



Borough of Fanwood Environmental Commission

Minutes
March 16, 2017

Opening

The regular meeting of the Borough of Fanwood Environmental Commission was called to order via reading of the NJ Open Public Meetings Act statement at 7:30 on March 16, 2017 at the Fanwood Community Center—2nd Floor Train Station by Eric Gaulin, Chair

Members Present

Gary Szelc, Eric Gaulin, Sandy Redder, Margaret Chowdhury, Phyllis Sandroock, Carol Walczuk, Dave Schwartzberg, Teresa Keeler (Planning Board Liaison), Kathy Mitchell (Borough Council Liaison). Dave will be appointed as an alternate member by the Mayor and Council at their regular meeting on March 20, 2017.

Members Absent

Victoria Gal

Members of the Public Present

Keenan Porter (local resident, current a landscape architecture student at SUNY ESF) – visited the Environmental Commission to provide an update on overall planting plan he was developing for the Nature Center. The group discussed the original proposed goal (ecological restoration), which likely not fully possible. Keenan indicated that his focus would shift towards focusing on planting native plants, in natural organizations, with the overall goal to focus on attracting folks to the Nature Center. Keenan is proposing a smaller test plot perhaps the area behind the Terril Bible Chapel generally bounded by the parking lot, Wilson's Trail and Stemmer Trail. This area could serve as a demonstration area, which could be fenced off for its protection.

Keenan indicated that he need a survey of the property, preferably in GIS. The group discussed acquiring a new survey or seeing if there was an existing survey attached to the Conservation Easement which exists on the Nature Center. Kathy Mitchell suggested reaching out the Union County GIS Bureau to see if they had any resources.

Approval of Previous Minutes

Minutes from the Environmental Commission meeting held on February 16, 2017 were approved by the Commission members without comment.

Nature Center Report

1. After soliciting feedback from the Environmental Commission, a revised job description for the Nature Center Caretaker was sent to Fanwood Borough Administrator Eleanor McGovern on March 15, 2017. Phyllis Sandrock has expressed interest in the job and will reach out to Eleanor McGovern to discuss.
2. Eric Gaulin and former Nature Center Caretaker met with Domenic Iannaccone (Boy Scout Troop Leader, Troop 33 of Fanwood on 3/5/2017 to discuss potential projects in the Nature Center). Short term, Mr. Iannaccone indicated that several scouts needed service hours and were willing to remove invasive species as directed. Eric and Dean identified several areas around the Indigo Bush trailhead and near the bird blind observation area where removal of multiflora rose was needed. Scouts from Troop 33 worked on 3/5/17 and 3/11/17 to remove multiflora rose, leaving two piles, each approximately 7 cubic yards. Eric Gaulin sent a message of thanks to the Scouts on 3/13/17.
3. The Environmental Commission had general discussion regarding potential other projects in the Nature Center. Ideas included extending the boardwalk, adding additional signage and adding additional information centers.
4. There is a tree down across Luisi's Trail which Dean Talcott was not able to remove prior to retiring as Nature Center Caretaker. The group decided to see if the Fanwood DPW could assist with this.

Old Business

1. Develop a mission statement and goals for the Nature Center
 - a. Carol Walczuk had started collecting information for preparation of the mission statement and goals. She circulated examples from other sources.
 - b. Group discussed in brief and agreed to review some of the preliminary materials which Carol brought, at a later time.
 - c. It was agreed that Carol and Margaret Chowdhury would work on this outside of the regular Environmental Commission meeting, and report to the Commission periodically.
 - d. It was agreed that the mission statement and goals define the purpose of the Nature Center, and provide good language which included education, open space restoration, habitat restoration, clean water protection, etc, such that it was applicable to common grant projects.) include this into
 - e. Additionally, the mission statement and goals should be consistent with the conservation easement on the Nature Center and establish that the Environmental Commission has the stewardship authority over the Nature Center.
2. Seek examples of Environmental Commission Bylaws from ANJEC and other sources and begin development of Bylaws for the Fanwood Environmental Commission

