

Pennington Borough Environmental Commission

FINAL Meeting Minutes for July
15, 2024, 7:30 pm Zoom Virtual

Attendees: Dan Rubenstein, Andy Jackson, Nancy Fishman, Brian Friedman, Jim Fuger, Nell Haughton

Absent: Yasmine Zein; Joann Held; John Valenza

Notetaker: Dan Rubenstein

1. Call to Order/ Roll Call Start:7:32 pm

2. Approval of minutes from June 17th, 2024:

Motion to approve by: Jim Fuger 2nd by: Nancy Fishman

Aye_____ 5 Nay_____ ABS_____ 1

3. Public comment—No public in attendance

4. Administrative Items

Resolution on ANJEC award money

- Award accepted at previous meeting.

- PEC initiatives in local news coverage

- Consider connecting with ‘MercerMe’ to invite journalists to attend EC meetings and provide coverage of our activities.

Notice of Any Upcoming Events in June & July

- Upcoming events in August to publicize are: Butterfly Fest at the Watershed and a Master Gardner educational gathering at the Flower Garden at the Mercer County Stables.

5. New Business

- Communications:

i. Quarterly Pennington Borough Newsletter –

- Latest newsletter was not sent with water bill but will be sent with borough tax forms.

ii. Site Planning Reviews – Wetlands application

- EC is periodically approached and tasked with providing input on environmental concerns posed by the planning board. The Wetlands application noted

above is informative and does not require an EC assessment. When assessments are sought, there are forms/templates that can be used to record deliberations.

- Community Engagement:
 - i. Community Event Ideation
 - Proposal approved that the borough poll residents on rank-ordering a series of environmental topics for a weekday night presentation in the fall on the topic that receives the highest number of votes. The topics to be included in the online questionnaire will be finalized over next month.
 - ii. ANJEC Open Space Community Grant Award Update
 - The Sourland Conservancy Foraging Forest led by Dan Pace was visited by a small group of the EC. While the fenced area will be similar to Pennington's proposed Arboretum, the signage and information offerings were more basic than proposed for Pennington's arboretum.
 - The trees being offered to us by ANJEC are no longer available to Pennington because of high demand.
- Strategic Projects:

i. GBESE update –

- The GBESE has been restructured to reduce repetitions, make it easier to follow and connect actions to features of the emerging Master Plan. Details about Storm water management were expanded. This version was approved by the EC and will be sent to the planning board.

ii. Continuous Learning

- The history and conservation focus Garden Club of NJ and North America, especially with respect to legislation and policy formulation were highlighted. The Clubs were among the first organization in NJ to push for elimination of invasive species; to push for wildflower preserves; and to champion an environmental ethics. Steps on transforming lawns to wildflower meadows were raised and will be looked into. The attachment provides more details on the varied and important accomplishments of the Club.

iii. Old / Unfinished Business:

i. Question: *“In an effort to be more transparent with our community, should we post our 2024 annual plan on our EC webpage?”*

- The timeline of planned activities could be shared. There was also discussion as to whether a monthly plan could be shared on what topics will be discussed at each EC meeting. This may be challenging, as topics are in constant flux but Kieran will explore, and report back if this can be done realistically.

iv. General Updates:

- Borough Council updates (John Valenza)
- Nothing to report
 - Planning/Zoning Board updates (Andy Jackson)
- The Blackwell property on N Main Street has been designated by the planning board for re-development. It will be sent to the borough council for review.
 - Open Space updates (Nancy Fishman)
- Nothing to report
 - Carbon Neutral Workgroup updates (Brian Friedlich)
- Will be reviewed at the next meeting when Brian is present.
 - Green Team & Sustainable Jersey updates (Joann Held)

- Will be reviewed at the next meeting when Joann is present

v. Review of Latest EC Project Timelines

- To be taken up at the next meeting.

vi. Future Agenda Items

- Junior PEC members
- Sustainable Jersey Certification
- To be taken up at the next meeting.

vii. Adjournment: 8:41____PM
Next Meeting: August 19, 7:30pm