

## WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

March 11, 2021

The March meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, March 11, 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; L. Katz; T. Wahrman; A. Baig; E. Gordon; H. Shankar; S. Wolfe

Green Team: D. Kaye

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

Guests: Girl Scout Troop #70057; Dr. Lawrence White; Sophie Glover, Watershed Institute;  
Girl Scout Troop #72833; Kathleen Schwartz, Watershed Institute Community Advocate;  
Marisa Immordino, Watershed Ambassador; L. Geevers, Council Member

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Members of Girl Scout Troop #70057, gave a brief overview presentation of their group's Community Raingarden Project, which will be located at the WWT Senior Center. A raingarden helps to prevent puddles and excess storm runoff from gathering on the side of yards or roads, naturally filters water & reuses it to benefit plants in the garden. It consists of several layers: the drainage layer made up of gravel, the transition layer made up of a mixture of gravel and sand; the submerge layer made up of sand and the filter media which is made up of soil. Their garden will also contain PVC pipes to aid in cases of large storms to prevent flooding. The GS troop plans to incorporate native plants throughout the garden to encourage pollinators. An area near the municipal court has been identified as it is already pitched with a low-lying ditch area. They will need to observe the garden after large storms to ensure any necessary repairs will be made quickly. E. Buhks requested the GS troop to share a copy of their presentation, including any photos or videos, with the EC so it can be shared with the community where appropriate.

Kathleen Schwartz is participating in the Watershed Institute Community Advocates Program. She is interested in learning about programs and activities the EC takes part in so she can be involved if applicable.

Sophie Glover, Assistant Policy Director of the Watershed Institute, complimented the Girl Scouts on their raingarden presentation. The Watershed Institute recently launched a new part of the website for Exploring Green Infrastructure. This allows individuals and organizations to post examples of their raingarden projects so other residents can learn and be encouraged to develop their own ideas.

Marissa Immordino, Watershed Ambassador for Millstone Watershed which includes WWT stated that the Watershed Ambassador is a [program affiliated with Americor (a national service organization) as well as the NJDEP. An ambassador provides free education and outreach for communities within her watershed and assesses streams and waterways in her region. Ms. Immordino wanted to introduce herself to the EC and offer resources when available if WWT is interested in utilizing her. However, her current term of service will end in July. Dr. Lawrence White commented that his son was also an ambassador with Americor and performed the same duties as M. Immordino during his term.

Eritika, Girl Scout Troop #72833, which is working on the Native Garden Zaitz project and has attended some meetings in the past, requested to have the field mowed to remove invasive plants & grass from the area. D. Dobromilsky stated he is aware and is coordinating with WWT DPW to have that field as well as other meadows in town mowed.

Dr. Lawrence White, a WWT resident for 35 years, had assisted D. Dobromilsky in the past with designing & maintaining the yoga garden next to the Senior Center. Dr. White gave a presentation about native spring ephemeral plants which mostly grown in local woodlands. Many of the spring bulb plants that can be seen

currently sprouting in many local yards and gardens are not native species to the United States but are typically imported from other regions such as Europe. Several native species are dwindling or endangered due to multiple causes including removal of natural habits due to development, large deer populations and invasive species taking over. Local gardens with native species have begun to require the installation of deer fences in order to provide a small level of protection. Dr. White shared details about numerous native species including the twin leaf plant, violets, dwarf larkspur and Jack in the Pulpit. E. Buhks thanked Dr. White for his informative presentation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 14, 2021 L. Katz motioned; T. Wahrman seconded  
Minutes were approved as amended.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Township Council Update – A. Mandel reported the annual budget is reviewed during four public meetings which are available online. Three have already taken place with one more remaining for anyone who is interested in attending. Many of the items are dictated by law or dedicated to salary however there are capital projects which do require review and approval. A number of residents have already received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. The two vaccination site locations in Mercer County which are Cure Arena and Mercer County Community College. The ongoing waitlist of WWT senior residents has been shared with the Mercer County Community College location to ensure prompt notification and scheduling as available. Cure Arena is dedicated to Mercer County residents, therefore all are encouraged to select that location as available when performing online scheduling requests. A. Mandel encourages all residents to utilize Recycle Coach. This educational service ensures everyone is aware of the appropriate items to place in garbage or recycling containers, lists dates and procedures for yard waste pick-ups and indicates when electronic recycling events will be taking place. A. Mandel shared a quick tutorial and overview of the SDL Portal now available on the township website. SDL allows residents to access residential property information including address, block and lot information, assessed values, acreage, permits which have been issued in the past as well as any current applications or open permits and violations, if any, and request inspections. Residents are required to register for free access to this system.

Project Review – E. Gordon reminded everyone that Sustainable Landscapes contribute to the development of healthy communities by restoring native habitats, promoting clean water and air and sequestering carbon. Utilization of native plants is always encouraged as well as environmentally friendly home lawns and gardens and proper recycling including composting. Hopewell Valley Open Space created a list which identifies invasive plant species commonly available for purchase at local retailers. They also created a Landscape Planting Pledge for their residents to sign which lists the invasive species available and encourages them to agree to not plant them on their property. E. Gordon suggests we adopt the same process or develop one of our own. A. Mandel inquired if D. Dobromilsky could supply this type of list to landscapers working or licensed within WWT. D. Dobromilsky stated he does not maintain a list of local landscape companies and therefore would be unable to accomplish this request. One species which poses a current threat is the Tree of Heaven which attracts the spotted lantern fly. Trees would need to be located and determine if it is public or private property. Once located, homeowner permission would need to be obtained if necessary and commercial tree service companies would need to be hired depending on the size of the tree. The burden of this cost is not always feasible based on township budget. Small trees can be removed using repeated treatments of herbicides. An alternative is coordinating with Boy Scout troops to locate and destroy spotted lantern fly eggs on trees in the Ron Rogers Arboretum, as well as additional locations. E. Gordon suggested having EC members and homeowners enroll and attend a Mercer County Community College training course on the safe use of lawn fertilizers and pesticides in May 2021. The course consists of 5 online sessions via Zoom and is open to all Mercer County residents.

H. Shankar reported on the information she obtained regarding solar energy from the consumer perspective. Solar panel systems are also identified as photovoltaic (PV) systems. PSE&G requires consumers to research at least three contractors or vendors prior to finalizing the installation. WWT recommended researching approximately 4 companies as well as obtaining recommendations from neighbors or local residents and reviews. There are numerous vendors in the local area with available appointments as quick as the next day. The contractors will come to your home and determine the size and strength of the system which would best benefit the resident based on sun exposure and product usage. The two most common systems are made up

of monocrystalline cells or polycrystalline cells which are both made of silicon. Monocrystalline are more efficient as the cell is made of a single crystal and allows the electrons to move the generated electricity more freely. It is more expensive and has fewer aesthetic options available. Polycrystalline are made from many fragments of silicon melted together which makes them less efficient but more affordable. They are also available in a blue hue instead of just black. Consumers can either lease or purchase the systems. A benefit with leasing is that if your roof is damaged, such as in a natural disaster, all damage would be covered by the leasing company. However, if you purchase and own the system, damages would have to be covered by the homeowners insurance. There is a 25 year warranty on the system and a 10 year warranty for labor and leakage. Consumers would need to obtain approval from HOA if required; some HOAs won't allow solar systems at all. WWT informed her that the entire process of applying and obtaining a permit through installation of the panels could take approximately 2 months depending on the current demand and the vendor schedule. Battery packages can be added and range from \$5,000-\$30,000 depending on the consumer's desired usage of the battery. A. Mandel commented that an advantage to a battery backup system is usage smoothing which would offset a high peak demand during suboptimal times such as rainy/cloudy days and counteract the cost of utilizing the power grid.

A. Shankar reported that she continues to organize and categorize past presentations as well as any additional ones from today's meeting and incorporate them into the new EC website design. Ensuring the information can be easily found and accessed is an ongoing task. E. Buhks requested that being up to date and organization remain her top priority. She will continue to provide weekly progress reports as follow-up. As information is identified that needs to be added to the website, D. Dobromilsky sends it to the township administration for approval. He will continue working with A. Shankar to have the website organized in the most efficient way.

D. Dobromilsky gave an update on the BYOBag campaign. EC has obtained approximately 4,200 bags of which only 150 remain. Most recently 1,000 bags were donated to the school district, 300 to Jewish Family and Children Services and 300 to Project Freedom and affordable housing. At this time, a total of \$7,000 has been expended with approximately \$4,700 being expended from the SJ grant. D. Dobromilsky proposes purchasing an additional 3,250 bags, producing 3,300 flyers, and moving forward with the previously proposed video that can be placed on the website and utilized in various ways. Based on feedback received from McCaffrey's, they plan to develop and obtain their own signage and would no longer need assistance for this from EC. D. Dobromilsky suggested purchasing 250 magnetic bumper signs in place of the previously discussed retail signs which would cost approximately \$1,200. These could be placed on vehicles, light posts, cart corrals and be moved and reused wherever deemed the most useful. L. Geever reported that she has distributed 350 bags to the Windsor Business Plaza, Shell and Valero gas stations, Ellsworth Shopping Center, other various retailers around town, Freedom Village and during the recent clothing drive. She expressed the school district would be interested in receiving additional bags to utilize with the various American Red Cross campaigns they participate in. T. Wahrman thanked D. Dobromilsky for all his efforts and ongoing work during this campaign. She also suggested contacting the West Windsor library branch to determine if they would be interested in distributing bags. D. Dobromilsky stated he would reach out to them.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Greening Together (Green Fest 2021) – E. Buhks provided an update on the upcoming Mercer County Sustainability Coalition Green Fest event, Greening Together April 24-30, 2021. The committee has decided to have a virtual event this year utilizing numerous online presentations. There will also be field activities held outdoors in accordance with social distancing guidelines. Monday will be dedicated to Zero Waste with the Hopewell Valley and West Windsor Green Teams. Our West Windsor Girl Scout troops have been asked to provide their recycling slideshow and composting presentation. The events are free but will require participants to register for attendance. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Motion to adjourn by T. Wahrman, seconded by A. Baig. Meeting was adjourned at 9:49pm

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary  
WWT Environmental Commission