

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

March 13, 2025

The March 2025 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, March 13, 2025 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; L. Katz; I. Singh; M. Toomar;
Liaison: F. Guzik Advisor: D. Parris; P. Gupta Council Liaison: Andrea Mandel
Guests: D. Dobromilski, Consultant K. Schwartz, WWT Resident
 S. Cello, WWT Resident

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 2024 E. Gordon motioned; I. Singh seconded;
Minutes were approved as presented.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update

Solar - Community Update – L. Katz reported that the new administration has recently retracted some grants. Therefore, regrouping and reevaluation are taking place to determine what projects can continue to be accomplished or if they will need to be postponed until alternative funding can be arranged.

Planning Board – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. F. Guzik reported that the PB has been reviewing and updating the checklists utilized for various project applications to ensure they reflect current standards and sources of information. The updates should reduce the frequency of developers needing to request waivers. A request to introduce a revised ordinance will be forwarded to the Township council based on the changes next month and should come back to the PB in April.

Township Council Update – E. Buhks stated the township has a presentation of exhibits available in the main building with details on the pedestrian and bicycle pathways incorporated in the redesign of Princeton Hightstown Road. F. Guzik reported that the exhibits and additional details for the project are also available under the Mayor's projects page on the township website. Mercer County is also involved, as the road is a County Road. The anticipated timeframe is for Phase 1, which is closer to the train station, to go out to bid in the summer, with construction starting in the fall. Phase 2, which is closer to the high school and consists of more residential properties, will need additional time as it will constitute numerous agreements to be coordinated with property owners.

Natural Landscape & Lawns – E. Gordon reported on the additional information he had been able to gather from local communities in New Jersey that have regulations on establishing a natural lawn. He was only able to find very few, and most contain generic language without specifically addressing similar issues to those being recently addressed in West Windsor. F. Guzik stated that township staff who have been conducting research have determined that many municipalities with property maintenance codes or nuisance codes in place also contain generic language and pertain to traditional lawn maintenance that doesn't address the specific issues being raised in West Windsor. EC members will continue to work with F. Guzik and township staff to provide aid and guidance if regulations for natural lawns and landscapes are developed.

Landscape & Fire Prevention – I. Singh provided a presentation on Wildfire Preparedness in the Northeast regarding upgrading fire resistance over time in existing construction and designing fire-resistant homes from the start for new construction. Practical changes with medium-term actions could take place within 5-15 years, and long-term planning strategies would be in place for 20+ years ahead. Some medium-term strategy suggestions for existing construction would be to replace flammable mulch near homes with a less flammable option like pebbles, installing sprinkler systems around their home and on the roof, and upgrading to fire-resistant doors and siding. Long-term strategies for existing construction include replacing shingle roofs with Spanish clay tiles or metal versions, developing neighborhood-wide fire prevention strategies, and implementing fire-resistant zoning regulations for renovations. Some medium-term strategies for new construction include requiring fire-resistant materials, installing heat-resistant windows with tempered glass, implementing fire-sprinkler systems to be integrated in new builds, and including wildfire mitigation strategies in building codes. Some long-term strategy suggestions for new construction include mandating fire-resistant communities in wooded areas, promoting advanced fireproofing technology in home designs, and researching alternative non-flammable landscaping solutions. F. Guzik stated that many of these types of regulations would need to come from township Fire Prevention services or be implemented by a land use code change or township planning board application requirements. E. Buhks thanked I. Singh for his thorough research and presentation. A. Mandel suggested creating a flyer or one-page document highlighting suggestions for homeowners on landscaping and maintenance to promote fire resistance. L. Katz suggested utilizing some of these fire prevention strategies as community outreach and promotion for the township's Sustainable Jersey Recertification application, if possible.

Sustainable Jersey Recertification 2025 – D. Dobromilsky stated he would look into the potential to utilize a flyer or on-page document from the presentation by I. Singh as an innovative project within the recertification application. He gave a brief overview of Sustainable Jersey and the certification process. He provided an update on the current status of the application and stated the goal to have a draft completed for initial submission in May. That would allow comments and feedback to be received before the final submission in July. A total of 350 points needs to be submitted and approved in order to obtain the Silver level certification. He provided an overview of completed actions and actions currently being worked on by him and township staff. A. Mandel stated she would provide information and confirmation of several posts and documents on the township website that can be incorporated as promotion and outreach. Several EC members offered to assist with various action items and projects. P. Gupta offered to advise and provide guidance as needed.

There being no further business, L. Katz motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by E. Gordon.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission