

## **Pennington Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Time:** 7:32 PM – 9:12 PM

### **Attendees:**

Kieran John (Chair), Andy Jackson, Nell Haughton, Emily Ott, Jim Fuger, Nancy Fishman, Joann Held, Dan Rubenstein (council liaison), Brian Friedlich

Absent: Andrew Seeder

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### **1. Call to Order**

- Kieran called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.
- Roll call confirmed attendance of all members except Andrew. Joann joined later in the meeting.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

- Kieran thanked Andrew for his timely work on the minutes from the last meeting, and asked for any comments. There were no comments, and the minutes were approved with a motion by Nell and a second from Jim. All in favor.

### **3. Administrative Items**

- **Announcements:**
  - Kieran shared that the Committee Chair meeting included Kati, Nadine, and GP, and that the posting of minutes, agendas, and Zoom links will be done on time moving forward. The goal is to make the process easier for public participation, ensuring all required actions are being followed.
  - Kieran also acknowledged Emily for taking today's meeting minutes.
- **Kieran's Personal Update:**
  - Kieran informed the team that his mother is facing serious health issues, and he may need to travel urgently abroad. He assured the team that all meetings and agenda items should continue as planned, with his participation remaining a priority.

### **4. Key Events in May and June**

- **Environmental Species Act:**
  - Discussion on changing the definition of the word "harm" in the Environmental Species Act. Brian emphasized that NJ has strong

environmental protections, which are influenced by federal policies. Dan shared examples to illustrate the term "harm" and discussed protections for threatened species. Action: Members are encouraged to reach out to congresspeople to retain the word "harm."

- There is a Hopewell Valley Garden for Wildlife event on May 20th. Pennington Farmers Market opening on May 24th, with 9 full-time vendors and 7 part-time vendors.

- **Pennington Day Debrief:**

- Kieran shared that the event went well. Specific highlights were numerous but included: The Wheel was popular, the native flower display, the eagle naming, and the arboretum. 50 packets of seeds distributed. The temporary wildlife tattoos were also a big hit.
- Nancy suggested fewer topics for next year to allow for more focused discussion. Jim noted the Arboretum sign-up sheet and mentioned individuals interested in getting involved.

- **Arboretum Update:**

- The opening is scheduled for June 7th. Kit is organizing the event, with the Mayor, Kieran (or alt), and a representative of the Heinzel family speaking.
- Eagle Scouts will assist with installations of the bulletin boards this month.

## **5. National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certification**

- Progress toward obtaining certification is ongoing.
  - Purchase orders and e-blast need to be completed.
  - Native plants are discussed; non-native plants are not an issue for certification.

## **6. Hell-Strip Project Update**

- Kieran discussed the project's design and Dan & Andy offered potential water runoff and soil measurement methods. Dan feels the students involved are well-equipped to handle it.
  - We discussed that the pilot project has been moved from the faculty building on Delaware to a faculty property on Greene St. Ongoing Pennington School connections were discussed, with possible future involvement of Toll Gate students too.

## **7. Community Conversations**

- **Greenscaping:**
  - Nell and Jim have reached out to potential speakers. Jim met with Jenn Rogers from FoHVOS, and they are considering her for the program.
  - The program date may be pushed back to allow for more planning.
- **Stormwater Discussion:**
  - Brian connected with Claire Paul for stormwater talks.
  - Emphasis is on framing the conversation carefully and even looking to showcase Pennington School's stormwater pilot as an example of community involvement.

## 8. Eagle Project Update

- Emily provided an update on the Toll Gate involvement with the Eagle Project. She will continue working on this.

## 10. Redevelopment Updates

- **Wells Fargo Site:**
  - Concerns were raised about the environmental issues related to the redevelopment of the Wells Fargo site. Traffic and water flow were discussed, particularly during school and rush hours. The borough is considering affordable housing, but environmental and stormwater issues must be addressed too.

## 11. Communications

- Kieran mentioned the need to finalize a community e-blast on a variety of topics including Pennington Day follow up, NWF certification and a number of other logistical issues.

## 12. Other Updates

- **Council Update:** Ongoing assessment of bridges and stormwater management. Focus on making borough operations more sustainable.

## 13. Adjournment

- Jim motioned to adjourn, and the motion was seconded by Nell.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM.