

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

February 8, 2024

The February 2024 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, February 8, 2024 via Zoom with Ephraim Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

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; I. Singh; A. Baig
Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisor: D. Parris Council Liaison: Andrea Mandel
Guests: Srihan Y., Boy Scout Varun K, Boy Scout
Agriya B., Girl Scout Eleni Litt, Rutgers Steward

REORGANIZATION: E. Buhks was appointed Chair by Mayor; E. Gordon motioned by S. Parratt and seconded by A. Baig to continue as Vice-Chair, approved by voice vote; A Baig was appointed as PB representative by Mayor.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Srihan Y. and Varun K., WWT Boy Scouts, introduced themselves and expressed interest in partnering with EC members on needs or opportunities to incorporate into and accomplish their Life Scout projects. S. Parratt stated he had reached out to them to discuss his project proposal for the installation of a meadow at Community Park. D. Dobromilsky asked them to submit a brief concept proposal to the township which would include their contact information, troop scoutmaster contact information, and proposed project details such as location, workload and projected timeline. After some discussion, S. Parratt reminded members that the proposed project is for the installation of one large meadow that is split into two distinct sections. A. Mandel suggested that each scout focus on one section and indicate specific details that would be incorporated to differentiate them as individual projects, even if they are worked on congruently. S. Parratt offered to continue communicating with the scouts and provide guidance on the next steps. E. Buhks thanked them for attending the meeting and looks forward to receiving further information and project update at a future EC meeting.

Agriya B., a Girl Scout, provided a status update on her project to install small outdoor libraries in the meditation garden near the Rain and Pollinator gardens at WW Community Park. She has completed the construction of the library boxes and benches and will finish weatherproofing them. She will coordinate with S. Parratt to begin planting the garden in the spring, weather permitting. E. Buhks thanked her for providing the update and invited her to email a progress report and continue attending future EC meetings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 8, 2023 S. Parratt motioned; I. Singh seconded;
Minutes were approved as presented.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update

Community Park Gardens and Meadow – S. Parratt stated he will coordinate with the Boy Scouts to gather the information indicated and provide it to D. Dobromilsky, as well as other EC members, regarding the meadow installation project.

Planning Board – A. Baig stated Application PB22-02 ER/UDC West Windsor LLC received preliminary approval at the February 7, 2024 PB meeting for Phase I of the development consisting of the installation of a 5,869-s.f. QuickChek convenience store with patron seating and eight fuel service pumps located at the corner of Princeton-Hightstown and Southfield Roads and McGetrick Lane, across from McCaffrey's. There are variances requested for signage and loading space and design exceptions for parking, access design, and

related relief. Phase II of the project which consists of the preliminary proposal to install a 4,541-s.f. restaurant with drive-thru service will be postponed for approval at a future meeting once site plans are available. D. Dobromilsky stated that there will be a significant amount of pervious pavement parking lots with recharge directly back into the ground, the stormwater system will include recharge basins, EV charging stations will be required to be incorporated and the developer agreed to make the canopy of the fuel pumps solar ready.

Township Council Update –A. Mandel reported that the State is reviewing potential affordable housing rules which could significantly impact the number of required units per municipality. She will continue to report to the EC as information becomes available and the potential environmental impacts it could pose. Council is reviewing the recent NJDEP-mandated regulations such as the MS4 permit, new salt regulations pertaining to runoff and environmental impact, a revised tree removal permit which will be due in May 2024 and approval of a new township Stormwater Ordinance which will be due in July 2024. She will report back as information is obtained and EC commission assistance or involvement is required.

Street Lighting Conditions and Standards Review – E. Buhks stated the Township Engineer had requested the EC review and provide information regarding street lighting pertaining to light pollution concerns. E. Buhks and E. Gordon determined NJ does not have a large number of specific regulations for lighting and that many of the regulations are based upon industry standards. Further collaboration or information with the Township Engineer would be available if needed.

MLK Day – E. Gordon gave a brief overview on the sixth annual MLK day of service and reflection event which was attended by several EC members on January 15, 2024. He reported that he shared photos at the event which he took while in attendance at the March on Washington sixty years ago.

NEW BUSINESS:

D. Dobromilsky announced that he is retiring from West Windsor Township as of May 1, 2024. Township Engineer, Francis Guzik will be overtaking the staff liaison duties for the Environmental Commission, as necessary, until a replacement is determined, if so deemed necessary. EC members expressed their appreciation for all the work he has provided to EC over the years and wished him well in the future.

New Tree Ordinance - D. Dobromilsky reported that the new NJDEP regulations have required municipalities to update and modify their tree ordinances to assist in the reduction of tree loss due to land development activities. Currently, single-family residences in WWT have been exempt from tree removal regulations or having to file a tree removal permit. The new ordinance would require all property owners to apply for and obtain a tree removal permit and may require an owner be subject to plant replacement tree(s) on the property. The number of required replacements would be subject to the size of the removed trees. If the replacement trees cannot be planted on the property, owners would be subject to paying a fee for the Township to replant trees elsewhere. Exemptions would include owners of single and two-family properties up to one acre in size being allowed to remove up to three healthy trees within a five-year period with no mitigation requirement. In addition, “Dangerous Trees” would not be included and may be removed without any replacement tree requirement or application fee. The Shade Tree Commission and township staff will continue to review and develop the ordinance which has a deadline to be officially adopted by May 1, 2024. A list of invasive species will be incorporated that will not be allowed to be planted as part of the mitigation requirements. D. Dobromilsky will provide updates to the EC as the process continues.

Arbor Day 2024 - D. Dobromilsky reported that the Arbor Day Celebration will take place on Saturday, April 20, 2024 at 9:30am at the Ronald R. Rogers Arboretum. The Shade Tree Commission will once again host its annual Art Contest with submissions on display and prizes to be awarded at the event. The EC is invited to attend and participate once again. If having Scout educational presentations, please provide details to D. Dobromilsky on their other various projects. E. Buhks suggested S. Parratt attend and provide information on the Community Gardens again as well as E. Gordon display or provide photographs as he has in previous years. Additionally, E. Buhks invited E. Litt to volunteer to participate again. D. Dobromilsky stated that the Township Recycling Coordinator would probably be in attendance again this year as well.

2024 New Projects – I. Singh gave a brief update on the status of his AI project and will prepare a presentation for the EC members at an upcoming meeting. The recycling presentation he collaborated with local students and the recycling coordinator is complete and he will organize with D. Dobromilsky for it to be given at the EC meeting in March. E. Buhks suggested another topic I. Singh could research is the effectiveness of the reusable store bag campaign implemented within New Jersey. There have been some recent accounts that many consumers forget to bring their bags with them and therefore purchase additional quantities resulting in an overabundance.

E. Litt, Rutgers Steward and Green Team member, reported that she is still teaching art within the community and exploring additional environmental options and events she can participate in. She is particularly interested in the topic of stormwater issues. She is looking forward to attending the 2024 Arbor Day event.

D. Parris reported that he will continue his work with the Environmental Education Center at the Schenck Farm and recording native wildlife. He looks forward to engaging in events and providing information and assistance to the Environmental Commission as appropriate.

E. Gordon reported that he is interested in working on the topic of light and noise pollution within the community. He recently noticed a lack of trash bins located within some of the parks and hopes to have that issue addressed and resolved to limit the potential of litter pollution.

S. Parratt reported that he has been involved in installing a residential rain garden project within his local neighborhood and looks forward to providing updates to EC members on its progress. He hopes this will demonstrate to other community members what type of projects can be accomplished on an individual or small group level. He also inquired as to the status of the EC student advisor position and the young woman who had recently expressed an interest in filling the opening. D. Dobromilsky stated that he would look into it and report back to the commission as soon as possible.

Motion to adjourn by S. Parratt, seconded by A. Baig. Meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission