



SPARTA TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MARCH 24, 2022 MEETING
7:00 P.M. @ Town Hall

This meeting was called to Order @ 7:05 pm.

Chairman Blumetti read the Open Public Notice.

In attendance: Chairman Dean Blumetti, Co-Chair, Neil Sauerwein, Ted Gall, Planning Board Liaison, Christine Dunbar, and Councilman Dan Chiariello

Not in attendance: Robert Poles, Kimberly Noel, Richard Tomko

No members of the public were present.

Minutes: None at this time to approve.

Correspondence:

Sussex County Open Space Committee Minutes dated September 23, 2021

Sussex County Agriculture Development Board Minutes of January 18, 2022

Sussex County Open Space Committee Minutes dated January 27, 2022

Chairman Blumetti asked the Commission members if there were any comments or would like to discuss any of the County Minutes.

Councilman Chiariello commented that there was some discussion about available funds allocated for trails in the SC Open Space Committee Minutes dated 9/23/21 and asked how the Township could apply and take advantage of those grant funds, then asked Mr. Gall if the Planning Board is aware of these grants and if they get involved in identifying an interest in creating and/or maintaining certain trails within the Township.

Mr. Gall recalled a number of years ago he suggested the Township purchase the vacant property by Fowler's Pond off of Green Road, but at that time he was advised that it was too expensive.

Councilman Chiariello recalls there was discussion about using that property to create a micro park at that time. He added that he would bring the open space trail grant information back to the Council as they recently approved the purchase of property in the Eagles Nest development to provide access to the Sparta Glen trails, the grant funds could possibly be used to improve the access point to the trail.

Chairman Blumetti referred back to the 9/23/21 County minutes noticing that Karen Spicer was present for Sparta Township at that meeting. In the 1/27/22 minutes, it appears the Open Space Committee had received requests for that grant money from a number of towns but didn't see anyone from Sparta there or mentioning any proposed use of those funds. He mentioned connecting with Karen Spicer, Sparta Township's Grant Writer, to discuss the deadlines of that grant.

Neil Sauerwein mentioned that Byram Township has a plan for a trail that runs the length from Green Township to Sparta Township (referring to Pages 3 and 4 of 1/27/22 SC Open Space minutes).



Mr. Gall remembered there was property for sale along the Wallkill River by Sparta High School that would have tied in with trails, but other members of this commission shared they remembered there was too much wetlands and property owners nearby so it didn't get approved.

Chairman Blumetti, seeing no more comments on the County Minutes, he moved to the Applications on the Agenda advising that this Commission has the opportunity to provide feedback to the Zoning Board prior to an Application being heard.

Zoning Board Application No. 28-21, Benevolent Acupuncture and Wellness Center

Chairman Blumetti stated this is a small piece of property near White Deer Plaza on Woodport Road (near Seminary Lane), the Applicants are looking to increase the number of parking spaces (6), increase impervious coverage to 55.2% (maximum allowed is 40%), and looking to re-zone it for one apartment above the acupuncture studios. From an environmental standpoint, it's not a big piece of property but the impervious coverage increase requested is 1,000+ ft or so of impervious space. They are looking to put in a free-standing sign as currently there doesn't appear to be any signage for this Center.

Christine Dunbar mentioned her concern is there is 15% more impervious cover and that the proposed 1,000 sq. ft. of "new" impervious cover calculates to over 1,000+ gallons of storm runoff during a 2-year storm, which yields a little over 3 inches. The Applicant is proposing an unspecified sized drywell, which could have limited capacity and questioned if it could manage 1,000 gallons of water during a 2-year storm (or more). Ms. Dunbar then passed out information to the members on how to calculate the amount of storm water runoff per square feet.

Chairman Blumetti added that given the elevation of the property, the run off would flow down the hill into White Lake Plaza.

Co-Chairman Sauerwein asked if there is a significant difference between paving with impervious asphalt and pervious asphalt?

Councilman Chiariello advised that he will bring up impervious coverage again to the Township Engineer as it relates to our current Ordinance. He has been researching this and explained how it could be more expensive and not as easy for someone to take a current impervious coverage and keep it impervious. He explained that we can't just strip up asphalt then put down blocks or something similar, asphalt sits on impacted soil, one would have to dig down deep to get the soil base that is pervious.

