

**MINUTES
EAST AMWELL TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
March 28, 2016
7:30 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER: The March 28th, 2016 Business Meeting of the East Amwell Township Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:37 P.M. In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act, this is a Regular Business Meeting of the East Amwell Environmental Commission, as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat on December 17, 2015. A copy of tonight's agenda was filed with the Township Clerk and the Township Committee, forwarded to the Hunterdon County Democrat, and the Trenton Times Newspaper, distributed to the various East Amwell Township Committees and Boards, and was posted on the Township Bulletin Board.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: T. Robbi, D. Schleifer, J. Angelone, F. Lippincott, T. Rue, M. Prendamano (secretary)

ABSENT: D. Kellogg, J. Frederick, D. Sageser, B. Hummel

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES: January 25, 2016 & February 22, 2016 Minutes were presented for approval. T. Robbi made a motion to approve both sets of minutes. This was seconded by D. Schleifer. All members were in favor of approving the minutes with one abstention from T. Rue.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS: M. Prendamano presented an invoice from the NJ Shade Tree Federation. She did not recall ever paying this fee. She asked the Commission if they were familiar with this invoice. T. Robbi stated we do not have a shade tree commission. D. Schleifer recommended that we do not pay the membership fee.

LAST MINUTE ADDITIONS: T. Robbi will have some trail news at the end of the meeting.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Steve Sousa was present representing Princeton Hydro. He is currently working on storm water improvement at Clawson Park. They are making progress with the concept now approved and site survey work will begin. The available survey for the park was missing information. The grant did provide funding for a licensed surveyor. A couple of test pits were dug within the north basin. It is the one closer to the railroad tracks. This is the major part of the project.

The minerals have been leached out of the basin. He encountered ground water about four feet below the surface. The bottom of the basin will be excavated and that material will be kept on site. Some will be used to fill in a property on Iron Horse Drive. They will be creating some natural diversions to get the water to go into the wetland basin. Some of the shale will be ripped to enhance infiltration. They will import fill that follows the DEP specification for bio retention basins.

On the gravel walkway to the north of the basin, they will be putting in a swale. There should be enough material left over to elevate the walkway to make room for the drains. The existing rain garden has failed. It is because the soil is so compacted that nothing can drain. That rain garden will be expanding and connected via a grass swale to the

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natural basin. There will be another rain garden on the other side of the basin. They have an Eagle Scout working on this project. Brandon Diacott is his name and he lives right near the park. They are trying to accelerate the rain gardens to be complete by the end of June.

He has a couple of small local contractors that have expressed some interest or if the town wants to take the project on they can be reimbursed through the grant.

He has approached the gas line people about doing some control test pits over the pipeline. He would like to use an area about 18" deep to plant over the pipeline. The area is currently lawn that is very compacted so water sits there. D. Schleifer asked how often the pipeline company does maintenance. S. Sousa replied that all of their inspections are done below. He is not sure how often they inspect.

T. Rue asked what causes the compaction. S. Sousa stated that when the farm was sold the top soil was carted off. On a really bad day, there is a small river running into one of the neighboring yards on Iron Horse Drive. He believes they can alleviate the problem with just that one swale. It is a big grading and planting project. There will be an interim sign and once the project is completed, a permanent sign will be put up. T. Rue asked how long the park will be closed. S. Sousa replied that the whole park will not be closed. It may take six weeks. The rain gardens should be done in two weeks. D. Schleifer asked how many months we are into the grant. S. Sousa stated that it began in mid July but the finalized contracts come in mid September.

D. Schleifer asked if he anticipated the project lasting 48 months. S. Sousa stated that a lot of this has to go through DEP to demonstrate that it is correcting water quality. We have to actually demonstrate an improvement in water quality. The school is potentially another spot for improvement. He is aware that there are some drainage issues there. If we have money left, we will look over there.

D. Schleifer shared that he has spoken to Sharon Ernst at the school and she is very interested in doing Milkweed plantings at the school. S. Sousa asked that he have Sharon Ernst get in touch with him.

S. Sousa added that there is a problem with invasive species at the park. He asked if any members of the Commission would be willing to help remove these. There will be some Boy Scouts out there as well. T. Rue suggested getting some donations from Rutgers Nursery. T. Rue mentioned that in the past his son completed an Eagle Scout project at the park.

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S. Sousa asked where he was needed to donate some time. He wasn't sure where he was asked to go. T. Robbi suggested he attend the Plant Exchange in May. D. Schleifer thought perhaps he was referring to Greenfest which was cancelled after FOSP lost their administrator. They will take it up again next year.

S. Sousa submits a small memo to the Township each month to keep them abreast. He can share this with the Environmental Commission as well. D. Schleifer is excited to discuss the plantings. S. Sousa stated that they try to have the right types of plants for storm water management and are native sustainable plants that also provide habitat. He is open to a variety of suggestions. He uses a lot of Black Eyed Susan.

T. Robbi stated that one of the goals of a small demonstration rain garden is to promote homeowners to create them. He suggested creating these with the idea of luring in the homeowner. S. Sousa is going to try and make the rain gardens appealing. T. Robbi suggested salvaging the Iris since they worked well. S. Sousa will try and salvage them.

S. Sousa added that the basin is currently underperforming. The goal is to have it flood more. There is going to be a fair amount of elevation change. He offered to come in any time and give an update or answer questions. He also mentioned that anyone volunteering at the park should track their time and give it to the Township. M. Prendamano offered to keep a log and submit it to T. Stahl. D. Schleifer will put an email out with a few dates for volunteering.

REPORTS:

a. Planning Board – D. Sageser was not present to report.

b. Township Committee- D. Sageser was not present to report.

c. Recycling Committee – T. Rue did not attend the Recycling meeting last month. M. Prendamano reported that the committee came up with some recycling guidelines for parties using the municipal fields. They also purchased new recycling and trash receptacles to put in place at the fields. AVLBL merged with Flemington this season. It is a trial merge. She is not sure how much they will be using the fields.

T. Rue asked if the committee was able to use AVLBL's building to store Styrofoam. M. Prendamano stated that it needs repairs and is not sure if the committee will be able to use it. J. Angelone asked how often the Styrofoam is removed for recycling. M. Prendamano informed him that they need to accumulate a truckload before they can bring it. It is recycled in Springfield, N.J. J. Angelone asked how much more storage they would need. M. Prendamano stated it is probably twice as much as they can store in the shed.

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T. Rue wondered why the committee couldn't use some of the space. M. Prendamano believes the building needs a lot of repairs. AVLBL is doing the merge as a trial and may be back.

d. FOSPC – D. Kellogg was not present to report.

e. Site Review – T. Robbi stated he had nothing new to report. M. Prendamano did present two applications for a variance. The members looked over the applications. One was for a shed with a setback issue and one for a network node on top of the firehouse. T. Robbi will take a look at both of these and maintain contact with J. Angelone.

f. Public Outreach/4H Fair – D. Kellogg was not present to report.

g. Conservation Easements –D. Schleifer reported that we received a cd from ANJEC that has lots of really good information for doing inspections and creating reports. He would like to share it with Commission members.

NEW BUSINESS:

6T. Robbi wanted to discuss some news with trails. The Eagle Scout project that the Commission approved one year ago is going forward. There is a kiosk and the Scouts are fulfilling their pledge to maintain the trail. Recently they picked up brush and removed a fallen tree. Someone donated five tons of stone and the parking area is clear. A lot of people use the trail. The Scouts organized a guided hike to take place on April 16th. He and J. Allen who is a local historian will be leading the hike.

T. Robbi added that just north of the preserve is the Amwell Village that at one time had seven operating mills. Another interesting thing is that when Washington first crossed the Delaware they walked up where 179 goes down to Mount Airy and spent the night in Mount Airy fields. They were looking to fight the British in Marshall's Corner but they were deceived and didn't realize that they were in Allentown. After that they went to Hopewell which was farmland at the time. They were very close to the Omick Preserve. There is a lot of history there and it will be explained by John Allen during the hike.

