

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

May 13, 2021

The May meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, May 13, 2021 via Zoom with Ephriam Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:31pm.

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; T. Wahrman; H. Shankar; E. Gordon; L. Katz

Green Team: D. Kaye

Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisor: A. Shankar Council Liaison: A. Mandel

Guests: Rhea D., Girl Scout; Emily S., Girl Scout; Angela Castano-Diaz, Wild For West Windsor;
Paula Bal, Wild For West Windsor; Miguel Vilaro-Munet; Kathleen Schwartz, resident;

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 2021 – T. Wahrman requested to table the approval of the February 2021 minutes due to concerns that M. Hornsby's comments were inaccurate. The recording will be reviewed for clarification.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Rhea S., a Girl Scout, gave a presentation on her silver and gold award projects. Her silver award project involved designing, purchasing supplies, constructing and planting a raised garden bed located at the community garden. All produce planted and grown was then harvested and donated to the West Windsor Senior Center. While planning her Gold Award project, D. Dobromilsky suggested she partner with the recently approved Freedom Village affordable housing development in WWT. While incurring delays due to the ongoing pandemic, she continued to modify and develop her project. She raised funds online to purchase two raised garden kits and coordinated with fifteen residents from Freedom Village to build them. As the timing of planting came closer to fall, she adjusted the produce chosen to focus mainly on greens such as kale, spinach and lettuce. She is currently developing a website to share recipes which will focus on utilizing the produce grown in these beds. She hopes to encourage more individuals to grow their own organic produce and explore additional ways to consume it. A. Mandel commended her on her ability to adjust her project accordingly amid the restrictions encountered during the ongoing pandemic. E. Buhks thanked her for the presentation and asked her to share the link to her website so it can be dispersed to the EC members.

Emily S., a Girl Scout, shared a video presentation on her silver award project in which she built and planted a butterfly and pollinator garden located across from the Rogers Arboretum. E. Buhks stated that Emily's video was submitted and will be used during the 2021 Greening Together event. Emily has registered her garden as a Monarch Waystation with MonarchWatch.org which encourages the planting of milkweed and nectar sources to promote monarch butterfly habitats and sustain their migration. She continues to maintain the garden and reported its milkweed plants have nearly tripled since last season. Her current goal is to remove the non-native species, such as mugwort, and replace it with alternative native flowering plant. A. Castano commented that she had previously seen partridge pea plants in the garden which seem to have been removed and suggested it be replanted as a native alternative to the mugwort. E. Buhks thanked Emily for sharing her project with EC.

T. Wahrman shared that Avani has received a gold award for her Girl Scout project on composting and organic recycling which she recently presented at the February 2021 EC meeting.

Kathleen Schwartz, resident of WWT, requested that the EC encourage the mayor to adopt an enhanced stormwater management ordinance. She believes it is the town's responsibility to do everything they can to protect the many streams and watersheds with future redevelopment plans. This would also allow the town to protect residents' health and wellbeing in order to maintain the quality of life that makes WWT a desirable

place to live. E. Buhks responded that WWT has reviewed the requirements from DEP and ensured the new proposed stormwater ordinance is in compliance with the required regulations and any further enhancement is not necessary at this time. A. Castano, co-team leader of Wild For West Windsor, inquired why WWT would not want to explore the option of having an enhanced ordinance if it were beneficial to maintaining the quality of life in the local community. A. Mandel replied that in the process of developing the new stormwater ordinance, the township Engineering Department reviewed the law, identified potential issues and problems within the town, explored various options to move forward and had discussions with the administration and town council. It was determined that the new stormwater ordinance adequately met the needs of WWT at this time. As DEP is currently reviewing additional options, WWT would take the ordinance under advisement again if a change is warranted. However, it would not be prudent or beneficial at this time to explore additional changes until new regulations or information is received. After some additional discussion, it was determined to proceed with the remaining items on the meeting agenda.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review – E. Gordon provided a brief update on the new pollinator garden being created near the skate park in Community Park. The sod has been removed, the topsoil has been aerated and loosened and compost has been delivered and spread. He reported that D. Dobromilsky has placed an order for the plants and there is a tentative date of May 29, 2021 to plant them in the garden. One issue they are currently discussing is managing the initial water supply. Paula Bal, co-team leader of Wild For West Windsor, is the coordinator of this project. She had reached out to the mayor to discuss her support of having a pollinator garden in WWT. As a beekeeper with her own personal pollinator garden, P. Bal knows the numerous benefits which result from promoting natural habitats. She has also registered her garden as a Monarch Waystation and commended both Girl Scout presenters for being proactive young adults and encouraged them to continue their good work. She shared her own slideshow of the current pollinator garden project. A. Mandel suggested compiling a final list of the plants the garden will consist of and including it with the project information posted on the EC website. Residents will be able to utilize the list as examples and inspiration for creating their own gardens. A. Castano stated they chose to order the plants from a 100% native wholesale nursery whose cost was less than the retail prices found earlier therefore has allowed them to order larger amounts than originally anticipated. She briefly reminded EC members that Wild For West Windsor is the team initiated by her daughter when applying to have West Windsor become a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. The team currently has forty residents who have registered their properties and hope to eventually have 100 in order to accomplish that goal of the certification point process. T. Wahrman offered to connect the team with some of the local schools in order to facilitate the collaboration and sharing of information on plantings and projects being accomplished. A. Castano thanked E. Gordon for all his assistance and effort being the project manager for this garden. M. Vilaro-Munet offered to contact the group directly to discuss self-watering system options and explore other various ideas to further enhance the sustainability aspects of the project.

H. Shankar stated she continues to work with high school students regarding solar energy in WWT. Unfortunately, due to current exams and other obligations, they have been unable to collaborate with her. She will present an update at the next meeting.

A. Shankar commented that she is the co-president of the Environmental Club at High School South for the coming year. In response to T. Wahrman's earlier suggestion of connecting Wild For West Windsor with the local schools, she stated it had been more difficult this year to have the Environmental Club involvement in more hands-on projects due to ongoing health concerns and restrictions. However, their goal is to have more in-person activities and involvement in the fall especially with any environmental concerns resulting from the current construction occurring at HS South. A. Castano invited A. Shankar to join the Wild For West Windsor group on Facebook in order to collaborate with any projects she may be involved in during the upcoming school year. A. Shankar proceeded to give an update on the progress of the new EC website. She recently met with D. Kaye to discuss the documents and information that will be included for the BYOBag campaign. D. Dobromilsky will provide a copy of the WVEC Sustainable Jersey grant application, the township council resolution and links to the new state press release and related documentation which was just released. D. Kaye suggested providing a list of the organizations and groups who received the donations of reusable bags purchased through the grant.

D. Dobromilsky gave an update on the WWBYOBag campaign. The current inventory has been depleted and an order has been placed for an additional 2,200 bags. The vertical and horizontal magnetic signs have begun to be deployed and can be supplied to EC members if desired. E. Buhks stated there have been various requests received by members for reusable bags and suggested compiling a list for review to assist in determining future disbursement. D. Dobromilsky responded that any requests can be forwarded to his attention and he will compile the list. D. Kaye cited recent CDC guidance lowering mask restrictions and in light of upcoming warmer weather, she offered to collaborate with McCaffrey's Food Market about giving away bags in person and encouraging resident awareness. D. Dobromilsky will order additional lawn signs which can be utilized and displayed at the farmer's market during the upcoming months. D. Kaye offered to install some in local parks to replace those which were lost over the winter months.

T. Wahrman does not have any new information on recycling at this time and will give an update presentation at the next meeting. E. Buhks inquired if there has been any recent information from DEP on enforcement in regards to single use plastics. T. Wahrman replied that she will review the legislation and report back to EC on her findings.

Township Council Update – A. Mandel reported that the 2021 budget has been passed by the council. An ongoing list has been compiled of furniture donations for the victims of the fire incident at the Avalon Bay apartments. As displaced residents are relocating to new apartments, the list is reviewed and donations are disbursed as needed. A mobile Motor Vehicle Commission unit was deployed to accommodate the timely replacement of lost documents. Covid-19 vaccinations have been made readily available for any eligible resident who chooses to receive one; if a resident is still having difficulty getting vaccinated, they are encouraged to contact the health department for accommodations. Mask regulations will continue to follow State and CDC guidelines as appropriate. L. Katz inquired if there has been any updates on in-person meeting restrictions. A. Mandel stated the TC has been continuously meeting in-person and there are no current restrictions that would not allow in-person meetings. D. Dobromilsky responded that the township building is still under renovation and construction which has resulted in limiting the availability of meeting room space to only the senior center at this time.

M. Vilaro-Munet reported that there are continued discussions with the cable industry on the federal level of upgrading the capacity levels of the high-voltage utility grid. There is debate on whether to follow a centralized or decentralized lower voltage disbursement model. He has forwarded information to E. Buhks regarding encouraging the inclusion of Carbon Nano Tubes (CNTs) into the lower-voltage community energy model. He is currently involved with the Sewerage Authority as they explore options to integrate energy resilience to ensure ongoing compliance. E. Buhks thanked him for the update and welcomed him to present more information on the processing of sewage at a future EC meeting.

E. Buhks provided a brief overview of West Windsor's involvement at the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition Green Fest event, Greening Together 2021, which took place April 24 through April 30, 2021. He encouraged EC members to visit the website and view the West Windsor Girl Scout video presentation in the resources section. The Trenton Talks Transportation presentation included information on the public transportation system in Trenton and their inclusion of multiple resources such as electric vehicles. There was a green infrastructure presentation from the Watershed on community work which included details on pollinator gardens, alternative garden options such as rooftop gardens and rainwater collection. Additionally, there was a presentation on Spotted Lantern Flies by a Mercer County Community Park representative which included information on the invasive species and their effect on our environment.

Motion to adjourn by E. Gordon, seconded by T. Wahrman. Meeting was adjourned at 9:51pm

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission