

Pennington Environmental Commission (PEC)

Minutes for September 16, 2024, 7:30 pm

Zoom Virtual

Notetaker: Helen (Nell) Haughton

1. Call to Order/ Roll Call at 7:31pm

Present: Joann Held, Jim Fuger, Kieran John, Nancy Fishman, Andy Jackson,

Yasmine Zein, Nell Haughton, Brian Friedlich, Dan Rubenstein

Absent: John Valenza

Guests: Kirsi Paalanen

2. Approval of minutes from July 15, 2024

Motion to approve by Jim, Seconded by: Joann

All present voted in favor.

3. Administrative Items.

- PEC was successful in receiving the Community Energy Plan award grant. This was announced August 14th by NJ Board of Public Utilities.
- Green Team minutes can be accessed at:
https://hopewellvalleygreenteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-08-15_HVGT_Minutes.pdf

4. New Business

- **Continuous Learning** Special Guest: Kirsi Paalanen. She is leading Hopewell (HPW) environmental commission's adoption of the National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat Program. Kirsi provided a high level overview of the program and is enquiring whether Hopewell and Pennington Boroughs want to join. This is the program link: <https://certifiedwildlifehabitat.nwf.org/>. Kieran asked what community engagement has been done to date. Kirsi explained that outreach programs were currently being developed by the HPW team, and Pennington & HPW boroughs could be included in this group. Kirsi explained that certification is based on population size, HPW township requires 200 points, & with the two boroughs this would be 225 points in total that would be required for certification. Nancy asked whether other organizations within the borough could be certified. Kirsi explained that schools could be included. Kieran explained that next steps would be that PEC would explore the program further and discuss adoption at our next PEC meeting. Nancy and Nell volunteered to help Kieran with any follow ups.

- **Community Engagement:**
 - i. **Fall Community Event #3:** Jim and Dan are creating a survey that will go out to all Boro residents asking them to rank their preference on a variety of environmental topics. This will allow the EC to pick issues to focus on for a speaker driven event. Nancy and Kieran suggested we should do follow up emails to remind folks to fill out the survey since there is normally only a 3-7% return rate. Kieran said that he will coordinate with borough administration to send out reminders in the borough newsletter and e-messaging service. Plan is to have an expert speaker and a community member. The event would be hosted by PEC. Dan suggested considering an incentive to complete the survey. Nell will look into this. At next EC meeting we will review next steps including speakers and logistical planning.
 - ii. **ANJEC Open Space Community Grant Award Update:** Kieran discussed the background and that this will focus on the new Pennington Arboretum, particularly the selection of the new native trees for planting and the creation of QR codes for information on native NJ plants & trees. Troop Leaders at the Eagle Scouts have been contacted by Kieran and they have agreed to participate in this program, researching and creating the QR code system, along with signage. Joann has contacted Girl Scouts and they have expressed interest to participate and assist. Joann is our representative on the Arboretum Committee. She explained that a Mercer County Master Gardener is now involved, and she has walked the arboretum and is advising us on potential new plantings. Mike Van Clef, the creator of the original arboretum master plan has also been consulted and is providing input to the plans. Spring is the timing for new planting. Nancy agreed to look up any grant stipulations related to when the work needs to be completed and any interim updates. Next steps are that Kieran and Joann will keep the arboretum committee updated, Joann will progress discussions with the arboretum planners. Kieran will be on boarding of the Eagle Scouts mid-October.
- **Strategic Projects:**
 - i. **GBESE update:** Andy shared that the GBESE element of the Master Plan was presented to the Planning Board on August 14th and it was conditionally adopted. The stormwater management plan will be stand-

alone. Some other minor changes were made, and these were elaborated on by Andy.

- ii. **Carbon Neutral Workgroup:** Brian explained the background to the CEP grant. He explained that the workgroup consists of himself, Andy, Joann, Kieran and John V and that as of this month it now includes the Borough Administrator in all meetings. The workgroup met this month and the team outlined an approach that includes a consultation with Sustainable Jersey. The team discussed evolution of the make-up of the workgroup members which will evolve over time. We will join forces with HPW township as appropriate, to ensure commonality and shared resources as deemed necessary. Next steps will occur after official notification from Board of Public Utilities is received at borough hall.

- **Communications**

- i. Nancy, Yasmine and Nell discussed that some new communication ideas were being discussed but these would be shared at a future meeting once they have been refined. Any communications would be on topics that are valuable and relevant, not just informational. Topics may for example include elaboration on the CEP workstream or other similar topics based on results from the recent survey.
- ii. Meeting minutes and agendas have not yet been posted on the borough website, despite ongoing requests. Kieran has met with borough administration and followed up via email. The borough has received all minutes from 2024 and receives agendas prior to each meeting. We are awaiting their posting.

- **General updates**

- i. Open Space – no specific updates
- ii. Planning Board – no specific updates
- iii. Green Team – will have a booth at Hopewell Harvest Fair focusing on single use plastic reduction; next scrap metal collection confirmed for Feb 8th, noon – 3pm at HPW public works; just Fyi that one of our local compost companies in our area, NJ Compost Man, is no longer in business. there is a nonprofit out of Princeton/West Windsor that has started a free service. We will watch to see if they are viable and if they expand to our area.
- iv. Borough Council – no specific updates

- Meeting adjourned 8:58pm
- Next meeting: Monday October 21st, 7:30pm