

Millburn Township Environmental Commission

Tuesday, May 10, 2022 @ 7:00 pm

(Virtual meeting via Zoom)

MINUTES

Members: Reade Kem (Chair), Debra Nevas, Noah Packman, Priya Patel, Mark Robison, Odarka Stockert, Roger Timpson,
Absent: Laura Kosik and Elizabeth Vollavanh (phoned in briefly)

Township Committee Liaison: Maggee Miggins

Secretary: Carolyn Scannelli

Call to Order: 7:00 pm

Commission Business:

- a) Open public meeting statement: *This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6-10: 4-21. Notice of this meeting has been published in the Item of Millburn and Short Hills, and on Tap as filed by the Environmental Commission and on bulletin board at Millburn Town Hall*
- b) **Master Plan Environmental Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations:**
 - i. Protect and manage critical environmental resources in the township.
 - ii. Improve the quality of life for residents.
 - iii. Minimize the environmental impact of the township on the environment.
- c) Acceptance of April 12, 2022, minutes – Roger Timpson motioned to accept the minutes Mark Robison 2nd, others in attendance who are eligible to vote are in favor.
- d) Treasurer Report – (RT) Roger confirmed with the Accounts Department on the previous year's budget expenditures, as there is a discrepancy of the budgets being spent down to zero. A review shows previous years' expenditures were not always charged to the correct line item. Going forward Roger will keep a record of expenditures which can be compared with the Accounts Departments records.

Public Comment –

Tammy Huang, MD (resident of Short Hills), expressed her concerns regarding gas leaf blowers. She discussed her research into health, noise and other risks related to the exhaust from leaf blowers not only to the workers but also by others who are in close proximity to them.

Mark expressed that there has been some resistance from the Township Committee. Odarka stated that a resolution was sent to the Township Committee for review and that no one probably thought at that time that people would still be working from home 2 years later. It was suggested that Tammy should attend a Township Committee meeting and express her views. Priya stated that the resolution was for a ban on gas powered leaf blowers and necessary feedback and information from the other towns where this has taken place is needed for the Township Committee to review.

Guest Presentation

- a) Sustainable Landscaping

Presentation by Lois Kraus, a member of Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in New Jersey (ATL-NJ) – Lois, a resident of Westfield presented a power point on this topic and will forward the presentation to MEC. Joe Barbanel is no longer a member and will be replaced with Roger Timpson. The ATL-NJ group started in January 2021 and has 39 members from 29 municipalities. They are seeking to reduce the noise and use of gas leaf blowers. They are advocating for sustainable landscaping.

Some highlights of the presentation of gas leaf blowers are as follows, a combination of gas and oil that generates nitrous oxide and volatile compounds that can cause many health issues and concerns, along with the noise concerns and environmental issues. The noise can cause deafness to the landscapers. The noise is a low frequency that can travel. Additionally, there are spills of oil and gas and disturbance of a healthy nature environment for insects and pollinators. Alternate equipment is more available for residents. For municipalities and landscape contractors there are challenges and doesn't leave the perfect looking lawn. For landscapers to purchase an electric set-up it could cost \$60,000-\$70,000 per crew. There are four municipalities that have some type of a ban.

Princeton, which has a seasonal ban on gas leaf blowers, has done a lot to educate the landscapers and residents through public outreach. Lois suggested for the MEC members to educate themselves, local landscapers, the residents, and Township Committee. First try a pilot program. Odarka thanked Lois for the mention of neurological issues to children. She also asked if there are any NJ municipalities that have all sustainable equipment, there are none in NJ, but there are communities across the country, ex: University of Alabama. The notion of having a manicured lawn needs to be changed. Reade asked if there are any known municipalities that have an ordinance for standards and guidelines for clearing out under foliage areas and re-mulching for a more ecological landscape and environment. Lois will check with the Quiet Communities group to see if there is anything like that in the country. Also mentioned was that Maplewood and Westfield have a registry of landscapers which consists of their license number for identify if a need arises. Maggee stated that education is critical, and she does not think there is such a list for Millburn. Maggee will convey the presentation information to the Township Committee. Also noted that Senator Bob Smith is in support to ban gas leaf blowers.

Communication/Updates

a) Shade Tree Advisory Board (EV) -

1. Free tree handout at DPW in April. 200 trees in bundles of 4 were handed out in less than 30 minutes. Four species were provided: Mockernut Hickory, Swamp White Oak, Dogwood and Hackberry. The arboretum picked up two trees.

2. Had quarterly meeting with the new Forester, Jeff. He will be helpful working on the Tree Preservation Ordinance when we are ready. We encouraged him to plant native shade trees rather than non-native short trees

3. They are trying to find a time to get together to work on the Ordinance.

b) Millburn Green Team (MR) – Native plant appreciation month was a success; plant sale went well. Mark completed his talk at the Bower Center.

c) Millburn High School E-Club (NP) – Next meeting 5/13. Will mention lawn maintenance regarding gas leaf blowers for students to relay to their family. Aquafest tentative date 5/31-6/3. Waiting on confirmation from the principal.

Township Committee Report (MM) – Maggee passed along that DWP was recently taking down an Ash tree and there was a beehive in it. A beekeeper was called to remove the bees. Once removed they will continue to remove the tree.

Storm Water Ordinance might be on the May 17th agenda if not, should be on the next agenda.

Planning Board Report (DN) – Debra inquired if the EC could provide some feedback on guidelines for tree plantings intended for developers. Mark stated there are no ordinances or guidelines, although they are working on one. Priya will email a checklist to help with environmental concerns and development.

Old Business

- a) Tree Ordinance / Native & Invasive Plants Resolution (EV, MR, OS) – Odarka questioned Maggee as to the status of the resolution that MEC passed on to the Township Committee. Maggee stated that at this time the Township Committee is consumed with other pressing

matters. Odarka will send the resolution to Mark for review. MEC will continue discussion at next meeting.

b) Stormwater Management/Green Infrastructure Ordinance (EV) – Presented to the Flood Mitigation Group the information from the Watershed Institute during their April meeting. This was basically the same information presented to the Township Committee in January, but our request was that the Flood Mitigation Committee, as technical experts, advise the Township Committee. Richard Wasserman requested the committee to review the information and include it in their next meeting.

New Business

- a) Open Space/Green Acres – Carry to next meeting.
- b) EV Charging Stations (PP) – An EV Ordinance was signed by the Governor last fall. 40% of GHGs are from gasoline emissions, so looking for an opportunity to build up some EV infrastructure. Maybe provide fast or level 2 chargers for passing motorist, visiting motorist, etc.
- c) 132 Millburn Avenue (PP) – Priya requested by OPRA documentation on this property. Owned by NJ Energy who had an application for a convenience store and gas station which was denied. Status of the property is unknown. Possibly leaking storage tanks. Requested DEP site reports and additional remedial action workplan. This could be a potential site for EV's, bus stop, rain garden, etc.

Announcements/Events/Updates

- Next MEC Meeting: Tuesday, June 14, 7:00 PM.

Roger Timpson motion to adjourn, Mark Robison 2nd with all in favor.
Adjourn 8:37

Carolyn Scannelli
Minutes Secretary