He also reported on the Cider Mill project and the ANJEC grant. The deadline is next week so we do not know whether or not we will get the grant at this time.

The third project is with regard to Rambling Pines and the proposed trail. This week he received a modified version of part of the plan for our approval. There is someone in DEP that is interested in getting this thing built. It is about a two mile walk up from the

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518 bridge where it crosses the main Stoneybrook. D. Schleifer asked if it will end at Snyderstown Road and T. Robbi stated yes it would.

CORRESPONDENCE: Various agendas/minutes from boards and committees. D. Schleifer took a moment to share some emails sent by E. Johanson with regard to a National Trails Day Event. NJ Invasive Species Conference is in April; ANJEC Garden party and fundraiser on May 15; Regulations banning fracking in Kingwood Township – D. Schleifer asked the Commission for their thoughts. T. Robbi stated that he did not think that we are locating in the basin and ordinances cost money. D. Schleifer thought we could use Kingwood's as a draft. M. Prendamano will ask T. Stahl what it would involve.

D. Schleifer directed the conversation to a property on Van Lieus where it was noted that the homeowner was removing vegetation from the bank of a small stream. The property was identified as being on Van Lieus Road. He and printed out an aerial photo and noted that the property does not have an easement on it. F. Lippincott observed that all of the vegetation has been removed from the stream. The stream runs along the edge of the development. D. Schleifer will look into the property further. T. Rue asked what our responsibility is. T. Robbi stated that if it is wetlands we would report it to the DEP. T. Robbi asked if he is removing mature trees. He stated that we do not have a stream ordinance so any ordinance would be a state regulation. J. Angelone suggested contacting the DEP and let them determine whether or not the property is wetlands. D. Schleifer thought it might have a Letter of Interpretation as part of the plans for the development.

M. Prendamano presented correspondence. A letter of interpretation for a property on 202 and John Ringo Road to define wetlands; a thank you letter from ANJEC; letter from the Delaware River Association; Greenways magazine;

OPEN TO COMMISSION MEMBERS:

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: The Commission opened to the public. Rebecca Angelone residing at 280 Wertsville Road, was present. She wanted to discuss a dirt stretch along Stoneybrook. She would like to request that the Environmental Commission develop a relationship with the DPW so that when they are making improvements they are environmentally sound. They brought in fill that contained crushed asphalt and the smell of oil was overwhelming. The oil will be seeping down into the water and affecting the habitat. She didn't think the choice of fill was sensitive.

She also realized that they brought in invasive species. There is this plant called tussilago (coltsfoot) that is very hard to control. The gravel fill seemed to have created a place for

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them to come up as they thrive in disturbed soil. It is hard to eradicate and it has grown in the drainage ditches. She shared this information with Jared Rosenbaum and he agreed that it should be removed. You have to be careful when you remove it not to break the rhizomes and pull it before it goes to seed. In general she feels that the road department should be working with the Environmental Commission to prevent this. It seemed that much more work was done than was necessary. They filled, changed grading and you could smell the oil. Both the county and the town are very heavy handed with the salt. If you choose to live in a rural area you have to expect the roads will not be perfect. The salt runs right into the streams. She feels there is a lot less activity in the streams with regard to amphibians.

Ms. Angelone added that she feels ashamed for not reported someone who removed all of the vegetation along their property. She thought there was an ordinance that you could not remove vegetation within a certain amount of feet from a stream bank. Will there be an ordinance that protects streams. She would love to see a stream restoration project. She thinks we could do a better job informing the public about invasives and streams. D. Schleifer noted that we do have information available at Greenfest and at the 4H Fair. We also have the Environmental/Recycling Newsletter. Ms. Angelone would like to see less invasives offered at our local nurseries and our plant swap. She suggested hosting an event where someone could show the public some native species versus invasive. She suggested doing a hands-on event. T. Rue said it would help to know what the native species are. She suggested getting someone like Bowman's Hill to do a demonstration. It would be a great service to the community.

