

**WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

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**(Approved at March 4, 2021 Meeting)**

**Minutes of February 4, 2021**

The meeting was held virtually and called to order by Chair Vicky Binetti. Also attending remotely were Anne Hastings, Leon Lakritz, Peter Garbowski, and Ryan Lee. The minutes of our January 7, 2021 Reorganization meeting were approved as presented.

**Treasurer's Report**

There was no report in Treasurer Ann Culkin's absence

**Old Business**

**Workshop Meeting**

There was no workshop meeting in January. Vicky Binetti announced that a February workshop meeting will take place to discuss new ideas for our Facebook and web pages.

**Sustainable Jersey**

The Washington Township Sustainability team welcomed new members Joe Perry of Washington Township, Renee Pollard of the Board of Education, and Terry McPoyle of the Planning Board.

The Washington Township Green Team will shortly announce on their webpage and social media that they are initiating a program promoting practical ideas and advice for reducing waste in their homes and on the go. The initiative will be known as “Zero Waste Wednesdays” and is modelled after one created by the Evesham Green Team promoted through TriCounty Sustainability. Vicky Binetti said tips will be posted to increase awareness of items-individuals are throwing away and how to reduce and possibly recycle that waste.

The Arts & Creative Culture team has three murals on display near the Ranger Station in Washington Lake Park and hopes to add more to the collection in the next couple of months. They are hoping to identify other locations around town; one possibility is at the Olde Stone House Village. There will also be another art exhibit at the Gallery in the Park in the spring. The Sun newspaper may publish an article about the gallery.

The Green Team may work with Jefferson Health and other local healthcare facilities to improve childhood lead screening rates. Vicky Binetti noted that Gloucester County ranks low on getting children screened for blood lead levels compared to other counties in the state.

Vicky Binetti announced that the Township has been offered a \$6,000 grant from New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to help fund an electric vehicle charging station. It is anticipated that the charging station will be located at a convenient location, most likely the Municipal Building complex on Egg Harbor Road. Eric Feerst will be working on the project to help the town prepare for electric vehicle use by local government and residents.

#### Proposed Ordinance: Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Release (Feral Cats)

Anne Hastings obtained statistics on the number of euthanasias and cats taken to the shelter from Washington Township in 2018 and 2019. She reviewed the data with the Commission, noting that adoptions were low in comparison to the kill rate. She mentioned that a new director has been named at the shelter, and the new director’s goal is to raise the number of feral cats who leave the shelter. Anne mentioned that Gypsy Rose Animal Rescue has taken over the People for Animals facility in Clayton and offers low cost spay/neuter services and inoculations for feral cats. Anne suggested a review of a Township ordinance that prohibits feeding of feral cats by residents. Anne’s position is that people who take care of and feed animals should not be penalized; Anne has recommended that such caretakers should be encouraged to have the animals spayed/neutered so that the overall population of feral cats is reduced.

#### ANJEC Grant/Poplar Trail

Vicky Binetti and Leon Lakritz continue to work on getting the Township website updated with information on the Poplar Trail and flora and fauna.

#### Climate Change Project with Heggan Library

The Margaret E. Heggan Library has received a grant from the American Library Association in its Resilient Communities program to become a climate hub. The Environmental Commission partnered with the Library on the grant application, and as part of our outreach on climate change, a series of readings and lectures is being considered. Vicky Binetti mentioned that there are several professional

videos that Rutgers University did on climate change, and they are being considered as part of a film series.

Ryan Lee is conducting research on the weather station located in the James G. Atkinson Memorial Park. He learned that the weather station began recording weather data in 2008 and continues to the present. He reported that the records include readings such as temperature, dew point, wind speed, wind direction, precipitation, etc. Ryan is also investigating the weather station at Rowan University and is currently attempting to locate someone at Rowan familiar with the station to learn about its history and what data has been recorded.

#### Communications-Web Page, Facebook

A discussion took place about the changes and additions we could make to enhance our web page and Facebook page for 2021. Vicky Binetti asked members to contribute ideas that would be of interest to residents. Several suggestions were presented, and a workshop meeting was called for February 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss these ideas in more detail.

#### Earth Day/Super Saturday

It is anticipated that the pandemic will prevent us from holding most, if not all, of our usual Earth Day activities. Vicky Binetti suggested instead that we promote climate change and design a program to include lectures and videos. She noted that Jim McCann of Public Works volunteered again to grow milkweed in the greenhouse to distribute on Super Saturday if the event is held in the Park. These plants, which are the main food source of Monarch butterfly larvae (caterpillars), have been given in the past to residents who want to help expand the Monarch Butterfly population. Jim is also adding marigolds this year which are a natural insect repellent and very helpful to gardeners who wish to minimize use of chemical pesticides.

#### Bluebird Buddies

Our Bluebird project last year was a success. Vicky Binetti announced that we will continue the program again this year to help expand the Bluebird population. She mentioned that volunteers are needed to map Bluebird nest boxes that are placed around the Township. For residents who may want to build their own Bluebird houses, a link to the Cornell Lab web page could be listed on our Facebook page. Eric Feerst has expressed interest to work on this project and potentially to install Purple Martin birdhouses. Purple Martins are known for their ability to ingest significant quantities of flying insects, including mosquitoes.

#### Monarch Butterflies

Vicky Binetti suggested a project last month to tag Monarch butterflies so they can be traced to Washington Township if recovered elsewhere during their migration. She indicated tonight that this may be postponed if it becomes apparent that there are not enough Monarchs in the area to tag.

## **New Business**

### **ANJEC Environmental Commissioners' Training**

ANJEC is offering their "Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions" training in a virtual format this year in four separate modules. The training is free for ANJEC members, but participants need to register in advance. Since the Environmental Commission is a member of ANJEC, Vicky Binetti encouraged members to attend, even if they previously participated, as it is very relevant training, and there will be new information.

### **Preparation for Plastic Bag Ban**

Vicky Binetti noted that New Jersey's ban on plastic bags and straws is the most stringent in the country. Plastic straws must be replaced with paper straws on November 22, 2021, and single-use plastic bags will be banned in May 2022. Anne Hastings offered to post the information on our Facebook page.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Open Space Advisory Committee**

The Open Space Committee has a couple of properties under consideration for purchase as open space, but none have been finalized to date.

The Community Garden will open this spring with 30 plots available. Leon Lakritz is contacting last year's participants to see if they are interested in returning to garden and would like to retain a garden plot for 2021.

The Community Forestry Management Plan has been approved, and Leon Lakritz is asking for volunteers to assist with activities planned later in the year, including a tree seedling giveaway on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Announcements**

Vicky Binetti announced that the state "Ride of Silence" organization is planning its annual event to memorialize cyclists who lost their lives or were injured in road accidents; the group is considering holding the ride in Washington Township. The bicycle ride will take place worldwide on May 19, 2021.

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

Submitted by:

*/s/Dorothy Hunter*

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary  
Washington Township Environmental Commission

