

Madison Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 22, 2019

1. **Call to order** by Chairperson Claire Whitcomb at Hartley Dodge

2. **Announcement of meeting notice**

Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: Read by Claire Whitcomb, Chairperson.

This meeting of the Madison Environmental Commission complies with the Open Public Meetings Act. (P.L. 1975 c. 231) Notice of this meeting was provided to the Madison Eagle, Daily Record, Star Ledger, and to tapintomadison.com. Copies of this notice are posted on the bulletin board at the main entrance of Hartley Dodge Memorial and were made available to the general public.

3. **Present:** MEC members Stephan Stocker, Trina Mallik, Claire Whitcomb, Brian Monaghan, Nicole Wood; Maureen Byrne as BC liaison;
4. **Absent:** Renee Shalhoub, Ann Huber, Ellen Kranefuss, Joan Maccari
5. **Guests:** Ray Codey; and guests Angelique, Jessica Griffin, Kathy Dailey, and Marilyn Musielski, Bridget Daley

6. **Events:**

Eco-house tour: Joan is doing an excellent job planning it. Brian is doing green lawns. Ray took care of insurance. David Steketee and Frank Curran doing solar hubs. Ciel Power is coming for energy retrofit hub. There should be a flyer on reusable bags. There will be a bag depot after Labor Day. Composter sale.

Green your closet: Claire having an event on September 28th at MPL with an expert from Eileen Fischer.

Bottle Hill Day- Maureen said we can use her tent.

Town wide yard sale: Week after Bottle Hill Day.

Restaurant Week: third week of October. Perhaps we can launch 'Skip the Straw' campaign then. Maureen will follow up with Lisa Ellis.

7. **Continuing Business:**

Recycling- general situation is that China and other developing countries are no longer taking US recyclables

- Our current recycling contract ends December 31st. Ray said that any recycling vendors will be expensive and even then none are bidding. Madison is at least in a better position because we don't do single stream. Other towns are taking their recycling to landfills.
- Claire suggested 'pay as you go' models.
- Jennifer pointed out that in Chester residents bought stickers for trash.
- Bridget and Jennifer say we should start preparing people now that trash and recycling may drastically change. Ray is hesitant on that because it could cause a panic.

Plastic Bag Ordinance

- Maureen said there are no updates

8. New Business:

Site of Affordable Housing

- The MEC was not notified of the August 12th meeting on planning discussions of the proposed Affordable Housing site. According to Stephen, experts spoke at the hearing but no one on the environment.
- The MEC is now only commenting on the environmental aspects of the proposed site of the Affordable Housing
- Maureen clarified that the BC did not choose to notify MEC or ignore an EIA. Because of Builders Remedy a builder cannot come and build an excessive number of Affordable Housing units. Madison is required to build 40 units.
- Ray Codey clarified that we're at a very early stage of the Affordable Housing project and an EIA is not required at this time. At this point, Madison just needs to get approval from the County.
- Stephan showed detailed maps of the proposed site. An affordable housing unit on the site could flood aquifers and wetlands by the Madison Recreational Complex. Even now the water levels get so high as to lift the manhole covers. The town has already built a 120,000 gallon rain garden to prevent overflowing.
- Our aquifer is replenished by rainfall. It takes 3 to 5 years and we've had to dig our wells deeper and deeper. They are currently 150 to 200 feet deep. With all the development, especially in Florham Park, water is being depleted from our aquifer, which can't be replaced. We use 3.5 million gallons per day.
- Kathy Dailey asked if we know all the aquifers in Madison, not just the ones by MRC.
- Ray pointed out that if we don't submit a plan by September 16th midnight, we could be in contempt of court. This proposed site is reasonable.
- The majority of the MEC clarified that we are not against the site, but that we want an environmental impact assessment done. Both Ray and Maureen agreed to that.
- Stephan mentioned the Endangered Species Act protects the proposed area. For instance, the Indian Bat is on that list and Stephen has put in bat houses to help the population. Woodthrush is another species and Stephan has done 2 conservation plans for them.

- Ray mentioned all the following points:
 - o Madison works closely with the US Fish and Wildlife service. All of Madison is a habitat for the Indian bat. Alicia Protus has done a lot of work on this.
 - o The Open Space Committee of Morris County sees if Madison assessed all lands for the site of affordable housing. County has never heard of a diversion request before. We have \$3 million in a fund to develop the affordable housing but it will cost \$12 million. Madison doesn't have money to buy private land.
 - o Once the site is approved the town will look into environmental design aspects- LEED certification, bike racks, pervious coverage, green infrastructure, enhancing the aquifer, etc. but costs are an important factor as well.
 - o Perhaps Madison will even waive the 100k solar cap for solar panels on the Affordable Housing. So far the only appropriate sites are pool parking lot and the MRC, which the MEC has said is not a suitable site. (Stephan stated that the wetland buffer there expanded from 50 to 150' by the NJ DEP).
 - o Borough will own land. Tax credits will go to the developer. After fifteen years the ownership goes back to the Borough
- Nicole said she doesn't agree with the affordable housing unit being on a former arsenic sight even if it will be remediated. Claire mentioned that there are plant based ways to remediate arson sites. After some discussion, it seemed that arsenic isn't completely removed even after remediation.
- Ray said that it will be built to unrestricted standards, the highest possible standards. Water level will be down 100' (which is different than what Stephan said earlier). He suggests an expert be brought on to discuss all of this.
- Ray- there are no other town entities opposing this site.
- Claire- we are stating concerns, but not opposing the site
- Kathy suggests we submit comments to Borough so they have time to respond and thus all on record. It's important to have the environmental input on record and we are the only ones to do that. Maureen agreed with Kathy.
- We took a vote on submitting the Environmental Checklist letter as is. All MEC Commissioners voted to do so except Stephan Stocker.

Where should donations collected from Eco House tour or other opportunities go? Sustainable Madison has a bank account. We cannot do e-commerce on the SM site (for example, selling composters). Ray mentioned that there's Community Pass where we could do something like that.

Next meeting: Nicole has invited a residential composting expert and Ken O'Brien from DPW is coming.