

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

June 13, 2024

The June 2024 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, June 13, 2024 via Zoom with Ephraim Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, place and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Township bulletin board, and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL

Members:	E. Buhks;	E. Gordon;	S. Parratt;	I. Singh;	L. Katz
Liaison:	F. Guzik	Advisor: D. Parris	Council Liaison: Andrea Mandel		
Guests:	Agriya B., Girl Scout		Jillian M., Girl Scout		
	Tirza Wahrman, Clean Water Action		Marta Young, Clean Water Action		
	Leel Dias, resident		Eleni Litt, Rutgers Steward		

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Agriya B., a Girl Scout, provided a status update on her project to install small outdoor libraries and benches in the meditation garden near the Rain and Pollinator gardens at WW Community Park. She thanked F. Guzik for his assistance and coordination with the township DPW. She thanked S. Parratt for providing the list and information on native plant species to incorporate into the space. She anticipates the installation of the benches and libraries to be completed by July and the planting of additional seeds to take place in early fall. E. Buhks thanked her for providing the update and invited her to continue providing progress reports at future EC meetings.

Jillian M., a Girl Scout, gave an update on the Girl Scout Gold award project she presented to EC members last spring involving Spotted Lantern Fly Traps and Education. Unfortunately, the decline in the Spotted Lantern Fly population last summer caused her to adjust the focus of the project to general environmental topics while conducting her instructional classes to fellow Girl Scout troops. She welcomes any EC member suggestions for the placement of the traps she has already constructed. S. Parratt suggested installing a trap on one of the trees near the Rain Garden in Community Park as well as including the information on the podium located nearby. Agriya S. offered to include the information on the website she is creating for her project and would be happy to have additional information or trap examples installed on the libraries she has constructed. F. Guzik offered to assist in including the information on the EC township website as well.

Tirza Wahrman, Clean Water Action Advisory Board member, introduced Marta Young, Clean Water Action's Zero Waste Specialist. M. Young leads Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund's ReThink Disposable program in New Jersey which helps communities, government, schools, and businesses reduce trash and save money by shifting from single use disposables to reusables. She is currently spearheading ReThink Disposable's initiative to "Skip the Stuff" in New Jersey, urging residents, plastic activists, Green Teams and Environmental Commissions, and municipal governments to adopt ordinances requiring restaurants skip the stuff in take-out food orders by only giving out single-use plastic cutlery and condiment containers if requested by customers. She welcomed feedback and comments from EC members to assist in advocating and expanding the outreach of this initiative. E. Buhks thanked M. Young for attending the meeting and sharing the initiative information. EC members will further research the initiative to determine if they would like to advocate for the township to pass a similar ordinance in West Windsor.

Leel Dias, West Windsor resident, is an environmental studies student at Columbia and a member of the Sunrise Movement, which is a youth-led climate movement. He expressed his support for the Skip the Stuff initiative and encouraged EC members to consider advocating West Windsor to adopt an ordinance in support.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of minutes were postponed to the next EC meeting.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update

Community Park Rain Garden and Meadow – S. Parratt provided an update on the current status of the project. Overgrowth has been pruned while leaving flowers to benefit pollinators. He inquired if F. Guzik could coordinate with DPW to remove the refuse pile generated by the maintenance. The recently planted trees have had 4-foot diameter buffers constructed to protect them from potential damage during mowing or other various maintenance activities at the park.

Community Park Pollinator Garden – E. Buhks shared an update on the current status of the Community Park Pollinator Garden from P. Bal. She has conducted some routine maintenance, including pruning of current overgrowth and evaluation of the ongoing growth and health. She will continue to perform the maintenance tasks as the season permits and will provide status updates when possible. E. Buhks stated EC members, as well as Girl Scouts and community residents, continue to offer support when needed.

Community Solar Update – L. Katz stated he does not have any current updates to offer on the ongoing project. He will continue to provide further updates as they become available. E. Gordon stated he has begun the process of having solar panels installed at his personal residence. F. Guzik stated there is information included on the Code Enforcement page of the township website that offers guidance to community members to assist in the process of solar installation.

Student/Scout Projects – H. Shankar was unable to attend the meeting. An update will be provided at a future meeting. E. Buhks expressed that he has been contacted in the past by several students showing an interest in participating in environmental projects, especially during the summer months. He inquired if there is a mechanism to handle these types of requests. F. Guzik stated that a procedure had been utilized in the past where students could contact the township administration expressing their area of interest and desire to participate in projects or volunteer opportunities. The practice appeared to be postponed due to health concerns during the recent pandemic, however, he offered to contact administration staff and report back to EC members.

