ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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(Approved at June 5, 2025 Meeting)

Minutes of May 1, 2025 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chair Vicky Binetti. Also attending in person were Chet Nawoyski, Rick Eckert, Rich Bennett, Eric Feerst, and Lisa Bertolini; attending remotely were Leon Lakritz and Anne Hastings. The minutes of our April 3, 2025 meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

The current balance in our temporary budget is $314.35. The final budget is expected to be adopted in May. Our temporary budget is $1,891.25, and to date Vicky Binetti reported that we have spent $1,576.90. Vicky attended the public meeting on the Township budget to discuss the activities and events that the Environmental Commission sponsors throughout the year in support of our budget request.

Old Business

Workshop Meeting

There was no workshop meeting in April. Vicky Binetti indicated there may be a need for one on May 15th, depending on whether any projects before the Zoning or Planning Boards involve environmental concerns. Vicky brought with her the plans for two new projects (Washington Woods/D.R. Horton and Township Walk/US Homes) so that the Commission could review them in preparation for future discussions.

Sustainable Jersey

The Township has been awarded a grant to develop a community energy plan from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. There are some administrative issues to be resolved before the grant can be set up. Vicky Binetti said we will not be able to proceed with our consultants until that is done, hopefully by next month.

The Creative Team is working on their next art exhibit, "Heroes and Heroines", for Washington Lake Park. In the interim, an exhibit that was first displayed two years ago (called "Natural Elements") will be installed. This exhibit was shown at Rowan University last weekend.

The Plein Air art event will be held on May 31st at the Olde Stone House Village. This is hosted by Friends of the Olde Stone House Village and the Historic Preservation Commission. Sustainable Washington Township also supports the event with a donation.

The childhood lead screening event was scheduled for Super Saturday but has been postponed indefinitely because of a staffing issue.

ANJEC Grant/Poplar Trail

There was no new report tonight.

Communications – Web age, Facebook, Other

Anne Hastings had no new report. Vicky Binetti mentioned that the Washington Township Sun newspaper printed a picture of our Community Garden recently. Leon Lakritz indicated there are still four plots available in the garden.

Blue Bird Buddies, Purple Martin Pals

The Blue Bird boxes show signs of nesting. Vicky Binetti said that four of the five nesting boxes in Washington Lake Park have eggs or nesting material, but unfortunately one box was taken over by tree swallows. There still are a few nesting boxes elsewhere that need repair.

Earth Month Activities – Recap/Review

Commissioners reviewed our Earth Month activities. Presentations by the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge and by Emily Reed of New Jersey Audubon were very well-received. The bird walk led by Marie Hageman and Lloyd Shaw of the Gloucester County Nature Club was attended by about ten people. who listened as Marie familiarized them with the various birds they encountered. Vicky Binetti asked members to consider organizing Earth Month activities next year.

Super Saturday Planning

The Environmental Commission will have two tables and Sustainable Washington Township will have one on Super Saturday, May 10th. Rich Bennett and Chet Nawoyski agreed to help out. Vicky discussed some of the activities that will be offered at our tables, including a prize wheel for gifts, environmentally-themed giveaways for children, a tree slice where attendees can guess the number of tree rings, just to name a few.

Washington Township Re-Leaf

Vicky Binetti said that the first tree of the year in our Re-Leaf campaign was planted last week at Veteran's Park with a flowering cherry tree donated by Columbia Bank. The next phase will be large planting of 40 trees at the Thorn property which will be known as Rotary Woods. This planting will be done as a partnership of the Green Team and the Rotary Club, the costs being shared by the Rotary and Township Tree Fund.

Tree Protection Ordinance Revision

Vicky Binetti reported that revision of our Tree Protection Ordinance is still in progress. Vicky would like the Environmental Commission to review the draft so we have an opportunity to make comments.

D. R. Horton, Inc. (Block 16, Lots 4,5,6 and 7

This project is known as Washington Woods and is located on Delsea Drive and Salina Road. Vicky Binetti brought along the revised site plan for the Commission to review and to identify any issues or concerns with this project. Initial concerns include environmental documents, tree compensation and open space. The application is scheduled to be heard by the Planning Board on May 5, 2025.

New Business

New Projects

Vicky Binetti reviewed a few new projects coming to the Township:

- Verchio's is adding an extension to its existing building. It would not change the amount of impervious surface.
- R&R Group Development - Subdivision – Applicant wishes to subdivide two adjacent properties and build five homes where there are now two.
- 208 Fries Mill Road – large residential development is being proposed.
- QSR Facility (located on Fries Mill Road). Applicant is requesting a change in use for an auto finishing business located in a wellhead protection area.

Committee Reports

Open Space Advisory Committee

The Pollinator Garden has been weeded, and some plants have been added around the perimeter of the garden and at the base of the new trees.

Council Report

There was no new report.

Correspondence/Announcements

Rich Bennett announced that he, along with other volunteers, will once again be placing American flags on the graves at Bethel United Methodist Church and Hillcrest Memorial Park in observance of Memorial Day on May 16th and 23rd. Rich invited members of the Environmental Commission to join if they are interested.

Submitted by:

/s/*Dorothy Hunter*

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary
Washington Township Environmental Commission