

MINUTES
MADISON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING May 27, 2021

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Madison Environmental Commission was held on the 27th of May, 2021 via Zoom.

The meeting was called to order by the MEC Chair, Ms. Claire Whitcomb, at 7:31 p.m., followed by a reading of the Public Meeting Notice.

The following members were present: Kirsten Wallenstein, Bridget Daley, Trina Malik, Brian Monaghan, Ellen Kranefuss, Joan Maccari, and Ann Huber. Also present, were Rebecca Bertrand and Kathy Caccavale.

Joan reported on the pollinator-plant giveaway. She has less than expected, about 80 plants and will be at the Farmers' Market on June 3 to distribute. She also reported on the bee-keepers program, indicating that it will be hosted by Tom Salaki and Blair Conley, on June 10, 2021.

Kirsten reported on an eco scavenger hunt for the high school to begin on June 3, 2021. Participation forms will be given out at the Farmers' Market and are available on rosenet.org. A discussion of electric equipment ensued. Apparently, there are a few residents using e-bikes in Madison for local transport; DPW has 2 e-leaf blowers; she has found D & R Landscaping LLC with e-blowers and e-mowers (amongst other ones) to do lawns in Summit. Ellen added that there is another company, Greenwheels, in Maplewood which also uses at least some e-equipment.

Kirsten volunteered to oversee the scheduling of our tables at the Farmers Market. Discussion ensued about finding a way to appeal to visitors with games, displays etc. It was suggested that the Watershed Ass'n and the Great Swamp Watershed Ass'n, each has a "water table". The Borough has chalk board easels available.

Claire reported that Henry McCann, a high school student who volunteered last summer, is interested in volunteering again. He is willing to weed again on Gibbons PI and to fact-check the on-line recycling coach. Hazel English is coming to look at the MRC rain gardens. It was suggested that Henry be invited to join.

Trina reported on climate action. Peter Fried is engaged in a regional effort including approx. 12 towns to develop a climate action plan. He wrote an op-ed piece on the EV event and will be writing monthly features. A climate action template is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Chatham has drafted a resolution on adopting a climate action plan which Madison will review.

Claire and Kathy met with Ray Codey and department heads about incorporating sustainability into all actions. There is a next meeting scheduled for June 28, 2021. Jim Burnet and Ray Codey are also working on a presentation of the selection of fuels for the electric utility.

Kathi reported that green purchasing is improving, e.g. the recycled steel benches are 25% recycled and are 100% recyclable. The new purchasing head, Kevin O'Keefe is on board and there are many smaller items such as scotch tape and paper which are being purchased.

Ellen reported on the Drew climate consulting projects. See her report to the Council attached. This report led to a suggestion by Councilmember Hoover that the Chamber should be included in this discussion although a Sustainable Jersey Green business Registry already exists.

A looming issue involves 53 Ac of forest known as the Drew Forest which is presently zoned for university use. Drew wishes to dispose of the property in an effort to raise cash. At the May 26, 2021 Council meeting, there were approx. 14 presentations of former and present students and employees about protecting the Forest environment from development. There is also new group, Friends of Drew Forest, who are working toward the same goals. Rebecca stressed that while it would be best if we could raise open space money to purchase the property, it is hard to do so until we can estimate the market value of the land. The most recent similar effort was the purchase of 133 Ac of Giralda Farms at a cost of \$14 million.

Brian reported on efforts at the MRC, particularly the meadow showing progress over the past 3 years. He also suggested that there is sentiment growing in Madison about environmental protection as evidenced by the change in attitudes about shade trees. Previously, homeowners did not want trees on their property. Now shade trees are being requested at a rate of 3 or 4 times greater rate. Brian also volunteered to investigate the removal of 8-10 Sycamores in Rebecca's neighborhood, done without notice or warning.

At Ellen's suggestion, a discussion took place about maintaining an inventory of environmentally friendly lawns, trees etc as examples of what can be achieved. Brian suggested that if you can get a group of neighbors to agree to stop using chemicals and stop watering in August, the lawns will go dormant but will come back. He is going to try to convince his block to try it.

Trina reported that the State is considering legislation to create ev charging stations and create a model ev ordinance. No need to create a local ordinance at the moment. A finished product should be announced in about a year.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Ann Huber