Street Lighting Conditions and Standards Review – E. Gordon stated he does not have an update to provide at this time. F. Guzik responded that the item will be tabled until further action or information is obtained from the township.

Planning Board – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. F. Guzik reported that PB24-02 Ellsworth Realty Assoc LLC was heard at the June 5, 2024, Planning Board meeting. This was a concept review for the mixed-use development known as Ellsworth Center (corner of Princeton Hightstown and Cranbury Roads) to consider updating an existing building along Cranbury Road with apartments on top of commercial space, new residential building and public space fronting Cranbury Road, improvements to parking and stormwater infrastructure and additional residential units to the rear of the site. Mr. Ellsworth is working with K. Hovnanian to develop low or moderate-income housing options to address the affordable housing unit requirements in the township. The applicant is seeking feedback allowing the Township Council to explore changes to the redevelopment plan, no new development is being approved at this time. PB24-03 Crossings @ Princeton Junction, located at 23 Cranbury Road, K. Hovnanian New Jersey Operations, LLC has made an application to the Planning Board for Concept Plan Review of a proposed residential development on property fronting Cranbury Road (County Route 615). K. Hovnanian seeks to build thirty-seven (37) market-rate townhomes with associated stormwater drainage facilities (detention basin). The development of adjacent Lot 20 in Block 5 as a residential/commercial mixed-use project by others will include affordable units required for this townhome project.

Township Council Update – A. Mandel reported that the new draft Stormwater Ordinance was discussed at the May 28, 2024 council meeting. It will be forwarded to the Planning Board to be voted on and then scheduled for a public hearing and approval at an upcoming township council meeting. She stated that she and F. Guzik

attended a recent Assupink Watershed meeting with the Watershed Institute to discuss the potential for regional projects in conjunction with the MS4 application.

NEW BUSINESS:

UNEP World Environment Day – I. Singh stated World Environment Day was June 5, 2024 and is the largest international event focused on the environment, led by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). It has been held annually since 1973 and was hosted by Saudi Arabia this year. The three interdependent themes for this year were restoring land, preventing desertification and preventing droughts and conserving water. Their website does provide a practical guide with a lot of useful information included, and he suggested any interested EC members to visit at their leisure.

NJDEP Rare Plant and Fungi Species of Greatest Conservation Need – E. Buhks stated F. Guzik shared information with EC members regarding plants and fungi being added to the NJ SWAP for the first time in 2025. The NJDEP Fish and Wildlife is seeking public comment on their proposed list of Rare Plant and Fungi Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). E. Gordon is reviewing the list and has proposed to compose a response document regarding the changes and circulate it for EC members to review and provide feedback. D. Parris stated that this is a new initiative and he recommends incorporating, if possible, whether any of the identified species are known to exist in West Windsor. The deadline to submit final written comments to NJDEP is July 12, 2024.

NJDEP Endangered & Nongame Species List – E. Buhks stated F. Guzik shared a public notice with EC members regarding NJDEP proposing amendments to the Lists of Endangered and Nongame Wildlife in the Division of Fish and Wildlife Rules. The proposal contains the listing, de-listing and change of conservation status for species. D. Parris reported that he reviewed the document provided by F. Guzik and volunteers to draft a written response for EC members to review and provide feedback to submit to NJDEP. The deadline to submit written comments for this initiative is August 2, 2024.

I. Singh stated that he noticed a plot of land located on North Post Road with signage identifying it as West Windsor Township Open Space, where a portion is occasionally mowed once or twice a year. He inquired as to the purpose of the mowing if the land is deemed open space. F. Guzik explained that mowing is conducted on occasion to deter the overgrowth of trees on the property and maintain the land in a meadow-type status.

Meeting Cancellation - After some discussion, it was determined to cancel the July meeting to accommodate several planned EC members' vacations and scheduling conflicts during the summer months. Pertinent documents needing review or revision, including the NJDEP Rare Plant and Fungi SGCN and NJDEP Endangered & Nongame Species List documents being drafted by EC members, will be communicated electronically.

Science News Discussion - E. Buhks shared information he had recently reviewed regarding CO2 Batteries gaining traction as a potential solution instead of lithium-ion batteries for long-duration energy storage for renewable energy sources.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission