

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

April 8, 2021

The April meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, April 8, 2021 via Zoom with Ephriam Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

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; L. Katz; A. Baig; E. Gordon

Green Team: D. Kaye

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

Guests: Barbara Simpson Vadnais, ANJEC; Anne Marie Price, NJ Audubon Society;
Inara, HS student; Miguel Vilaro-Munet

PUBLIC COMMENT – Barbara Simpson Vadnais, Board President, ANJEC, gave a brief presentation on the current and upcoming virtual opportunities. On April 12 there will be a presentation on Acting Locally to Protect Open Space. Environmental grant applications for open space projects are being accepted through April 19. Earth Day on April 22 will be hosted through the Hopin virtual platform and will allow any group interested in participating to supply presentations, videos, talks, or recordings as they have available. There will be a training on May 6 entitled Turning a Brownfield Liability into an Asset. ANJEC worked with the Watershed Institute to develop an updated model Stormwater Ordinance which is available on the resource page of their website. Plastic pollution has been a large focus this year including the limited provision of single-use plastic straws which will go into effect November 2021 and the ban on single-use plastic bags and polystyrene foam food service containers in May 2022. The website njnoplastics.org is a valuable resource containing information on legislation clarification, single use bags substitution/replacement information, etc. ANJEC will continue to host quarterly webinars as they have been positively received.

Anne Marie Price, NJ Audubon Society, provided a brief overview of the organization. The NJ Audubon Society has conservation priorities for reaching people, protecting species and advocating for the environment. The public policy and advocacy group consists of lobbyists, research and monitoring, and stewardship teams who reach out to encourage landowners to use sustainable practices when maintaining their property. Ms. Price is currently working at the Plainsboro Preserve which is a part of the NJAS Education & Outreach group. The Plainsboro Preserve consists of approximately 1,000 acres inclusive of a 50 acre lake and 5 miles of trails. A. Mandel, who has a long history with the Audubon Society and the Plainsboro Preserve welcomed Ms. Price. E. Buhks requested to have an email sent to EC with details of activities or events taking place at the preserve so that it can be shared with members and posted on the website as appropriate. This may also ensure the information be dispersed to local Boy and Girl Scout troops for their participation.

Inara, a student at High School South, gave a presentation on the survey she has been conducting for consumer preferences on the adoption of climate friendly packaging in Mercer County. As many people are aware, legislation has been introduced to ban single use paper and plastic bags and is set to take effect in May 2022. During quarantine due to the national Covid crisis, many restaurants were not taking initiative to switch and adopt these new packaging options. This survey helped determine the level of community interest and assist businesses to understand the level of community acceptance and anticipated participation. Based on her survey, 93% of patrons were aware of the packaging material utilized by a business, and more than 50% are moderately or extremely influenced by the type of packaging when selecting a restaurant. 94% are willing to pay approximately 1-3% more on their bill for better packaging. 93% say they don't want or need the single use plastic utensils supplied by a business and would not mind if the business discontinued to supply them unless requested. Results pertaining to grocery stores were very similar. 67% of participants believe Mercer County should put a higher priority on sustainable packaging and 60% believe Mercer County is not doing enough to address this issue at this time. She has received 181 responses at this time and has learned that she would

need 380 to be considered statistically significant in proportion to WWT population. She determined she needs to broaden her scope and reach more channels, therefore she is inviting EC members to participate and share the survey by whatever means to garner more responses. E. Buhks thanked her for the presentation and asked her to share the link so it can be dispersed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: none

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Township Council Update – A. Mandel gave a report on the recent large scale fire incident which occurred on April 7, 2021 at the Avalon apartments off of Clarksville Road. A large apartment building was heavily damaged by fire resulting in the displacement of 24 families and three firefighters being injured. However, there were no fatalities. WW and the American Red Cross are actively coordinating to provide any resources and services to those affected as quickly as possible. A serious concern is that many residents had to evacuate without any documentation or identification which is proving to be a hindrance. They are coordinating with Mercer County to determine the best course of action to arrange documentation replacements as well as the possibility of gaining access to the building if plausible to allow residents to retrieve items. Temporary housing has been provided by the American Red Cross or personal connections of the residents. The development owner, Avalon, has also offered to coordinate relocation of residents to vacant units throughout this complex as well as the additional communities under their ownership. They do plan rebuild the building as soon as possible. The Superintendent of Schools has provided electronic equipment for any residents with students in the district to allow the continued participation in remote education as well as notify teachers of the current situation. Many additional options and offers for donations and assistance are still under review at this time.

Project Review – E. Gordon provided a brief presentation on the Spotted Lanternfly which included the identification of various life stages and the location and physical appearance of eggs to assist in identifying potential infestations. Mercer County is now recognized as a location with a significant population and therefore no longer requires residents to report sightings. He also provided an overview on weeds which can be commonly found or purchased in the area. He suggested compiling a list to identify invasive and non-native species to assist residents in avoiding them if possible and desired. The list could contain options for removal in alternative to the use of herbicides and be made available through the EC website. Anne Marie Price offered her assistance.

A. Shankar gave an update on the progress of the new EC website which included the various resources she plans to incorporate. She will continue to determine the appropriate photographs and introductions to provide in these areas. D. Dobromilsky inquired if these would be similarly incorporated and tied into the current layout and design of the WWT website. A. Shankar confirmed she will have taken the current layout into consideration to provide a seamless transition. T. Wahrman confirmed the list of video links she provided had been received. E. Buhks confirmed the WWBYOBag campaign is the current priority and inquired what would be addressed afterwards. D. Dobromilsky suggested the links to various informational pages and affiliated websites would be the most helpful. He also suggested including a disclaimer identifying the links as for informational purposes only and are not directly maintained or endorsed by the EC and WWT. T. Wahrman offered to supply the disclaimer utilized by Princeton as an example. A. Mandel suggested having E. Gordon supply the Sustainable Landscape information previously discussed and local scout projects including the rain garden as quickly as possible so it can also be incorporated. A. Shankar stated she will continue to provide progress updates as available.

H. Shankar stated she has been working with two high school students with regards to solar energy in WWT. They gave a presentation on the results of the survey they created to gather consumer feedback for those residents who have solar panels. Some examples of the questions asked were how long they have had the panels installed, how long it took to receive a permit, if they have experienced any issues with their system and their general pros and cons of the system and experience. They were able to conduct the survey with 35 households, unfortunately none of which had solar panels. However, they did have questions which could be answered by these individuals and shared the results of the responses. 31% of the responses indicated they had considered installing solar panels. 22 of the responses which stated they chose to not install solar panels indicated the high cost of installation, maintenance and unreliability to be their primary cases of deterrence.

Nine of the remaining households which chose not to install solar panels indicated a lack of readily available information as their primary cause.

D. Dobromilsky gave an update on the WWBYOBag campaign. An order has been placed for 200 vertical and 100 horizontal magnetic signs which can be placed at various locations to encourage and remind consumers to bring their reusable bags when shopping. There is a total of \$3,789 currently remaining in grant funds which is slated to be utilized for the purchase of additional bags and possible streaming rights for the films to be posted on the EC website as previously discussed. The total projected budget, inclusive of grant and donations, is \$10,000.00 for over 6,000 reusable bags, \$1,441 for the magnetic signs and additional various costs to be tallied for the videos, flyers and posters. Over 4,200 bags have been distributed to date, with a current inventory of 140. D. Dobromilsky is in the process of generating an order for the final 2,000-2,400 bags.

T. Wahrman gave a presentation on recycling which began with sharing information on the materials accepted through the program provided by the Mercer County Improvement Authority. Recycling in New Jersey is governed by each county and therefore rules and regulations may vary dependent upon the programs offered. MCIA provides flyers and informational resources to assist residents in ensuring they do not submit items that could potentially contaminate an entire collection load. Such issues can prove to be a hindrance in the county offering a cost-effective program to its residents. L. Katz suggested including the link to MCIA on the EC website to ensure residents stay up to date on acceptable materials. A. Mandel suggested including the Greening Together video provided by the local Girl Scout troop as well as a link to the valuable electronic app entitled Recycling Coach which can assist in determining if product packaging is recyclable. T. Wahrman also addressed the recently approved Plastic Pollution Reduction Act going into effect in May 2022. The main concern is to reevaluate our current choices of disposable materials in various situations including cleaning with paper towels or utilizing single use plastic cups in eating and entertaining. The goal is to transition from single use to reusable to reduce the amount of waste generated. In the effort of time management, T. Wahrman offered to continue her presentation at an upcoming meeting.

A. Baig provided information on the recent Planning Board application by Princeton University seeking preliminary and final major site plan approval for the initial phase of the Lake Campus South project. This includes the one-story TIGER CUB, which stands for "thermally-integrated geo-exchange resource central utility building," with two Thermal Energy Storage (TES) Tanks, electrical transformers, and a natural-gas powered back-up generator to deliver thermal energy for buildings at the new Lake Campus. The TES tanks are used to store water that will be utilized to heat and cool the Lake Campus and supports the University's goal of producing net zero percent annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2046.

NEW BUSINESS: E. Buhks provided details on the upcoming Mercer County Sustainability Coalition Green Fest event, Greening Together 2021, which will take place from April 24 through April 30, 2021. The West Windsor Green Team will be participating on Monday April 26 in the Journey to Zero-Waste on how to live sustainably and produce as little waste as possible in day-to-day activities. There are numerous outdoor and virtual events scheduled which may interest EC members and residents. All events will be free but will require registration to participate. E. Buhks will provide the Sustainability Coalition website link to EC members so they may find additional program details and register once the opportunity becomes available.

Motion to adjourn by E. Buhks, seconded by A. Baig. Meeting was adjourned at 10:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission