

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

April 13, 2023

The April 2023 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, April 13, 2023 via Zoom with Ephraim 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; E. Gordon; S. Parratt; L. Katz;	
Liaison:	D. Dobromilsky	Advisors: D. Parris
		Council Liaison: S. Gawas
Guests:	Andrea Mandel, WWT Council President	J. Maingi, Girl Scout
	Gina Talt, S.C.R.A.P. Princeton University	Alejandro Berlin, Rutgers Master Gardener
	Eleni Litt, Rutgers Steward	Susan Bristol, The Watershed Institute

PUBLIC COMMENT – J. Maingi, a Girl Scout, gave a presentation on her Girl Scout Gold award project on Spotted Lantern Fly Traps Education. There are three prongs to the project. The first is classes she plans to teach on how to construct circle and tape traps which the attendees will take home. Materials will be provided for the construction as well as information on installation and usage. The second would be handing out premade traps at the Farmers Market each weekend in WWT. The third and final aspect would involve assembling a group of volunteers to install traps in various parks throughout the community and providing ongoing monitoring to maintain them. A. Mandel suggested including information on when and why to remove the trap to ensure damage is minimal to beneficial pollinator and native insect species.

G. Talt, Project Manager of the S.C.R.A.P. Lab at Princeton University, gave a presentation on the Sustainable Composting Research project. This project has been ongoing for approximately 5 years and is an investigation into the implementation of small-scale composting technology to inform institutions and municipalities on how to recycle and compost organics. Food scraps are collected from the kitchens around campus and brought to the lab each morning. The team empties the bins into the shredder and adds compostable materials such as wood shavings, pizza boxes and paper plates to be ground together. The scraps spend 5-7 days in the drum where it is automatically aerated every 15 mins and rotated every hour before it emerges as compostable material. It will then typically be stored for a few months to cure in a passive static pile before being spread around campus wherever compostable materials are needed. A. Mandel asked about the risk of contamination due to the accidental inclusion of materials such as silverware or ketchup packets. G. Talt replied that they have a very low rate, typically less than 5% of contamination, and most students are diligently aware to only include compostable material in the collection bins. E. Buhks invited her to attend future events where the EC is involved to provide information and reach out to local community residents. He also inquired as to the funding of the project. G. Talt replied that an original donor wanted to contribute to a food regenerative project which was utilized to purchase the vessel. As an employee of the Office of Sustainability at the university, she coordinated with the Facilities Department to receive matching operating budget funds to promote their goal of bridge-building with campus life which was then applied to building the facility, paying for utilities, and funding two student workers. E. Buhks thanked her for attending the meeting and sharing the presentation on this project.

S. Bristol, Municipal Policy Specialist for The Watershed Institute, introduced herself. She replaced Sophie Glovier who held the position prior to being promoted to Director of Operations and had attended EC meetings in the past. S. Bristol is also a former West Windsor resident. The Watershed Institute will be hosting a DEP mapping workshop on May 18, 2023; all interested EC members are welcome to attend. The Watershed continues to offer its assistance to local and regional municipalities as they work on updating their Master Plan elements.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 10, 2022 S. Parratt motioned; E. Gordon seconded;
Minutes were approved as presented.

CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update:

Community Park Pollinator and Rain Garden – S. Parratt and A. Berlin, Rutgers Master Gardeners and WWT residents, gave a brief presentation on the proposal to create and install a wildflower meadow in Community Park. This meadow would reduce the overall lawn surface requiring chemical treatments and mowing, help to infiltrate rainwater, provide native plant food and habitats for pollinators and serve as an educational demonstration for community members of the use of meadows as an alternative to grass lawns. Several installation techniques will be used and tested over the next few weeks to determine which is found to be the most effective and the findings will be reported back at a future meeting. This can be used as an educational demonstration to community members that various methods are available for them to choose from for their own garden installations.

Greening Together 2023 – E. Buhks reported that the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition Greening Together 2023 posted details of the various events being held throughout several municipalities and organizations within Mercer County on their website. This includes the WWT Arbor Day celebration on April 29, 2023 at the Ronald Rogers arboretum.

Scout Projects/Arbor Day – D. Dobromilsky reported that the Arbor Day Celebration will take place on April 29, 2023 at 9:30am at the Ronald R. Rogers Arboretum. The Shade Tree Commission will once again host its annual Art Contest with submissions to be on display and prizes to be awarded at the event. The EC will participate and assist by having Scout educational presentations on spotted lantern flies and their other various projects, providing tree planting and maintenance information, and tree sapling giveaways. E. Buhks requested he share the event flyer with EC members.

Planning Board – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky and A. Mandel reported that the Flood Plain Management Regulations ordinance was extensively reviewed by the PB at the April 12, 2023 meeting. The PB voted unanimously to pass the ordinance with two minor grammatical changes it will now be returned to the township council for approval. At the April 19, 2023 PB meeting, an application will be heard for Carnegie Center, PB22-09, for interior renovations as well as exterior improvements to the existing three story office building known as 105 Carnegie Center to convert it to a mixed use building with approximately forty percent dedicated to office space and the remainder converted to lab.

Master Plan Conservation Plan Element Update – Individual elements of the Master Plan continue to be reviewed by the PB and their consultant. These will be presented to EC for analysis and input as necessary. The EC working group devised at the March 2023 EC meeting met with D. Dobromilsky several times to address the Conservation Element and anticipate having a draft for review by EC within the next month.

Solar Lighting – H. Shankar was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky stated there is no update on the progress of this project at this time.

Township Council Update – S. Gawas reported the Council introduced the 2023 municipal budget and the public hearing is scheduled for May 22, 2023. A public hearing to approve the Flood Plain Management Regulations Ordinance will be scheduled for an upcoming meeting after receiving approval by the PB as previously stated.

Recycling – I. Singh was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky provided an update on the progress of the ongoing project. I. Singh will continue to reach out to several outlets and compile information. The WWT Recycling Coordinator will be attending the Arbor Day event.

Sustainability Summit – L. Katz requested to attend the Sustainable Jersey Sustainability Summit on May 5, 2023 to participate in the Suddenly Solar session. Registration is open to elected and appointed officials, EC members, Green Team volunteers. D. Dobromilsky stated EC budget can be utilized for reimbursement of the cost of professional seminars.

Energy Efficiency – L. Katz gave a brief overview of the information he has compiled regarding the federal energy tax credit program and the NJ state energy tax credits. D. Dobromilsky suggested compiling the information into a document or flyer that can be posted on the EC website as well as in a public place such as the Code Enforcement office in the township building.

Electric Vehicle – E. Buhks inquired if the purchase of an electric vehicle would be a possibility for the township in the future. S. Gawas and A. Mandel stated it has been in discussion and planning for several years. The current budget does account for a vehicle to be purchased for the Health Department, if a vehicle and charging apparatus requirements are feasible and meet budgetary restraints. An update and more information can be provided as this moves forward.

Motion to adjourn by L. Katz, seconded by E. Gordon. Meeting was adjourned at 9:06pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission