

PENNINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Approved Minutes – November 17, 2025

Zoom Meeting, 7:30 PM

Notetaker: Kieran

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 7.30 pm. Present: Kieran, Joann, Brian , Jim, Nell, Andy, Nancy, Andrew. Quorum achieved.

2. Approval of Minutes from October 2025

Minutes approved. Motion by Joann, second by Brian. All in favor except for one abstention due to absence at prior meeting.

3. Announcements

- Holiday Walk scheduled for Friday, December 5.
- Potential new EC member identified; process underway.
- Borough notices shared on tire recycling (Dec 7, Ewing site; small fee only if tire has rim) and monthly bulk collection dates.
- Watershed Ambassador announced an invasive plant removal event at Mercer Meadows; notice to be shared on green team and borough Facebook channels. EC suggested inviting the new ambassador to a future meeting.

4. Public Comment

None.

STRATEGIC PROJECTS

5. Site Planning Checklist – Next Steps

Andrew reviewed progress to date. The EC discussed how the ANJEC checklist aligns with the Borough's existing planning and zoning application checklist. Key points:

- EC's role is advisory, with focus on environmental impacts of development.
- Much of the technical compliance review remains with the Borough engineer, planner, and land use administrator. The checklist should help EC flag environmental considerations, not duplicate technical review.
- A small working group (Andrew, Andy, Joann, Brian, and Kieran) will refine the ANJEC checklist as needed.

- EC recommended to meet with land use staff and the Borough engineer - likely to occur in January due to workload. Andrew to connect for an informal discussion and to ask feedback from Planning & Zoning board.
- EC agreed to take a sample case (e.g., Starbucks, or another) to test how the checklist would function in practice.

6. Pennington Arboretum – Updates

- EC reviewed the draft bulletin board poster for the entrance at Welling and Curlis. Members were supportive of the layout and simplicity. A seasonal add-on section may be incorporated in future.
- EC will time an e-blast highlighting Neil's recent project with installation of the poster. Nancy will draft the short text.
- Exclosure project: Girl Scout lead (Samuel) still needs to complete a formal project proposal. Joann is coordinating with Girl Scout leadership on process; Kieran will follow up with Samuel directly. Target is to have a defined plan by spring.
- QR code inventory: only about 13–14 codes are currently installed; more are needed for adequate coverage. EC will order additional codes using available ANJEC grant funds. A map showing tree locations and QR codes will be developed for the kiosk and website.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

7. Planning the Next Community Conversations Event – Stormwater & Water Conservation

EC began scoping the next session for January 2026. Key direction:

- Frame the session broadly around how rainwater moves through Pennington, why runoff matters (clean water, aquifer recharge, pollution control), homeowner-level strategies (grading, downspouts, rain gardens, permeable surfaces), and Borough-level stormwater challenges.
- Maintain accessible, non-technical language.
- The Watershed Institute is the preferred expert speaker; Brian will reach out to the watershed ambassador or others at the Institute.
- Ideally explore including a resident example of home stormwater practices (e.g., rain garden or barrels).

- Borough perspective (GP) will be included but kept high level; avoid the session becoming a forum solely for individual flooding concerns.
- Stormwater utilities may be mentioned as context but deferred for a later, separate conversation.
- Planning subgroup will include Brian, Kieran, Jim, and Nell.

8. Recycling & Greenscaping Follow-Through

- EC agreed not to repeat these topics immediately as full sessions.
- Instead: reinforce prior content through communication channels (e-blasts, links to videos).
- We will use immediate future Community Conversations to move into new topics rather than re-run past ones unless needed.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

9. Wildfire Management – Discussion

- EC reviewed the wildfire article and discussed local relevance. While Pennington has low structural wildfire risk, drought periods raise concern, and Borough buildings and tree canopy should be managed with awareness of fuel load.
- Master Plan's Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment includes wildfire-related recommendations.
- EC will address wildfire preparedness through communications rather than a standalone project.
- Andy will share contact for the Fire Marshal (Andrew Pisina). EC may invite him to brief the Commission next year.
- EC will also explore possible alignment with regional partners such as FoHVOS.

EC PLANNING & FUTURE PRIORITIES

10. Early Thinking on EC Priorities for 2026

- Members will email themes or initiatives to Kieran for consolidation. A draft plan will be circulated to EC for discussion in the new year.

STANDING UPDATES

11. Committee & Board Updates

- *Borough Council* (Dan absent): No update.

- *Green Team* (Joanne): Reported strong turnout at the fall Green Gathering. Discussion included home energy audit testimonials, interest from conservation groups in supporting carbon offset plantings, and ideas for improved recycling hubs.
- *Open Space* (Nancy): Open Space Committee exploring whether certain wooded parcels might support Borough goals such as carbon offsets and tree preservation. Brian will assist with language connecting this to EC goals and existing plans.
- *Planning & Zoning Board* (Andy): Land Use Plan nearing completion; Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment now posted on Borough website. Final adoption expected in January.

12. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8.40 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, December 15, 2025 at 7.30 pm.