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ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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(Approved at February 5, 2026 Meeting)

Minutes of Reorganization Meeting of January 8, 2026

The Reorganization Meeting was called to order by Secretary Dorothy Hunter. The following members of the Environmental Commission were in attendance: Vicky Binetti, Leon Lakritz, Eric Feerst, Lisa Bertolini, Rick Eckert, Chet Nawoyski, Jodi Smith, as was Council Liaison Dana Pasqualone, guest Cameron Shapiro; attending remotely was Anne Hastings and guest Joe Buscarnera. Vicky Binetti introduced our new Council Liaison, Dana Pasqualone, along with past Watershed Ambassador Cameron Shapiro, and current Watershed Ambassador Joe Buscarnera.

The first order of business tonight was to open nominations for Chairman for the current year. On a motion made by Leon Lakritz, seconded by Jodi Smith, Vicky Binetti was nominated for the position of Chairman. With no other nominations, the vote was unanimous to elect Vicky Binetti Chairman of the Environmental Commission for 2026. The meeting was then turned over to Vicky Binetti.

Chairman Vicky Binetti asked for nominations for Vice Chairman. Leon Lakritz nominated Anne Hastings; the nomination was seconded by Eric Feerst. Jodi Smith nominated Chet Nawoyski; the nomination was seconded by Rick Eckert. Anne Hastings was elected by a majority vote to be Vice Chairman for 2026. Chet Nawoyski was nominated by Jodi Smith for Treasurer. The nomination was seconded by Eric Feerst. No other nominations for Treasurer

were presented, and Chet Nawoyski was unanimously voted to be Treasurer for 2026. On a motion made by Vicky Binetti, Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Dorothy Hunter as Secretary of the Environmental Commission.

Rick Eckert proposed an addition to the agenda, a discussion of potential zoning provisions with respect to AI data centers. Rick noted that they may have a tremendous impact on water, power, and resources.

Treasurer's Report

Vicky Binetti discussed some of the year end items that were purchased for our activities in 2026. Vicky mentioned that our budget for 2026 will likely be finalized in June.

Old Business

Workshop Meeting

There was no workshop meeting in December.

Sustainable Jersey

The January Green Team meeting was cancelled. Vicky Binetti said that the Township is waiting for the draft of the Community Energy Plan (CEP) from Blue Sky Power, which is expected to be ready about mid-January. The Township will review the draft, modify it as needed, and select 10 or 12 priorities that we could do over the next several years. We will also need to solicit public input. BlueSky Power will help to manage the process for us. Once we receive approval of the CEP from the BPU, the Township would be eligible to apply for more sizeable grants to complete the work.

ANJEC Grant/Poplar Trail

There was no new report. This year the Commission plans to label a number of trees in Washington Lake Park using our tree inventory for identification purposes. The labels we plan to use are metal and available through Plantsoon. The signs will have a QR code linking to a plant data registry on Plantsoon's website which will provide educational information about the trees and plants.

Communications – Web Page, Facebook, Other

There was no new activity to report. Commissioners discussed several ideas for short videos and other media to communicate about our activities, as well as ideas for periodic outreach on environmental issues. Specific topics suggested include Monarch butterflies, Atlantic white cedars, trails, spring vegetation, etc. We will revisit this at our next meeting.

Earth Month 2026 Planning

A meeting has been scheduled for January 16th at the Margaret Heggan Library where Vicky Binetti will meet with Sheila Mikkelson to discuss ideas to help celebrate Earth Month. Vicky Binetti mentioned that we have had successful partnerships with the Library sponsoring various events in previous years. They have expressed interest to specifically initiate sustainable practices. Potential Earth Month activities might include an adult community book read on an environmental topic. New Jersey Audubon has previously provided a speaker on birds. We could arrange for another lecture this year. Other ideas offered include a clean-up, recycled art show, a recycled fashion show, seed bomb workshop, and a climate pledge wall.

For Arbor Day, Leon Lakritz suggested we select a location within the Township to host a small tree planting, utilizing volunteers to plant the trees. Leon also mentioned that tree seedlings may not be available this year from the State. Vicky Binetti would like to have a plan in place by February for things we want to do for Earth Month in April.

New Jersey Salt Watch

The Environmental Commission is sponsoring a new pilot project to measure the impact of road salt in our streams and lakes. Vicky Binetti ordered three test kits for three locations. Vicky reminded Leon Lakritz and Anne Hastings to meet with Frank Altamuro to help identify appropriate locations for the salt sampling.

Monarch Rescue

Lisa Bertolini has volunteered to chair our Monarch Rescue project this year.

Pollinator Garden

Until spring, there is no activity in the pollinator garden. Chet Nawoyski is checking into purchasing “Save the Bees” seed packs that are known to attract bees and promote expansion of the bee population. These could be used as giveaways to promote the pollinator garden.

Blue Bird Buddies, Purple Martin Pals

The Blue Birds will begin nesting around the end of February/beginning of March. Vicky Binetti said that a few of the nesting boxes need some repair. We are ready to welcome Purple Martins to their new housing in Washington Lake Park sometime during March.

Washington Township Re-Leaf

The goal of our Township Re-Leaf initiative is to plant 5,000 trees in ten years. Vicky Binetti mentioned that so far we have planted about 50 large trees in the Township which doesn’t take into account the number of seedlings planted by our residents as a result of our

tree giveaway program. Vicky said we still have some trees to replant in Rotary Woods because the original trees were damaged or destroyed due to weather or wind. Leon Lakritz recognized the Library for the outstanding job they are doing to care for the five trees that were placed at their location.

Tree Protection Ordinance Revision

Our tree ordinance was revised recently to be compliant with new State requirements, specifically as it relates to trees being removed from private residences. The system has not been set up as yet, making implementation challenging.

CarMax Auto Superstores, Inc. (Block 115.02, Lots 9.01, 16, and 16.01)

Vicky Binetti had no new update. This has been postponed a few times.

Nexus Watson Drive (Block 115, Lot 7) 301 Watson Drive

This project is coming before the Planning Board on February 3, 2026, and Vicky Binetti will submit a letter addressing our issues and concerns. Vicky Binetti noted that we have received a copy of the Phase I Environmental Assessment which we did not have previously. Because of prior agricultural use and the sampling they did, high levels of arsenic and lead were found. The developer proposes to use soil sampling and arithmetic averaging to bring concentrations of arsenic and lead down to residential standards of exposure.

New Business

Activity Proposals for 2026

Several new ideas were proposed last month for new activities in 2026. Since it's become apparent that people have accumulated excess reuseable totes that they haven't used, Vicky Binetti suggested we collect them for Mother's Cupboard. A container placed in the Municipal Building lobby would be a convenient collection location, next to the barrel which collects food items for Mother's Cupboard. If any member is interested in managing, please let Vicky know.

New Site Plan Applications

Vicky Binetti mentioned a few site plans that will be coming in for review the latter part of February: a solar landscape business and a small dental office on Delsea Drive and Park Place.

Committee Reports

Open Space Advisory Committee

There was no report tonight.

Council Report

There was no Council report.

Correspondence/Announcements

There was no correspondence or announcements.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by:

Dorothy Hunter

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary
Washington Township Environmental Commission

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