

Pennington Environmental Commission (PEC)

Monthly Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 15, 2025 | 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Zoom link previously circulated (Betty Sterling's recurring link)

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

- Kieran John, Nancy Fishman, Emily, Brian Friedlich, Joann Held, Jim Fuger, Andrew Seeder, Daniel Rubenstein, Nell (late)
- Liz Ritter (ANJEC), Cheryl Reardon (ANJEC)

2. Approval of August 2025 Meeting Minutes

- Review and approval of draft minutes.
- No comments
- Jim Fuger moves, Joann Held second, meeting minutes approved.

3. Announcements & Upcoming Meetings

- ANJEC Environmental Congress – October 10 (New Brunswick Theological Seminary)
 - There is an additional spot for the ANJEC event for an EC member. Joann, Kieran and Dan will be attending. Let Kieran know today or tomorrow if you'd like to go.
 - Liz Ritter with ANJEC gives overview of the ANJEC Environmental Congress. It is a full day event with sessions, exhibits and a keynote speaker (NJDEP Commissioner Sean LaTourette).
 - There will be "meet your NJDEP" sessions during the event. Different groups from NJDEP will be at the event to talk about stormwater, NJPACT, green acres/blue acres, T&E species, etc.
 - There will be many exhibits at the Environmental Congress.
- Pennington was invited to participate in the ANJEC "best of the outdoors" to showcase stewardship project for Arboretum. There will be a tour and silent auction in 2026. The EC will share photographs of the Arboretum with ANJEC for promotional materials.
- There will be quarterly chair meeting on October 15th – Kieran will be attending and will bring back feedback.
- Hopewell Valley Green Team will be at the Hopewell Harvest Fair on 9/20 from 10-4. The HVGT will be sharing information about "Hosting a Green Party".
- There is a Wild Bird Research Event – Wings Over Mercer birding competition on 10/4 at Reed/Bryan Farm in Mercer Meadows. Starts at sunrise but can start time is flexible. There will be an award ceremony at the end of the day.
- ANJEC offered to get events posted to help publicize – EC can send email with events to Cheryl Reardon or Liz Ritter.

4. Public Comment (if any)

None.

5. Strategic Projects and Special Topics

- **Site Plan Review Checklist Discussion**

(Andrew Seeder, ANJEC Guests – Liz Ritter & Cheryl Reardon)

- Recap of checklist progress (Andrew)
 - The site plan review checklist will be a way to develop clear and consistent input for planning board application.
 - There is not currently a formal process for EC's review of projects.
 - ANJEC can help with training, tools and best practices to help Pennington.
 - Andrew gave an overview of where we are in the progress of site plan checklist.
 - The municipal code describes EC's responsibilities for development review. The EC reviews proposed plans as part of the zoning variance review process. In addition, once the EC submits an ERI, the planning board is required to provide the EC with all applications for informational purposes and review.
 - We have an informing role for projects going through the planning board.
 - There are redevelopment projects that are currently planned that would need to be reviewed by planning board.
 - The EC currently have a liaison to the planning board – Andy Jackson.
 - The checklist should help formalizing criteria for EC's review.
 - Andrew has reviewed ANJEC's sample checklist. We are considering testing the sample checklist with future developments in Pennington.
 - What are the baseline considerations that are in line with our goals?
 - What are the core competencies for EC members that are reviewing projects?
 - Dan noted we do not want to be seen as obstructionists or anti-development – want something that is simple and not a barrier to development.
- Discussion with ANJEC on best practices and planning integration (Liz & Cheryl/all)
 - ANJEC recommended that Planning Board Secretary provides application directly to the EC – directly to the EC Chair (Kieran John).
 - There are a number of sample checklists. ANJEC has one, but we can also review neighboring municipalities like Princeton. NJ Future also has a green development site plan review checklist.
 - Noted that there is a regional effort to address water quality and flooding in Stony Brook watershed.

- ANJEC recommended that it can be useful to phrase comments as questions to the applicant. Asking open-ended questions can be a good strategy.
- ANJEC suggested having a sub-committee for site plan reviews.
- ANJEC noted that it is important to also give positive feedback in reviews.
- ANJEC noted that the EC can have “associate members” that can help with site plan reviews – particularly if they have special expertise.
- Liz will send a brochure regarding stormwater with link to enhanced stormwater ordinance.
- Next step is for Andrew and Kieran to meet with Andy to have discussion with Planning Board.
- ANJEC should send materials to Kieran and Kieran can distribute to EC.

- **Community Conversations on Greenscaping – Debrief**

(Jim, Nell, Emily, Nancy)

- Event recap and feedback (Jim & Nell) –
 - Mike and Samantha were excellent speakers and paired well together.
 - Content and speakers were great – Robin did a great job handling the logistics/administration of the online event.
 - Slide changing was awkward in spots – we should do a prep session the day before for future events.
 - Attendance was down slightly – had 21 to 22 people.
 - The EC should find ways to bring the topics and sessions back to life and continue using the content of the community conversations.
- Publicity and promotion: what worked and what more we can do (Emily & Nancy)
 - Emily asks where people typically see events. Feedback was a mix of online, social media, emails, etc.
 - It is helpful for EC members to send email invites to their personal networks.
 - Hopewell Valley Green Team shared the event with their network.
 - Mike Van Clef (speaker) said that he got very good feedback and interest after the presentation.
- Discussion and reflections from the EC
 - There is a native plant sale at D&R Greenway this weekend. Suggested to promote the plant sale and link to the recording of community

conversation. We could include some of the highlights/plant selection recommendations with the promotion. Nancy will take lead.

- Many people may have seen the event advertised but then forgot that it was occurring the day of. We discussed if there would be a way to send calendar invites to attendees (calendar invite attachment in email or through pre-registration?)
- Kieran to discuss promotion of events with other committee chairs.

- **Other Project Updates (if any)**

6. Committee & Liaison Updates

- Borough Council (Dan)
 - Council is occupied by redevelopment projects – Dan gave update on the status of redevelopment projects. There are concerns about public safety related to development at Delaware Ave and Route 31.
 - Dan discussed issues of existing sidewalks – many in bad condition and dangerous. Typically the resident is responsible for fixing the concrete, but what happens if Pennington's street tree caused the damage? It is important that Pennington Borough has safe walkable streets.
 - Discussed Carbon Neutral – GP and Rick will be going to Duke Farms to observe their operations. Duke Farms are using a lot of electric powered equipment, and they are seeing the benefits. Pennington should be looking into electric vehicles. Dan suggested we should start by looking at police vehicles.
- Green Team (Joann) – no additional information to report;
- Open Space Committee (Nancy) – no report;
- Planning Board (Andy) – no report;

7. Adjournment

Next meeting is not on calendar – 10/20.

Nancy motion, Joann second