

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

January 14, 2021

The January meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, January 14, 2021 via Zoom with Ephriam Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, place and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Township bulletin board, and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL

Members: E. Buhks; L. Katz; T. Wahrman; A. Baig; E. Gordon; S. Wolfe

Green Team: D. Kaye

Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisor: D. Parris; Council Liaison: A. Mandel

Guests: Melissa, ShuP; Sophie Glover, Watershed Institute; Girl Scouts from Troop #72833;
A. Diaz, Wild for West Windsor

REORGANIZATION: E. Buhks appointed Chair by Mayor; T. Wahrman nominated and voted in as Vice-Chair; A. Baig appointed as PB rep by Mayor; D. Parris appointed as an advisor by Mayor at his request; H. Shankar appointed by Mayor to member. E. Buhks thanked L. Katz for his leadership as chair for past three years. He thanked D. Parris for his service as a member and looks forward to working with him as an advisor.

PUBLIC COMMENT: D. Parris reported the Environmental Education Center acquired a classic commercial scale from the 19th century.

Melissa Hager, ShuP, thanked all EC members for their support with the Send Hunger Packing program. Approximately 200 of the 320 reusable bags donated to them have already been distributed.

Sophie Glover, Assistant Policy Director of the Watershed Institute, stated that they have been advocating for the adoption of enhancements to the State's Stormwater Management ordinance. They offered to assist WWT and the EC with their Stormwater Ordinance if needed.

Girl Scout Troop #72833 Zaitz Project: Julia gave a brief presentation addressing the importance of planting native plants within our ecosystem. She has partnered with other members of the troop to plant an exhibition garden consisting exclusively of native plants at the Zaitz Nature Preserve. Suhina updated the members on the progress of the garden. They have planted 58 plants so far consisting of 15 species of flowers and 2 species of trees. In addition they have received donations of over 70 species of seeds from the Native Plant Society of NJ, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve and individual residents of West Windsor. The curator of Bowman's Hill is acting as an advisor on the project and has helped determine the best choices of donated seeds to include in the Zaitz Project. Assistance from WWT is being requested to mow the grass in late March to help curb the growth of foxtail grass which is an invasive species. D. Dobromilsky offered to contact DPW to see what arrangements can be made. Aratrika reported they have also been working on plants at home with techniques such as winter sowed, which involves putting the seeds in used plastic jugs to begin sprouting. They have implemented virtual workshops as community education with two additional Girl Scout troops to assist with their Take Action or Bronze award. Additionally, a Bug Badges virtual workshop was run for Brownie Scouts and they hope to have more opportunities for other virtual workshops in the future. T. Wahrman asked for the specific location of the project for anyone wishing to visit it. Aratrika and A. Mandel gave details of the project's location within Zaitz Preserve. E. Buhks requested to have a written presentation of their project submitted to D. Dobromilsky for inclusion on the website.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 12, 2020 L. Katz motioned; A. Baig seconded. Minutes were approved.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: BYOBag WW Campaign - D. Dobromilsky stated the most recent number of bags donated were 30 to St. Francis Pace Program, 320 to ShuP and 100 to the West Windsor Senior Center. There are currently 150 bags and 200 flyers remaining with 2,000 additional bags on order. Total funding for the campaign consists of the \$10,000 SJ Grant, approximately \$2,000 from the 2020 EC budget and \$400 in donation bags from Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. At this time, \$4,700 has been expended from the SJ grant, approximately \$1,800 from the EC budget and \$84 in printing costs for the flyers. A. Mandel inquired if a \$350 charge on one of the bills was a standard shipping & handling type cost or if it would vary based on the quantity ordered. D. Dobromilsky stated that it is actually calculated into the overall total cost of the bags as quoted by that vendor. A change in quantity would only reflect a minor change in price. A. Baig asked if there is a timeline on when the grant needs to be fully expended. D. Dobromilsky informed him that the grant was awarded through 2021 and should therefore be utilized by the end of the year.

T. Wahrman reported that based on a NYC bar report she recently reviewed, there is new information and research concerning bags made of polyester materials shedding microbeads of plastic when machine washed. In light of this concern, she suggested a review of alternative bag materials and options such as canvas. Prior to placing any future orders. L. Katz stated that if the microbeads are only shed when machine washed, perhaps the wording can be adjusted on flyers distributed with the bags to indicate that handwashing or wiping down are the preferred method of cleaning. Sophie Glover, Watershed, reported that although this area and topic of study is new it could warrant concern. E. Buhks encouraged the exploration of purchasing a bag made of an alternative material such as cotton. D. Dobromilsky offered to forward the information previously gathered by D. Kaye which includes cotton bag options to EC members.

T. Wahrman reported that Wegmans has a sign stating "Did you remember your reusable shopping bag?" on display at their entrance. D. Dobromilsky shared a photograph of the sign. T. Wahrman inquired about encouraging other retail establishments to display signs encouraging the use of reusable bags. D. Kaye had previously drafted a letter to be distributed to retail establishments for this purpose. D. Dobromilsky will send this letter to Township administration for their review and approval and will relay any feedback to EC members. E. Buhks questioned whether it would be the EC or Township's responsibility to send the letters to the establishments.

Energy Efficiency Outreach Toolkit – S. Wolfe reported that the Home Performance program with Energy Star assists in ensuring places/projects can be made more energy efficient at an affordable costs. The program can be utilized with residential and commercial properties. L. Katz inquired if the program is available through the State as well as PSE&G. S. Wolfe confirmed it was available throughout the state. After some discussion it was determined that S. Wolfe will gather further details on the program, with a focus on residential properties, and disperse it to EC members. He will also determine program's availability timeline.

NEW BUSINESS: Stormwater Management Ordinance Update- D. Dobromilsky stated the DEP has put out new rules and regulations on Stormwater Management which will go in effect in March 2021. The DEP is asking towns to approve a revised/amended ordinance with increased emphasis on water quality and green infrastructure. There are areas which have some varying options which the WWT Engineering office has been reviewing. It is possible the EC will be asked to review it and provide feedback prior to submission to TC for final approval. S. Wolfe offered to assist D. Dobromilsky to review the information and ordinance. A. Mandel requested to have the revised ordinance submitted to TC for approval as quickly as possible.

Township Master Plan, Conservation Plan Element – D. Dobromilsky reported the PB has been actively updating the Township Master Plan by addressing elements individually. The Conservation Plan element is largely comprised of the Environmental Resource Inventory information produced and updated by the EC in the past. The work is expected to be initiated during the summer. WWT staff will likely look to utilize EC members for input on the draft level. A. Mandel inquired if a public hearing will be necessary as it was with other elements in the past. D. Dobromilsky responded that he is unsure of a public hearing requirement at this time but will advise once it is known.

E. Buhks reported that a list has been comprised of various projects that could be addressed by the EC if the opportunity presents itself. These project topics include: sustainable landscapes, stormwater management, energy savings, solar/renewable energy including local and state regulations, and electric vehicles (EV) and

alternative vehicles (AV), which have several charging stations being installed throughout WW. He is requesting EC members to choose an area that they can champion and develop information, locate resources, gather links to websites, etc. L. Katz volunteered to work on the energy savings topic with S. Wolfe. E. Gordon reported that there are several sources of information and databases available for sustainable landscapes with special regard for lawn maintenance. He suggests the possibility of providing this information to residents via periodic emails focusing on specific topics such as proper height to mow grass, when to fertilize lawns, and how to sharpen lawn mower blades. In addition the information can be posted on the EC website.

A. Diaz informed EC members of a group she has established entitled "Wild for West Windsor" which encourages and educates residents on the option of planting native and sustainable plants in place of sections of their lawn. The group currently has 144 members and is continuing to grow and gain interest. A. Diaz is the mother of one of the Girl Scouts involved with the Zaitz Project and has become keenly interested in this topic throughout the process of that project. She proposes a joint project with WWT to allow residents to purchase shrubs of sustainable nature and provide educational brochures on additional sustainable options to include in their yard. D. Dobromilsky suggested having the Shade Tree Commission be involved with the project. They do not have a budget to purchase the plants but could obtain them through donations. E. Buhks asked A. Diaz to send all information of the potential project to D. Dobromilsky for the EC to review. E. Gordon requested a list identifying the public areas available throughout WWT that could be utilized for projects such as these. D. Dobromilsky stated he would contact him to provide that information and discuss further. T. Wahrman inquired if the topic of pesticides is addressed within the educational aspect of the Wild for West Windsor group. A. Diaz responded that the focus is mainly on the importance of the native plants and pesticides are not typically discussed unless specifically asked with regards to vegetable gardens. She encourages residents to plant those native pollinators around the vegetable garden as it would attract the natural predators of those insects.

E. Buhks requested to have EC members begin gathering information on the topics of their choice and report back on the findings and progress at the monthly meetings. He reported that H. Shankar has expressed interest in the solar/renewable energy topic and A. Baig volunteered to focus on stormwater.

E. Buhks stated that L. Katz, A. Mandel and A. Shankar have begun working on the website. A. Shankar will continue to provide assistance with organizing the content on the page within the developed template.

Motion to adjourn by E. Gordon, seconded by L. Katz. Meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission