ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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(Approved at April 3, 2025 Meeting)

Minutes of March 6, 2025 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chair Vicky Binetti. Also present were Leon Lakritz, Jodi Smith and Rick Eckert; Gina Freshcoln, Chet Nawoyski and Anne Hastings joined via Zoom. The minutes of our February 20, 2025 meeting were approved as presented. Vicky Binetti added two topics to the agenda: Monarch Rescue and Lego plastic reduction efforts.

Treasurer's Report

Chet Nawoyski is our new Treasurer, filling the position vacated by Shannon Hornibrook. Chet had no report for this meeting while he gets on board for his new position. It was noted by Vicky Binetti that there were no purchases this year other than a $75.00 deposit to the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge for an event at the Library (Fur, Feathers and Scales) which is part of our Earth Day program.

Old Business

Workshop Meeting

There was no workshop meeting in February because our regular meeting was moved ahead two weeks to the date of our usual workshop meeting. Vicky Binetti is not planning to call a workshop meeting in March unless new projects come in for review or more time is needed to discuss Earth Month plans.

Sustainable Jersey

The Creative Team is planning the next art exhibit for the Park; the theme is "Heroes."The 5th Annual Plein Air (outdoor landscape painting) art event, sponsored by the Friends of the Old Stone House Village and Sustainable Washington Township, will be held on May 31, 2025. Rich Bennett had suggested including high school students in the event; the Plein Air planning committee has invited the high school honors art class to participate this year.

Another project on the agenda is to develop a Community Energy Plan. A grant sponsored by the Board of Public Utilities will be used to identify activities that the Township may want to undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency, such as where to put electric charging stations. A team will be formed to develop the plan, and once it is approved by the Board of Public Utilities, the Township will be eligible for larger grants to implement selected initiatives.

ANJEC Grant/Poplar Trail

There was no report.

Communications

There was no report.

Pollinator Garden

A clean up of the Pollinator Garden will take place at the end of March in preparation for the new growing season.

Bluebird Buddies/Purple Martin Pals

The Environmental Commission will soon get ready for the spring nesting season for Bluebirds and Purple Martins. We will be installing new Bluebird nesting boxes at the Margaret E. Heggan Library property and refurbishing boxes at Grenloch Lake Park and Winchester Farms. Volunteers to serve as monitors are also needed. A Purple Martin birdhouse will be installed before the end of March before their nesting season begins.

Earth Month Planning

Vicky Binetti presented a calendar of events planned for April as part of our Earth Month programming. Earth Day is on April 22nd. There is a host of environmental activities for all to enjoy during the month of April. Events include a bird walk in Washington Lake Park on April 26, a presentation by New Jersey Audubon, a milkweed and marigold and tree seedling giveaways, and the Woodford Cedar Run Refuge on Wheels presentation "Fur, Feathers and Scales" at the Library on April 6. The Environmental Commission will have a slide show on birds, covering

local resident and migratory birds featuring the photos of Marie Hageman. Residents can find additional information on our Facebook page.

Super Saturday Planning

Super Saturday will be held in the Park on May 10, 2025. The Environmental Commission will be participating; help is needed in planning our display.

Washington Township Re-Leaf

Columbia Bank is generously donating a tree to commemorate Arbor Day (April 25th). The tree will be planted in Veteran's Park. Bartlett Tree Services is sponsoring a tree giveaway at Super Saturday. They may also provide a conceptual tree plan for the Thorn Tract, a site where the Washington Township Rotary Club plans to sponsor a large tree planting to support our Re-Leaf campaign.

Monarch Rescue

Vicky Binetti noted that Monarch Butterflies have been proposed to be classified as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act because of their declining population in recent years.

New Business

National Fix-A-Leak Week

Vicky Binetti announced that National Fix-A-Leak Week, a public awareness campaign created by the U.S. EPA, will be held March 10-16, 2025. It's an opportunity for people to inspect their homes for easy to fix leaks. Faulty toilet flappers and leaky faucets are the most common culprits. Kits to detect them will be available in the lobby of the Municipal Building between those dates.

LEGO Plastic Reduction Efforts

Rick Eckert is a member of the Garden State Lego Users Group. He attended an event last weekend where Lego's new product was introduced. Rick brought samples of new Lego elements, including miniature trees and bushes, which are made totally of plant material. They are still working to develop an environmentally-friendly material to make the "bricks" from. Over the years the company has been subject to criticism because of the huge amount of plastic used to manufacture its product. They have been on a mission to make these toys more sustainable and hope to achieve this in their overall product offering by 2032.

Committee Reports

Open Space Advisory Committee

Leon Lakritz reported that the beavers continue to fell trees near Cedar Pond, leaving the trees in unstable and precarious positions, creating a public hazard and requiring them to be cut down.

The Community Garden may be relocated from its present location to make room for the new inclusive children's playground. Leon Lakritz and members of the Open Space Committee are seeking a suitable site to relocate the garden if need be.

Council Report

There was no report in Rich Bennett's absence.

Correspondence/Announcements

There was no correspondence or announcements.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/Dorothy Hunter

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary
Washington Township Environmental Commission