ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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(Approved at May 7, 2026 Meeting)

Minutes of April 2, 2026 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chair Vicky Binetti. Also attending in person were Leon Lakritz, Rick Eckert, Valentina Moncayo, and guest Shannon Hill; attending remotely were Anne Hastings and Chet Nawoyski. The minutes of our March 5, 2026 meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

There was no budget report as updated finance reports were not available. Vicky Binetti mentioned that she prepared several purchase orders in anticipation of purchases or invoices that will be payable in April.

Old Business

Workshop Meeting

There was no workshop meeting in March. Since there are no plans currently that require Environmental Commission review, Vicky Binetti does not expect to call a workshop meeting in April.

Sustainable Jersey

A draft of the Community Energy Plan (CEP) was prepared by Blue Sky Power based on input from representatives of the Administration and the Green Team. Before presenting to Council, there will be review and evaluation of the recommendations.

ANJEC Grant/Poplar Trail

There was no new report.

Communications

The Township has put many of our environmental activities on their website, and Anne Hastings has done the same on the Environmental Commission's Facebook page. Additionally Lisa Bertolini is working on some new ideas to enhance our webpage.

Earth Month Planning

Vicky Binetti reviewed the events for Earth Month that we are either hosting or sponsoring. Vicky also mentioned that the town of Pitman invited us to participate in their Earth Day celebration on April 18, in Ballard Park. She asked for volunteers to set up and host a table on our behalf. Valentina Moncayo and Rick Eckert offered to staff this event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

It was suggested by Vicky Binetti that the Commission request the Township Council to adopt a resolution to officially commemorate Earth Day.

We celebrate Arbor Day (April 24th) during Earth Month. A tree, donated by Columbia Bank, will be planted at the Firemen's Memorial in Washington Lake Park to mark Arbor Day.

Jim McCann will give a presentation on trees to third graders in the school district's six elementary schools and distribute seedlings to the students.

Potential coordination with Margaret E. Heggan Library regarding sustainability

There was no new report.

New Jersey Salt Watch

This new pilot program to measure salt content in our waterways is underway. Anne Hastings, Eric Feerst and Leon Lakritz tested water samples from Bambi Pond, Grenloch Lake and Bethel Run. There is one more testing to complete on April 4, 2026. The results and photographs we submitted to New Jersey Salt Watch can been viewed on their website.

Monarch Rescue

The Environmental Commission will be distributing milkweed and marigold plants on April 26th to residents wishing to participate in our Monarch Rescue project. Milkweed is the primary food source for caterpillars, and we would like residents to plant it in their gardens to help attract these beautiful and endangered butterflies.

Pollinator Garden

Now that spring has arrived, the pollinator garden will soon become alive again. Plans have been made to add more plants to the garden before the area is mulched.

Blue Bird Buddies, Purple Martin Pals

We have several Blue Bird nesting boxes positioned on Township-owned sites around Washington Township. Some nesting activity has begun.

The new Purple Martin bird houses are ready for their expected arrival in early April. No nesting activity was noticed on a recent inspection last week.

Super Saturday

The Commission will be participating in Super Saturday in Washington Lake Park on May 9. We will host a table for the Environmental Commission and one for the Green Team. Vicky Binetti will be putting together a schedule at our May meeting to be sure we have coverage for the entire day. She would like to have all members participate.

Washington Township Re-Leaf

During Earth Month we plan to have a tree planting of 20 additional trees at Rotary Woods, an open space lot on Woodbury-Turnersville & Grenloch Road. Last year 40 trees were planted. The project is sponsored by the Rotary Club and the Township as part of our Re-Leaf initiative.

Data Centers

A meeting was held with Township officials to discuss the data centers that are being developed in New Jersey, specifically our neighbors in Vineland and Williamstown. During the meeting, Rick Eckert and Vicky Binetti highlighted the impact of these data centers on energy and water supply and the noise level associated with them. Township officials are aware of the negative impact on communities, and they are following the situations in Vineland and Williamstown. Rick will continue to follow up on this topic.

New Business

Tote Bag Collection

A new project to collect gently used or new shopping totes for Mother's Cupboard will be tabled until summertime after our Earth Month activities have concluded.

Committee Reports

Open Space Advisory Committee

The Community Garden will be open for planting in May. The new location is behind the greenhouse near Greentree Road. Previous participants have been notified of the status and upcoming transition.

Council Report

There was no report.

Correspondence/Announcements

There was nothing to report tonight.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/Dorothy Hunter

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary
Washington Township Environmental Commission