

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

May 11, 2023

The May 2023 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, May 11, 2023 via Zoom with Ephraim 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; E. Gordon; S. Parratt; L. Katz; I. Singh; H. Shankar;
Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisors: D. Parris Council Liaison: Andrea Mandel, President
Guests: S. Mamidi, WW Voice reporter Siriteja T. and Reeti , Girl Scouts
Jilian M., Girl Scout Eleni Litt, Rutgers Steward

PUBLIC COMMENT – Siriteja T. and Reeti, WWT Girl Scouts, gave a presentation on their Girl Scout Gold award project on Fast Fashion and how it is affecting the environment. “Fast Fashion” refers to trendy clothing that can be produced quickly by utilizing poor-quality materials and low-standard production and is offered for purchase via various websites and marketing platforms. It is generally mass-marketed by celebrities or influencers through social media and typically targeted to the teenage consumer pool. These clothing items tend to fall apart quickly, therefore resulting in more waste, lack of recycling, and additional costs on the part of the consumer. It requires factories across the world to spend more money on production costs as well as emitting higher carbon emission levels in the environment. Ways we as consumers can combat this issue is to promote awareness, advocate upcycling quality clothing items and encourage others to do the same. They created a poster board display game for members of the community to play that helps identify various brands of both slow and fast fashion companies which raises awareness of which brands are more harmful. A. Mandel suggested incorporating information on how to recycle clothing including accessorizing an outfit differently to promote additional use and donating to second-hand stores. D. Dobromilsky suggested incorporating information on fashion industry standards which would assist in identifying specific concerns to measure whether an article of clothing would be considered fast or slow fashion. E. Litt offered to assist in contacting the Parsons School of Design to gain additional knowledge on their ideas and initiatives for fashion sustainability as they are also actively promoting the concept at this time.

Jilian M., a Girl Scout, who attended last month's EC meeting to present her Girl Scout Gold award project on Spotted Lantern Fly Traps and Education, updated the EC that she has received final approval on her project. She thanked the EC for the opportunity to present her award and the valuable suggestions and feedback she received.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 10, 2022 S. Parratt motioned; L. Katz seconded;
Minutes were approved as presented.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update:

Community Park Gardens and Meadow – S. Parratt stated that P. Ball has weeded the Pollinator garden and he and A. Berlin weeded the Rain Garden. Both gardens are currently waiting for compost and mulch to be delivered by the township which will then be spread out accordingly. He is evaluating the need for additional plants, edging and pruning for the Rain Garden as well as updating the seasonal signage. The rain garden located at the municipal building still needs to be inspected to determine what seasonal maintenance is required at this time. He gave an update on his current proposed project to create and install a wildflower meadow in Community Park. He shared the draft design that A. Berlin has developed. D. Dobromilsky stated he would request the size of the mower blades from DPW so the width of the paths can be determined.

Planning Board – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky reported that the PB is working on reviewing application submittals but has not had any recent hearings. They are continuing to review and

update various individual elements of the Township Master Plan and are currently working on the Historic Preservation element.

Master Plan Conservation Plan Element Update – The EC working group has met with D. Dobromilsky to review the Conservation Plan Element. They are currently coordinating another meeting to review and revise a draft which will be presented to EC members within the next month.

Township Council Update – S. Gawas was unable to attend the meeting and requested A. Mandel provide an update to EC members. A. Mandel reported the public hearing for the 2023 municipal budget is scheduled for May 22, 2023 and will be voted on accordingly. Feedback was received by the State to revise the definition of what constitutes a hardship as identified within the Flood Plain Management Regulations Ordinance when granting a variance by the Zoning Board pertaining to impervious coverage. Therefore, approval of the Flood Plain Management Regulations Ordinance has been postponed until June for those revisions to be incorporated.

Solar Lighting – H. Shankar reported she recently had to travel outside of the country due to a family emergency and was unable to work on this project. She will renew her efforts to pursue the information and present it to the EC at an upcoming meeting. L. Katz shared information he received while attending the Sustainable Jersey Summit regarding the decision to make community solar a permanent program in New Jersey. Hearings are taking place soon to determine the details. The Community Solar Energy Program enables utility customers to participate in a solar energy project that is remotely located from their property and can apply to receive discounted rates on their utility bills. The program has 25 projects established currently and anticipates approximately 100 additional ones to be in place by the end of the year. The NJ BPU has launched the Community Solar Project Finder, which was developed in partnership with Sustainable Jersey, on their website to connect interested customers with community solar projects that serve their area. After further discussion, it was determined to revisit the topic later in the year once the program becomes more established and additional information is available.

Energy Efficiency – L. Katz gave a presentation of the information he has compiled regarding the federal and state energy efficiency incentives, specifically on tax credits and product rebates. He created a document that can be shared on the EC website for residents to access additional websites for guidance. D. Dobromilsky stated he will have the document incorporated on the website as well as display it near the Code Enforcement office for residents when they submit permits to the township.

Recycling – I. Singh shared the research he has conducted on the topic of fireworks and the negative impacts they have on the environment as it was discussed at a previous meeting. Fireworks are an environmental concern due to the potential they have to cause air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution and waste generation. Due to these concerns, it is essential to ensure fireworks are handled responsibly and their use is minimized where possible. He will continue to gather research on what other towns are implementing to address these concerns as well as if there are potential alternatives that can be utilized. E. Buhks suggested contacting local fire departments to discuss the topic and gain insight into their perspective, potential safety concerns and additional guidance they can provide to incorporate into the presentation.

Arbor Day – E. Gordon reported that the Arbor Day Celebration on April 29, 2023 went well and had a larger number of residents in attendance than anticipated. The event which was moved to the WWT Senior Center due to inclement weather. E. Gordon shared a slideshow of photographs taken throughout the day.

Diversity Day – E. Buhks shared information on the upcoming Human Relations Council event, “Diversity Day, Tea and Conversation,” which will take place on Sunday, May 21, 2023 from 2 - 4 pm at Grover Middle School. Attendees will be able to visit tables to learn about several country’s cultures, try various teas from across the world and enjoy cultural performances via an open mic opportunity. All EC members are invited to attend and he will share a flyer with further details.

Environmental Science News – E. Buhks stated he had offered to occasionally share environmental news with EC members as information and topics present themselves. One resource for such information that he would recommend is Chemical Engineering News, a weekly publication, that tracks important research advances,

business and policy trends, chemical safety practices, career guidance, and more in chemical industry. The industry is very concerned with sustainability, reducing carbon footprint and pollution and increasing recycling. One recent article focused on growing foods with less chemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers and increasing the use of artificial intelligence such as satellites, sensors and robots to measure various factors to ensure the best quality production. One example is a sensor that evaluates the color of early vegetation to determine if the crop has received enough fertilizer and will limit future applications. An additional suggestion was to limit the level of water incorporated in products to lower the weight, therefore lowering carbon emissions and waste involved in shipping. This may result in seeing more products such as detergents offered in tablet or powdered forms as opposed to liquid forms. He will continue to share additional resources and information he comes across that may interest EC members.

Motion to adjourn by L. Katz, seconded by I. Singh. Meeting was adjourned at 9:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission