

**West Amwell Township
Environmental Commission
January 8, 2009**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chairperson Cathy Urbanski.

In attendance: Carol Cavanaugh, Joel Coyne, John Hoff, Dan Longhi, Robyn Myhre, Rob Piel, Cathy Urbanski, and Joan Van der Veen.

Absent: Charity Hall

Approval of Minutes

On a voice vote of all ayes, the minutes from 12-11-08 were approved, with corrections.

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

Ron Shapella attended as a member of the public, but was asked to leave the meeting during the discussion of the associate member.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approval of an associate member for the EC.

On 11-13-08, the Commission members discussed and approved the following to be added to our by-laws: "The Commission may have associate members who may participate in discussions of the proceedings, but may not vote. Associate members shall be approved by the Commission." The Township Committee had subsequently approved the amendment to our by-laws. Ron Shapella was nominated as a potential associate member, given his long standing history on the Environmental Commission and that he had much expertise to contribute to our discussions. Carol spoke of his knowledge and contributions and Joan elaborated that other committees were considering the same, as a great way to increase community involvement and interest in various boards and committees. Joan suggested that we even have junior members and try to involve the local students. John felt that having associate members would somehow dilute the importance and role of the EC. Robyn said that it would be important to have a diversity of opinions. Cathy mentioned that she had first discussed this with ANJEC and they were supportive and said that other Environmental Commissions had done the same thing, and that there were other residents interested in joining as associates. After considerable discussion the Commission voted as follows to accept Ron as an associate member:

Myhre-aye, Van der Veen – aye, Piel –aye, Longhi – aye, Hoff – nay, Coyne – aye, Urbanski – aye. Mr. Shapella was then welcomed as an associate member and joined the meeting.

2. 2009 Project

Review of certification of Sustainable New Jersey criteria for certification as a Sustainable Green Community. It was determined that we already qualify for the certification based on

our Local Food Productions and Gardens, Buy Local Programs, NRI, Natural Resource Protection Ordinances, Environmental Commission, Community Asset Mapping and Recycling. Joel pointed out that the certification is not necessary to obtain the Green Futures Grant, but it was decided that it would probably help. At this point, no information is available from Sustainable NJ, but it should be available soon.

The EC will apply for a Green Futures grant for public outreach based on the Green Living Handbook. Members were asked to pick a topic and elaborate on it for inclusion in the proposed booklet which we would like to distribute to all residents. If no grant is available to us, we will have a lot of information to include in our newsletters.

3. COAH Properties

Joan mentioned that there was an organization which is helping purchase “group homes” in West Amwell, and that it may be a good idea if the EC could guide them in the renovations, preferably “green”, even if it was just to purchase Energy Star appliances, etc.

4. Case/Holcombe Farms Water Allocation Permits

Cathy discussed the recent permit applications for the Case and Holcombe Farms submitted by the SADC to the DEP (this was discussed via email since the last meeting). The permit application for the Case farm was for 387.5 million gallons/year and the Holcombe farm was for 60.6 million gallons/year. John commented that production wells were different from residential wells, as they are constructed differently, and explained to the members what a “pump test” is. John echoed the Commission’s concern that the request is for far more water that can be drawn out of the ground than is there. The probable reason for the water allocation permits is to facilitate “hoop houses.” According to the applications drip irrigation was requested. A discussion followed as to how this would affect neighboring wells. Cathy mentioned the possible problem with the Holcombe property being adjacent to the NJDOT yard and the salt pollution it caused in the neighboring wells. Commission members were concerned as to how that would affect the salt “plume”. Rob discussed the need to address “drawn down” and its effect on neighboring wells, although he felt that the SADC was not in a position to monitor wells. It is unknown at this time what the aquifer in West Amwell actually can produce. The protection of the currents wells in our township was considered very important, not just for drinking, but for septic considerations. The members discussed that the water allocation permits were probably for a commercial operation. Rob stated that the DEP would give serious concern to the science as to the availability of the water. The Commission was advised that a letter from the Mayor was faxed to the DEP on 1/08 am and they are awaiting a response to their request for an informal panel to discuss these issues. If the informal panel does not sufficiently address the concerns of West Amwell, then a public hearing will be requested. A discussion of “modern day farming” ensued.

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 8:40 pm.