minutes

#### Action Items

The following action items were agreed to in the meeting.

No.	Item	Owner	Detail
1	PFNA Research	Spille	Mr. Spille agreed to research the PFNA issue in more detail
2	Well Data	Coyne	Mr. Coyne to find Township well data
3	FB Site and Watchdog	Spille	Mr. Spille to present the ideas for an EC facebook page and creation of a watchdog function to the next Township Committee meeting.
4	Recycling Committee	Beaumont	Mr. Beaumont he will reach out to Recycling Committee on shared issues and resident education on this topic
5	Regional EC Websites	All	All members will individually look at regional EC's in the area, their websites and resources
6	Outreach to conservation groups	Coyne	Mr. Coyne to reach out to regional groups like Sourland Conservancy and The Watershed Institute
7	Consider EC Goals for the year	All	The Commission as a whole will bring a list of potential goals for the year to the next meeting for discussion and consideration

#### 1) Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.

Notice of this meeting has been provided to the Hunterdon County Democrat and was posted on the bulletin board at Town Hall according to the regulations of the Open Public Meetings Act. A copy of this notice is available to the public and is on file in the office of the Township Clerk.

#### 2) Roll Call

*Present:* Jennifer Andreoli (Member), Dave Beaumont (Member), Joel Coyne (Member), Mike Spille (Chair)

*Absent:* David Clapp (Member), Nella Hamtil (Member, Rep. to Planning Board), Jill Haug (Member)

Also present at the meeting: John Dale (Township Committee Liaison)

#### 3) Opening Statement by Chairperson

Mr. Spille thanked the commission members and welcomed them to the 2020 re-organization meeting of the Commission. All present gave extensive praise to the 15 years of leadership from our previous chair, Cathy Urbanski, who remains as an Associate Member of the Commission.

Mr. Spille further indicated that he while he hopes to bring some valuable skills to the Commission, he will need significant support from the full membership to achieve its' goals for the year. Several Commission members have long years of experience, and each has special expertise well in environmental science, policy and education that will be invaluable to the Commission's success.

Mr. Spille also indicated he will be reaching out to other ECs in the region.

**4) Opportunity for Public Comment (limited to 15 minutes)**

It is noted for the record that no members of the public were present at this portion of the meeting.

**5) Approval of minutes;**

Approval of past minutes was waived as the last meetings minutes have been approved at a prior date, and the last EC meeting was some time ago.

**6) Old Business;**

**a) PFNA Contamination**

Significant discussion ensued around the PFNA contamination issues the Township faces.

There was a recap discussion on how this issue came about. PFNA levels have been tested for some time, and been found acceptable. But new NJ regulations were recently passed at more stringent 13 nanograms/Liter level, which is much lower than the prior Federal standard of 70 ng/L (see: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/emerging-contaminants/>). This change in NJ standards brought the high school out of compliance. At some point extensive filtration was installed at the school, and has brought the school's PFNA levels back to acceptable levels.

Some discussion ensued around sources of PFNA contamination. Firefighting foam was mentioned as one source. Mr. Dale mentioned that Teflon tape, which is used to wrap water pipes, was also a probable source of PFNA in the schools.

Ms. Andreoli mentioned that they were extending testing to homes and wells in a ring around the high school. It's not known if those tests are completed or not.

On potential spread of contamination, there was discussion that DEP may not have good data on township wells. Mr. Coyne kindly offered to see what information he could find on it from other sources. Ms. Andreoli indicated that should be a wealth of data available beyond just location including technical data such as flow rates, etc.

**b) PennEast Pipeline Update**

Mr. Spille gave the update on PennEast.

**i) FERC Declaratory Order (DO) in Support of PennEast**

Mr. Spille indicated that FERC issued a DO on the 3rd circuit ruling. It was discussed that this was a solely political move by FERC. Mr. Spille indicated that this DO did little more than reaffirm what FERC has been doing for decades anyway

**ii) FERC Cert lapsed**

It was briefly noted that PennEast's two year time limit for their FERC Certificate had lapsed. This means they currently have no federal legal rights.

**iii) PennEast FERC amended filing for "2 phase" pipeline construction**

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, PennEast filed an "amended" application to FERC. The new plan involves splitting the project into two phases. Phase 1 would be restricted to PA only, while Phase 2 would cover NJ. The route is substantially the same as before.

The phase-1 PA portion now connects to the Adelpia Gateway pipeline. Mr. Spille noted that Adelpia was owned by New Jersey Resources, a 20% owner in PennEast.

Mr. Spille indicated that it's not very clear how this could go forward. It was also noted that PennEast only has commitments for slightly over half the pipeline capacity in PA. This could be a significant problem for PennEast to show purpose and need. Mr. Spille said this is another indicator of over-building of pipeline infrastructure in our region and decline in demand over time. Demand-decline is probably due to a combination of over-building as well as a rise

in renewables over time. The TC will be intervening on the new docket.

**iv) PennEast withdraws app from DRBC**

The Commission briefly discussed that PennEast had withdrawn its DRBC application. We expect them to refile eventually with a revised application.

**v) NJR deeply worried based on their FY 2019 Corporate Report**

Mr. Spille indicated that NJR spoke extensively about the 3<sup>rd</sup> circuit ruling against PennEast in their end-of-year FY 2019 Corporate Report. Deloitte and Touche was hired by NJR to do an extensive audit of the PennEast situation. While D&T found no "impairment" or write-down was required by NJR at this time, the reasoning seemed rather circular and vacuous.

**c) NRI Update Due**

This was briefly discussed, and as the last update was 2015, there was concurrence by the Commission that this was not due this year, and this item will be closed.

**7) New Business**

**a) Review of Town Ordinance establishing EC and EC Bylaws**

The commission reviewed and discussed the Town Ordinance that established the EC, and the EC bylaws that were passed approximately 15 years ago. It was noted that some of the powers attached to the commission have since moved to the Open Space Committee, but we concluded that we would not change the language at this time as it did not hurt, and could be useful if Open Space ever changes.

We discussed the possibility of being more active in the community and acting as a sort of Watchdog on environmental issues, where we could be a point of contact for residents who have environmental questions, witness potential violations of environmental codes, etc.

It was agreed that this could be a useful activity of the Commission, and will be on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Spille said he would bring this to the Township Committee to get their opinion, and to also see if this could require an amendment to the code that created the EC.

**b) ANJEC yearly renewal**

We discussed both ANJEC and Sustainable NJ memberships. It was agreed these were useful resources, but that the paid membership does not give the Township any tangible benefit. It was unanimously decided to not pursue memberships for either this year.

Mr. Coyne indicated that Sustainable NJ has a wonderful inventory of environmental work done throughout the state, and urged all Commission members to take a look at their website if they have not done so already.

**c) NJ Spotlight Roundtable March 5<sup>th</sup>: *Health of the Delaware River: Where Are We Heading?***

This was not discussed at the meeting. Mr. Spille will send a note to the Commission for any who wish to sign up.

**d) Establishment of EC Facebook page**

Mr. Spille put forth the idea of creating an EC Facebook page. This would contain similar information to what we have on the website, but open a new Social Media channel of communications to residents. Such a page could also include small articles, highlighted projects or techniques, etc. It would be free of cost, and would be maintained by EC members collectively. This should reach traction quickly by posting about it in the existing West Amwell community facebook page, which has over 1,500 members.

This was unanimously approved by vote. Mr. Dale suggested we bring this up at the next

Township Committee meeting to get their input on this idea, and Mr. Spille agreed to do this.

**e) EC Website discussion**

Mr. Spille also suggested the EC create a separate web site from the township one. This was due to the perceived difficulty in getting content on the Township website, and also due to the very outdated technology, architecture, and look and feel of the Township site. Mr. Beaumont indicated that the Township were continuing to pursue a new site. There was discussion that a separate website right now would probably not bring many benefits against the effort to create it. There was discussion of analytics and data on who was using the existing site, for how long etc, but we don't seem to have that right now.

There was agreement that we should look at what other EC's in the region have, and the group agreed to look at them independently. Beyond that there was no interest in proceeding with an actual website.

The Commission members voted unanimously "no", and this item is tabled for now.

**f) 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day (April 22, 2020)**

The Commission discussed the fact that this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, that this is a big celebration and it may be desirable to boost our outreach by recognizing this formally and advertising this to residents. It was mentioned that we could use Earth Day as a mechanism for launching our Facebook page discussed earlier. All agreed that we were not contemplating any actual events or paid advertising, but only using free digital means to promote Earth Day and get more awareness of environmental issues in the Township.

**8) Discussion/Other Issues Not on Agenda**

**a) Recycling**

Mr. Beaumont started a brief discussion about the Recycling Committee and issues we've been having for the past year. With China rejecting most recycling the whole market has changed. Mr. Dale indicated that at some points recycling costs more than plain garbage.

There are issues with purity of recyclables. Some classes of recyclables are being phased out. There was discussion whether the Township had to offer recycling or not under State law. Mr. Beaumont asked if we should coordinate with the Recycling Committee, perhaps on outreach and education back to residents on how to recycle, "pre-cycle", reduce garbage creation, etc. It was agreed by the Commission that such outreach would be a good idea.

**b) Outreach to Other Environmental Groups**

Mr. Coyne talked about the wonderful conservation and environmental groups we have in our region, including the The Watershed Institute, Sourland Conservancy, etc. He indicated they are really rich resources we could collaborate with in some way, and possibly get some help on environmental issues in both directions. It was agreed this was a great idea. Mr. Coyne will see if he can do some initial outreach to these organizations to start.

Mr. Coyne also stressed that the Commission should seriously consider the goals they want to achieve for the year, and put forth a wide range of examples, from replacing large lawns with native gardens to education of residents and more. There was general agreement that we should begin to list our potential goals for the year and then begin to discuss and prioritize them.

**9) Opportunity for public comment**

For the record it was noted that no public was present.

**10) Adjournment**

The Meeting was adjourned at 9pm.