T. Robbi said the main problem he sees is that deer eat native species. Bowman's Hill has a fence around there property. We can't force homeowners to put up deer fences. There are places in the township where there aren't deer. Native species can be placed there successfully. Upper Stoneybrook Road has way too many deer. Do you want something to look like Central Park or an understory that the deer do not eat. R. Angelone noted that there is an article that refers to that as a 'ghost forest' where you allow the invasives to take over the understory. It actually does such damage because a lot of the animals leave. There are native plants that the deer do not eat. To allow people to remove everything down to grass at a stream should not be allowed.

J. Angelone stated that she has touched on a lot of different topics. He asked what she would like to see done immediately and what would be a long term goal. R. Angelone would like to see better communication between the Environmental Commission and the road department so they are not introducing invasives and oil to the environment. It seems to violate what the DEP says. Also, because the Commission touched upon streams, she feels it is very important to protect the stream beds with an ordinance and to educate the public on what to plant. She finds it discouraging to see this happening.

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J. Angelone asked how extensive the tussilago (coltsfoot) is. R. Angelone said it is running along the edges of the drainage ditch. She will try and photograph it. If left unchecked it is going to mushroom. T. Robbi asked if D&R Greenway was made aware of it. He suggested sending an email to Dianna Rachel. He said D&R manages a lot of the property there and might help. R. Angelone feels that this was a result of the actions of the Township so why wouldn't they get involved. It is time critical because it is going to send seed. T. Rue stated that it sounds like something within the purview of this committee. D. Schleifer will speak to J. Silverthorn. M. Prendamano suggested that Rebecca Angelone attend a Township Committee meeting and bring her concern. T. Robbi said in the past, that Ed LaPorte persuaded the road department to stop using herbicides alongside the road. He persuaded on the basis that they were killing a lot of wildflowers. So it is possible for the Environmental Commission to provide some guidance to the road department. T. Rue added that it would be good to provide more information to the public. T. Robbi commented on the newsletter stating that it was not as attractive and readable as in years past. M. Prendamano reported that there were a lot of contributors this year so much information was crammed into it.

J. Angelone suggested that we ask the road department to consult with the Environmental Commission before doing road work. D. Schleifer will find the liaison to the DPW from the Township Committee and work with him. He will look into the statewide regulations with regard to streams. T. Robbi stated that a lot of the land along streams is under agricultural use. The right to farm laws often overrides environmental regulations. F. Lippincott added that there is a Federal Program that helps provide fencing along the stream bed. She added that the property on Van Lieus is not an agricultural site at this time but she has heard they are going to put horses on the property. T. Robbi said it is probably farmland assessed. R. Angelone asked if there is any way to find out what chemicals the Township uses. She knows that the County is using chemicals at the bridge near the stream. If the Township does something similar is there any way to know? J. Angelone replied that the community has the Right to Know. R. Angelone asked if the Environmental Commission cares what they are using. T. Robbi stated they used to use chemicals but began cutting. He has never seen them spraying. R. Angelone thanked the Commission for hearing her and taking her questions.

The Commission closed to the public.

D. Schleifer shared that he was contacted by a resident named Christine Kurch who lives next to Cider Mill Preserve who has a complaint about the proposed grant. She was in contact with the Mayor. D. Schleifer responded to her and she has not gotten back to him. She said the parking lot would interfere with her scenic view. T. Robbi noted that there is an economic value to open space in that it increases your property value.

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ADJOURN: 9:41 PM. Motion for adjournment was received from T. Robbi and F. Lippincott seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Maria Prendamano, Secretary

cc: Env. Com. Members	Board of Adjustment	Board of Health
Twp. Com. & Clerk	Democrat Newspaper	Recreation Com.
Twp. Bulletin Brd.	Trenton Times	Recycling Com.
Planning Board	Associate Members	Agric. Adv. Com.
Farmland & Open Space Preservation		