

**West Amwell Township
Environmental Commission
January 14, 2010**

The meeting was called to order at 7:29 pm by Chairperson Cathy Urbanski.

In attendance: Charity Hall, John Hoff, Robyn Myhre, Rob Piel, Jeff Slowick, Cathy Urbanski, Joan Van der Veen.

Absent: Joel Coyne, George Fisher (Township Committee Liaison)

Oaths of Office

Chairperson Urbanski administered oaths of office to the members of the commission.

Financial Disclosure Statements

Newly appointed members of the commission, Charity Hall, John Hoff, and Jeffrey Slowick, were given information regarding the need to complete an ethics/financial disclosure form. Based on a communication from Township Clerk Lora Olsen, the forms are required under the Citizen Service Act to guard against conflicts of interest.

While the new members will be required to complete the forms within 30 days of their appointment, forms will also be required of the veteran commission members but at a later date.

Opportunity for Public Comment: no members of the public were present.

Old Business

Green Team and Sustainable Jersey – Deferred to the next meeting.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grant – Still waiting. 300 applications were submitted. The disposition of the grants will be delayed until after the change of governor at the end of the month.

Shoprite Donation - Shop Rite will donate the reusable shopping bags for WAT elementary students the children and teachers.

The commission discussed of the bags would be distributed on Arbor Day or on Earth Day. It was noted that the Community Forestry Commission sometimes does a special event for Arbor Day. Cathy Urbanski will contact Gary Robinson (Chair of the Community Forestry Committee) to determine if the forestry committee will be having an Arbor Day event.

WAT Elementary School Artwork – Cathy will follow up with the Art teacher.

Appointment of Commission Secretary – Jeff Slowick was nominated as the secretary for the commission. The nomination was seconded and was confirmed by a vote of the commission.

New Business

Forest Stewardship bill – The bill has passed both houses and is waiting for the governor's signature. The bill provides tax relief for an owner of a forest track that is being maintained under a forest management plan.

Post meeting note: Chairperson distributed information on the forest stewardship bill to commission members via email.

Violation of Chapter 138, Soil Removal – The violation was for a homeowner who was removing boulders from their property. Because the boulders were being crushed and sold the violation was for mining which is prohibited under Chapter 138. This is also a prohibited act as per code: mining operations are prohibited.

Zoning Board application review – The commission reviewed the Mostofizadeh application and recommendations from commission member John Hoff.

The environmental concerns of the property appear to have been addressed by design limitations and set backs as required.

The following issues were noted with the application under review.

The first issue is that the current septic system is not performing. Perc testing was conducted but within the stream buffer. The variance requested is to allow the applicant to place the replacement septic system within the stream buffer. The commission reviewed the layout of the lot and agreed that aside from obtaining the variance, the applicants only other choice in order to remediate the faulty septic system would be to purchase adjacent land. The commission agreed that the variance should be granted in order to allow the replacement of the septic system.

The second is request for a variance to subdivide a 4 acre lot (lot 12.01) from the existing property. The commission noted that the lot is currently in a zone that is designated commercial. However, documentation that accompanied the request indicated that the subdivided lot would be for residential use.

It was noted that plan did encroach on the stream buffer at the south east corner of the subdivision. However, the commission felt that encroachment was not significant enough to recommend denial of the application.

Of greater concern was that the lot would possibly be designated residential. The current plan creates a lot that is smaller than the current residential minimum. The commission felt that this would set a dangerous precedent regarding the minimum size of residential lots.

Post meeting note: Chairperson Urbanski drafted a response to the zoning board detailing the commission concerns and recommending the variance for the septic be granted but that the request for the subdivision be considered carefully because of the precedent it could set. The response was reviewed and commented on by commission members via email.

Large Square Footage Dwellings – Joan Van der Veen raised a concern before the commission regarding the square footage dwellings. She noted as an example a large dwelling in Hopewell Township. She expressed a concern that such dwellings may overburden the septic systems leading to environmental damage.

The commission discussed the issue. It was noted that septic systems are built with overages that ensure that septic system operate appropriately. In addition, it was noted that the septic system would be inspect and proper operation confirmed when the property is being sold or refinanced. Therefore, no additional regulation would be considered.

Opportunity for Public Comment: no members of the public were present.

A motion to adjourn was made and on a voice vote of all ayes, the motion passed and the meeting ended at 8:23 pm.

Minutes prepared by Jeffrey Slowick.