

Minutes for the Environmental Commission July 10, 2014

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 7:30 pm.

Members present – Clapp, Hall, Haug, Piel, Urbanski, Van der Veen, Zuzov.

Members absent – Longhi, Neufeld

Minutes of June 12, 2014 were approved.

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

Woodlands Ordinance – The Planning Board thanked the Commission for their comments on the Woodlands Ordinance and really liked the inclusion of invasive species of trees.

319h grant – Discussion as to the problem with communication with Nick Zripko of the DEP. Payments for work done in October 2013 for the rain garden at South have not been made yet. The Clerk has commented that her submissions have not yielded the proper funding. Cathy sent an email to the DEP concerning the partnership with the Science Dept. at South on 6/18 and has had no response yet. Members urged her to contact via phone. She will do so.

Princeton Hydro has advised that they are proceeding with the survey of the dam project even though they have not had approval from the DEP. They have repeatedly tried to contact them via email and phone, but have had no response.

Janice discussed a photographer/videographer, Peter Gillette, who she thinks might be interested in filming the pre and post dam decommissioning. Scott Ward, SHRHS Science teacher, gave him a good recommendation. Dave said that he could get Jared Fletcher who did the filming for the Sourlands, if we might need him.

Cathy reported that Princeton Hydro had advised her that the rain garden at South was replanted with shrubs on 6/23. Members who had looked at the site disagreed. Cathy will check with P. Hydro.

Orleans detention basin project- The owners of the property with the second detention basin did not want a rain garden planted there. They liked the looks of the mowed area and if they had native plantings to deal with, they wanted the township to buy their property and reduce their taxes. Decision to find another project.

Newsletter – Cathy reported on very favorable comments from Princeton Hydro and Hunterdon Printing Dept. Princeton Hydro loved it and recommended that the newsletter be sent to the DEP (it was, on 6/18) and Bob Thurgarland from the printing dept. shared the newsletter with his environmental commission and township committee.

Sustainable Jersey Re-Certification – We have been certified for 180 points, but will not be notified until 10/14 at which time we will be certified and given a press release.

NRI Update – Once the township committee has adopted the revised Woodlands Ordinance the EC must update the NRI to reflect the changes and also include the invasive tree list. Cathy and Joan to work on this. It was noted that if the NRI is updated in 2014, that it will not be needed to be updated till 2018.

Open Space Committee Request – The OS Committee had requested that the EC address the farming of the municipal property as per hay crops vs, cropped land. The Commission discussed this at length and came up with the following:

At the request of the Open Space Committee, the Environmental Commission discussed the use of the acreage currently being farmed on the municipal property with regard to hayfield vs. crop land.

The Commission would encourage the township to maintain the acreage in as natural an environment as possible and would recommend a permanent cover in hay for the following reasons:

1. The headwaters and associated wetlands of the category one Alexauken Creek are located down slope of the farmed field. Hay does not usually require herbicide application while cropland does. Reducing possible contamination of the Creek with runoff from the field would be environmentally sound.
2. Hayfields do not require any form of deer control. While deer may browse on hay, the damage is usually very minimal. Field crops such as corn and soybeans are much loved by deer and they can do extensive damage.
3. Hayfields can provide nesting habitat for grassland birds. The Commission would recommend that the fields be first cut after July 15 to allow grassland birds their best chance of nesting success.
4. Hayfields are aesthetically pleasing and are very gentle to the environment.

The Commission does not feel that the best use of municipal land should be for a profit commercial operation for cropland as there would be no benefit to the township or its residents, but that it should be maintained in a natural and environmentally friendly grassland state. Mowing the fields and harvesting hay would benefit both the farmer and the township and the environment.

Agenda addition possibilities – The Commission discussed the possibility of including reports from various committees and decided against this.

It was noted that the meeting in August has been cancelled.

Open to members for further discussion. No discussion.

Opportunity for public comment – None.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Minutes prepared by C. Urbanski.