

**Township of West Milford
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

MINUTES

May 1, 2023

Main Meeting Room

The May 1, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Township of West Milford Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:10 pm with a reading of the Legal Notice.

ROLL CALL

Present: Tim Dalton, James Lyons, James Roger, Douglas Trainor, Don Weise, Chairman Stephen Sangle, Alternate #1 Mark Lynch.

Absent: Thomas Tamayne.

Also Present: Chris Garcia.

PRESENTATIONS – None.

APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW – None.

ON GOING BUSINESS

Greenway Project: Chairman Sangle advised that a meeting was held prior to this regular meeting with members of the Greenway Subcommittee. Don Weise reported that the feasibility of obtaining permits in the wetlands was a concern. The NJDEP and Passaic County will need to be notified since the wetlands in the proposed Greenway trails are located on their lands. County, State and Federal authorization will be explored. The Greenway Subcommittee discussed the necessity of bridges in certain locations, and acknowledged that footbridges will need authorization prior to installation. Chairman Sangle advised that applications can be submitted to the Highlands Council for planning and engineering grants. Mark Lynch inquired if there will be funding in place to build the trails and felt that this was a pre-requisite for obtaining planning funds. He then inquired if a grant can be obtained for in-kind services, but Chairman Sangle remarked that the Township would not have the staff or resources to provide the in-kind services.

Belchers Creek Testing: Commissioner Doug Trainor provided an overview of the phosphate and nitrate levels at several locations. With the significant rain that was in this area recently, the levels were lower. He advised that he reviewed the testing procedures with Mark Lynch, who will assist with the sampling at several locations. Mr. Trainor commented on an issue with the garden apartments across from Reflection Lakes and overflow of water, and possible diversion to Belchers Creek.

Greenwood Lake Bi-State Commission: Doug Trainor reported that there was not much activity on the Commission. The current Chairman may be resigning from the GWLC, and one member has been pursuing grants.

Lakes Committee: Jim Rogers reported on the Lakes Committee meeting that was held on April 17, 2023. Guest speaker for the meeting was Kathryn Coyman, Health Dept. REHS, who provided information on the 2023 lake permit requirements, which are the same as the previous year. Packets with information for the private lake communities were in the mail. Any use of portable flotation devices must include manufacturer specs in the application packets for license renewals. Floats cannot be more than 25 feet from the shoreline. Mr. Rogers noted that some owners have been placing floats further out on Greenwood Lake and it has become a problem, but the State marine police have been monitoring this.

Chris Mikolajczyk, Senior Aquatics Mgr. from Princeton Hydro, was at the WM Lakes Committee meeting and he gave a brief overview of the findings of the lake study that was undertaken in conjunction with Princeton Hydro, the Township, and the Highlands Council. The watershed study is 95% complete, with all the streams and lakes data compiled. Water samples were obtained during the Summers of 2021 and 2022 from the waterbodies that were participating in the study. The information has been analyzed and the report will provide a “picture” of the overall health of the Township’s watersheds, lakes and streams. The report will be provided to the Township’s Governing Body and to the WM Lakes Committee. Grants to address issues identified in the study may be forthcoming. Princeton Hydro also advised that this Summer of 2023 may see an increase in the HABS – Harmful Algae Blooms - in the local lakes. Commissioner Tim Dalton commented that the Upper Greenwood Lake Association was working with the State on HABS, and he will attempt to get more information on this.

With regard to the short-term rental issue, it was determined that each lake community can address the matter within their by-laws and in conjunction with existing Township ordinances.

Open Space Committee: Don Weise had reported earlier on the Greenway and Trail Feasibility Study and had nothing to add regarding Open Space matters at this time.

Environmental Contamination Issues: Commissioner Tom Tamayne was absent and no report was available. The Commissioners reviewed the items on the agenda under the NJDEP.

Shade Tree Committee: No update at this time.

Green Team–Sustainability Committee: No update at this time.

Environmental Boardwalk: Chairman Sangle advised that he would go to the site of the Environmental Boardwalk and assess the conditions there. Repairs will be required, but this can be covered under the current open space funds.

NEW OR CURRENT BUSINESS

Tree Removal Ordinances: Chairman Sangle reported that he had no update at this time with regard to the tree removal amendments. The new stormwater guidelines are being reviewed by Engineering, which may affect the content of the tree removal ordinance amendments. He will be in contact with the Administration on this matter. Jim Rogers remarked that he found the new stormwater regulations on the State website, and the new plan requires tree removal practices. He will forward a copy to Jim Lyons for review.

Autumn Lights Festival: Chairman Sangle inquired if Tim Dalton would be available to represent the Commission at the Autumn Lights Festival. Mr. Dalton will examine the brochures and environmental materials that are in the Planning/Building Dept. from past Autumn Lights events. He will replace what is outdated. Doug Trainor and Jim Rogers may be available to assist.

Other Business: Don Weise commented on the recent forest fires in the Newark Watershed property. He noted that alot of the undergrowth was affected by the fire. The fire was contained by use of the Highlands Trail, but the trail was also used as a fire break, so the Highlands Trail may be impacted for several months, with repairs necessary. Mr. Weise also reported that the use of conservation dogs is expanding and will be utilized to seek out invasive species on the trails, with funding for this endeavor obtained from mainly private sources. The conservation dogs are currently working in watershed areas to detect wood turtles.

The Commission briefly discussed contacting Newark to clean up the downed trees from Hurricane Sandy, since this also contributes to the spread of the wildfires.

The Commission noted that a program for “no mowing grass in May” was recently in the Sunday Record, but did not feel that the program would be too well received.

Chris Garcia reported that the Rotary Club was donating a pollinator Garden to the WMCA for their new campground renovations.

MINUTES

The minutes from the March 6, 2023 Environmental Commission meeting were unanimously **approved** on a **motion** by Jim Rogers and a **second** by Chairman Stephen Sangle.

The minutes from the April 3, 2023 Environmental Commission meeting were unanimously **approved** on a **motion** by Tim Dalton and a **second** by Chairman Stephen Sangle.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

The following correspondence was reviewed by the Commission:

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Correspondence

1. None.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection Correspondence

1. Suspected Hazardous Discharge notification, dated April 21, 2023, NJDEP Case #23-04-20-1636-09, received for Tennessee Gas Pipeline, 960 Burnt Meadow Road, B 4601; L 17, regarding a broken fitting on a man lift that caused a spill of a pint of hydraulic oil – clean-up was in progress.
2. Suspected Hazardous Discharge notification, dated April 15, 2023, NJDEP Case #23-04-14-0927-23, received for 43 Kanouse Rd., B 14701; L 1, regarding a 550 gal UST removal – clean-up is pending.
3. Notice of a GP#24 being submitted to the NJDEP by Stewart Surveying and Engineering, dated April 6, 2023 regarding 233 Gould Rd, B 14802; L 6 for the replacement/relocation of a septic disposal system.
4. FHA Verif and FHA IP #1615-22-0023.1 LUP 220001 permit from the NJDEP, dated April 4, 2023, regarding 33 John St, B 6603; L 4, for the replacement of an individual disposal system in the floodway of Belcher Creek.
5. Suspected Hazardous Discharge notification, dated April 6, 2023, NJDEP Case #23-04-05-1026-03, received for 34 Macopin Terrace, B 13202; L 9, regarding a 550 gal UST removal – clean-up is pending.
6. Notification dated April 12, 2023 from Cramer Ecological Services regarding a FW GP #8 & 10 and FHA GP #6 being submitted to the NJDEP for 97 Forest Hill Drive, B 14113; L 29, regarding disturbances to transition area buffers for the reconstruction of a single family home, construction of a driveway within onsite wetland transition areas, and for the proposed construction which is located within the riparian zone of regulated watercourses.
7. Public Notice Plan for Veolia Water Authority Administrative Consent Order for the Bald Eagle Village Waste Water Treatment Plant, NJPDES No. NJ0051098, dated April 10, 2023.
8. Public Notice Plan for Veolia Water Authority Administrative Consent Order for the Birch Hill Park Waste Water Treatment Plant, NJPDES No. NJ0028541, dated April 10, 2023.

Miscellaneous

1. ANJEC Climate Mini-Series 2023 Webinar: 05/10, 05/31, 06/20, 7 pm.
2. ANJEC – Plastic Pollution Discussion via Webinar 05/04 at 7 pm.
3. HEPSCD – Certification notice of a soil erosion and sediment control plan, dated March 30, 2023 received for Capo Lancaster Lane SFD, B 9802; L 1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Jerry Sheehan, 75 McKinley, inquired if there were any updates on the proposed Veolia Birch Hill Plant. Chairman Sangle advised that the Commissioner who has been in contact with Veolia was not at this meeting to provide any information or updates.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Environmental Commission, the May 1, 2023 regular meeting was **adjourned** at 8:00 p.m. on a **motion** by Tim Dalton with a **second** by Don Weise.

Approved: June 5, 2023

Respectfully submitted by

Tonya E. Cubby, Secretary