- a. Gary Szelc received examples of other bylaws from ANJEC and distributed.
 - b. Sandy is continuing to review these materials and will work on bylaws with Teresa's help.
3. Gary reached out to Ann and Larry Cihanek, the farmers who provided the herd of goats in for the Nature Center in 2015 and 2016. Currently, the Borough of Fanwood has not finalized budgets. Finalization of the budget will determine scope and schedule for the goat project.
4. Girl Scout Project occurring in the Nature Center. At this time, no update, other than the key for the information center was recalled and copied.
5. Make shirts for the Environmental Commission. Sandy has procured the shirts. The artwork is being located. Phyllis indicates that the shirts can be printed by the students at the school which she works at.
6. Monthly environmental message / recycling message. Eric has setup a google docs for collection of ideas. Additional ideas are still needed. Teresa will provide some ideas.
7. Grant Opportunity – Union County Community Garden – Eric / Margaret worked on the application for this grant. Purpose of the funds will be to improve the butterfly and pollinator gardens located on the grounds of Fanwood Borough Hall. Award notifications are pending.
8. Grant Opportunity – NJ American Water – \$10,000 award; budget / project due to grant writer. The group discussed several ideas including plantings on the banks of the Robinson's Branch of the Rahway River (which passes through the Nature Center), installation of educational signs in the Nature Center which provide information about watersheds. Eric to draw up a budget and provide to the grant writer.
9. Finalize the Fanwood Environmental Resources Inventory – Gary is still working on this.
10. Provide the 2016 Annual Report – Gary is still working on this.
11. General discussion about replanting of tree in the Nature Center. Dean Talcott had previously suggested that the Fanwood Shade Tree Commission could assist. Union County will give trees out in September – Eric to follow up with Steve Falco. It was additionally discussed that either the NJ Forest Service or the local Soil Conservation District may also give out trees.
12. PSEG Conservation Grant. It was discussed that PSEG may award grants – Eric to follow up on this.
13. Increase public awareness in the Nature Center. It was suggested that perhaps that a "Name the Stream" contest be held.

New Business

1. Need a volunteer to maintain the Facebook page – Eric to reach out to Victoria.

2. Need a volunteer to maintain the printed / educational materials / banner / etc in our space at Borough Hall. Margaret agreed to manage this.
3. Clean Community Day – April 22, 2017 – Margaret (who is on the Clean Community Day committee) indicated that the townwide cleanup will be held at 8:30 AM on April 22, 2017. Traditionally, the Environmental Commission attends and helps the cleanup, usually focusing on the Nature Center.
4. Ordinance to oppose pipeline – Kathy Mitchell indicated that the Borough has passed an ordinance to oppose the pipeline through the Pinelands. Further discussion noted that the Borough previously (2014) passed an ordinance opposing a petroleum pipeline through the PSEG right of way in Fanwood.
5. Bike trails in Watchung reservation. Recently the County of Union released a plan to install dedicated bike trails in Watchung Reservation. Additionally, some existing hiking trails would be converted. The Environmental Commission will continue to monitor this situation.
6. Gary notified the Commission that the Union County Bioblitz would be held in Warinaco Park on June 16 and 17. More details to follow.

Review of Plans

1. 94 Woodruff Place, Block 20.01, Lot 24.02 – Variance sought for front yard setback, for the purposes of installation of a hot tub. No comments from the Environmental Commission.
2. 196 Hunter Avenue, Block 7, Lot 5.01 – Variance sought for fence height, 4' height allowed. Other existing non-conformities included front yard setback (on two streets) and a side yard setback. No comments from the Environmental Commission.

Action Items

1. Continue development of a mission statement and goals for the Nature Center – Carol / Margaret
2. Continue development of bylaws for the Environmental Commission – Sandy / Teresa
3. Maintain contact with the goat farmers (Ann / Larry Cihanek) to provide them an update – Gary
4. Reach out to Union County GIS to see if they can provide a map of the Nature Center – Eric
5. Look for a copy of the conservation easement for the Nature Center to see if a survey is included with it - Eric
6. Purchase / produce Environmental Commission T-Shirts – Sandy / Phyllis
7. Monthly environmental message – Eric to coordinate
8. Grant Opportunity – Union County Community Garden – Eric / Margaret to follow up

9. Grant Opportunity – NJ American Water – Eric to follow up
10. Grant Opportunity – ANJEC – Eric / Phyllis / Margaret to follow up
11. Grant Opportunity – PSEG Conservation Grant – Eric to research this
12. Complete hiring of Nature Center Caretaker – Eric / Phyllis to follow up
13. Finalize the Fanwood Environmental Resources Inventory – Gary
14. Provide the 2016 Annual Report – Gary
15. Need a volunteer to maintain the Facebook page – Eric to reach out to Victoria.
16. Need a volunteer to maintain the printed / educational materials / banner / etc in our space at Borough Hall. Margaret agreed to manage this.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 by Eric Gaulin, Chair. The next general meeting will be at 7:30 on April 20, 2017 in the Fanwood Community Center—2nd Floor Train Station.