

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chairperson Cathy Urbanski.

In attendance: Charity Hall, Jeff Slowick, Rob Tomenchok, Cathy Urbanski, Joan Van der Veen.

Absent: Joel Coyne, George Fisher (TC liaison), Robin Myhre, Rob Piel,

Approval of minutes

There some edits to the minutes of the September 9, 2010. Chairperson Urbanski will make the changes and submit them to the town clerk.

Opportunity for public comment

There were no members of the public present for comment.

Old Business

1. Green Team/Sustainable Jersey Certification

Green assignments were reviewed. Chairperson Urbanski reported that the farm land preservation plan has been approved by the state. There is a public hearing October 19th after which the plan can be used for the Sustainable Jersey certification.

It was noted that Betty Jane Hunt of the Agricultural Advisory Committee is going to be submitting articles to *The Beacon* featuring a local farmer and what the farmer produces. The first article featured the Tomenchok farm.

The Commission discussed placing an electronic version of the articles on the town web site.

No other progress was reported.

2. Invasive Species

The Commission discussed various invasive species including thistle, multi-floral rose, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, Japanese stiltgrass, Russian olive, bamboo, and giant hog weed.

The Commission discussed how to present the invasive species that will be used to get the word out to the public. The Commission discussed many options including using a laminated poster at the municipal trash depot and using the school's list server to electronically mail it to the residents. The Commission also discussed enlisting the help of the agriculture teacher at the high school.

Whatever the format, the communication will be a simple format. It will be one page. It will not be a horticultural lesson. It will contain how to identify the invasive species and how to eradicate or control them.

The Commission discussed the initiative as an opportunity for groups such as the boy or girl scouts to do volunteer work.

The Commission discussed working jointly with other municipalities such as East Amwell and Lambertville. There was a proposal to hold joint meetings with those Commissions.

3. Stream Corridors

The Commission discussed the following revision to the West Amwell stream corridor ordinance.

6. Activities Permitted in Stream Corridors Under Hardship

A. For Category One stream corridors, requests for exemptions must be authorized by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

B. For all other stream corridors, applicable variances may be granted by the Board of Adjustment or the Planning Board, whoever has jurisdiction, in cases of a preexisting lot (existing at the time of adoption of this ordinance), when there is insufficient room outside the stream corridors for uses permitted by the underlying zoning and there is no other reasonable or prudent alternative to placement in the stream corridors, including obtaining variances from setback or other requirements that would allow conformance with the stream corridors requirements. A variance may be granted according to Section 40:55D-70 of the Municipal Land Use Law and only if it is shown that the activity is in conformance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, including but not limited to the Stormwater Management rules, N.J.A.C. 7:8, and the Flood Hazard Area Control Act rules, N.J.A.C. 7:13.

C. Any relief granted shall be the minimum required to allow a proposed development project to move forward, in order to meet the intent and purpose of this section and ordinance.

D. In consideration of such a request, the applicant shall compensate to the maximum extent practical by expanding or rehabilitating a stream corridor area on the same property or on another property owned by the same applicant at a ratio not to exceed two-to-one, based on the number of square feet reduced. Rehabilitation shall include reforestation, stream bank stabilization and removal of debris, in accordance with a stream corridor management plan. The applicant shall also obtain all other relevant permits, such as Stream Encroachment and Freshwater Wetlands.

Chairperson Urbanski reported that she spoke with Joe Doyle at NJPO of the as well as the Bill Shurts who is the West Amwell planning board attorney, both of whom confirm that the stream corridor ordinance is subject to the MLUL.

Revised wording for the ordinance has been proposed. The revised wording gives the zoning board more flexibility and is consistent with the MLUL.

The public hearing regarding the ordinance is scheduled for the TC meeting on November 3.

New Business

1. Review of Ziegenfuss application

The Commission has been asked by the chairman of the planning board to provide an opinion of the first application in the township concerning Solar installations.

The Commission reviewed the application. It was acknowledged that the plans were, as of now, conceptual. It was also noted that when the applicant went before the planning board they did not have a complete plan.

Chairperson Urbanski reviewed with the Commission her research into several state laws concerning the application including a recent amendment to the MLUL defining solar installations as inherently beneficial.

The Commission reviewed the plans that were submitted to the planning board. It was noted that the current plan involved clearing a wooded area which might be in conflict with the woodland ordinance. It was also noted that the current plan infringes on the Alexauken Creek stream corridor. The Commission decided that both concerns could be addressed by moving the planned field 300 feet away from the creek.

The Commission assembled a list of questions for applicant. The question will include how the applicant plans to address the state laws relative to solar facilities, the stream corridor infringement, the woodlands ordinance, storm water management, environmental impact, noise and glare issues, and site security.

It was also noted that included in the application were drawing that were intellectual property that would require any possessor of those documents to have non-disclosure agreement with the owner. Since the Commission is not currently covered under any non-disclosure agreement with the owner of information, the information was collected so it could be returned to the planning board.

Chairperson Urbanski collected the issues that were noted so that those issues could be communicated to the secretary of the planning board the following week. The members of the Commission agreed to review what Chairperson Urbanski prepares by way of electronic mail in order to meet that target date.

Opportunity for public comment

There were no members of the public present for comment.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00PM.