Discussion continued between members on other types of impervious and pervious coverages relating to pavement and asphalt, as it appears the Applicants are asking for more new impervious coverage by adding pavement for the parking spots.

Chairman Blumetti wrapped up the comments on this application, asking the members if the impervious coverage variance applied for were their only concerns and advised he will make the recommendation to the Zoning Board that the applicant use permeable pavement.

Chairman Blumetti suggested the current Commission should consider a generalized response for every application they review, strongly recommending using permeable pavement as well as using native and non-



invasive plants, which is something the prior Commission members added in their comments back to the Boards.

Zoning Board Application No. 30-21, Chabad Center of Northwest NJ

Chairman Blumetti shared that this property is off of Woodport Road heading South, after East Mountain Road on the right. The variances that the applicant is asking for is the height of the building, little clearance in the side and rear yards, and a parking variance. They are increasing impervious coverage but not over the maximum allowed in that zone.

Ms. Dunbar commented that she drove by the property and noticed there is a lot of rechargeable surface area and the applicant is asking for 25% more up to the max of 50% impervious coverage. She also noticed in their application, they are putting in a new septic system. She asked for clarification if the existing driveway is gravel or dirt and mentioned that if they are paving the whole driveway or only part of it as it slopes downhill onto Woodport Road; if fully paved it will flow right down onto it. On Page 3 of the Engineer's report, it mentions something on storm drainage... "The outlet pipes from the proposed driveway inlets are being tied into the existing storm drain inlets..."

Chairman Blumetti said it appears they are adding a paved area along the street but not sure what is there currently. He pointed out on the chart on the Site Layout, Lighting and Landscaping Plan, the proposed paved parking area and driveway would go right out onto Woodsworth Place (pointing out that it appears there is one way in to the Center from Woodport Rd. and one way out onto Woodsworth Place).

Mr. Gall noticed they are up on a hill and that it does look like there is an existing drain south of the driveway that they could tie into, recommending they put a catch basin in the driveway and tie it into the existing drain to the east.

Ms. Dunbar pointed out that south is uphill and it could cause a problem, they may need to have a catch basin to the north or the east.

Chairman Blumetti summarized the comments for this application, recommending they use permeable pavement and native and non-invasive plants for the landscape plan; they are putting in an expanded parking area with pavement which will create increased stormflow down the driveway toward Woodport Road, therefore the applicant should ensure that there is a significant capacity to collect and distribute that increased stormwater coming down the driveway.

Chairman Blumetti then confirmed that there was no public present to comment and moved onto Reports.

Mr. Gall advised that the last Planning Board meeting was on-line and focused on the Diamond Chip Warehouse, but no decisions were made. Chairman Blumetti noticed the next Planning Board meeting was to be held in person and commented if the meeting would be moved to a bigger venue due to the size of our Council Chambers and whether the public would be allowed to participate if they were in the hallways of Town Hall.

Councilman Chiariello commented that the Council Meetings had not had much activity other than changing the time of the Environmental Commission meetings by Ordinance to 7:00 p.m. as well as that the public is showing interest and attending their meetings to share their concerns about the warehouse. The Councilman



also advised he attempted to make a motion to entertain an Ordinance change to restrict the allowable uses so that future warehouses and trucking terminals and/or transfer stations would be at least conditional if not restricted uses, but that motion failed and it will not advance.

Chairman Blumetti moved onto Unfinished Business on the Agenda.

Councilman Chiariello stated that the Plastic Bag Ban Community Event is being planned for Thursday, April 28th at 6:00 p.m., just before this Commission's regularly scheduled meeting, and explained it will be a hybrid meeting (in public and accessible via teleconference or Zoom), but explained how to answer any questions and asked the Secretary if she could monitor the live questions from the public and read them for the ANJEC Representative to answer. He explained this is more of an educational awareness of the new NJ Law and not entertain questions about repealing this ban nor to debate or argue the law. He explained the next steps would be to meet with the Township Manager and have him approve the draft press release, discussing logistics as well as how to get it advertised. Councilman Chiariello advised that he asked the Mayor to kick the event off, as well as placing a plastic bag Proclamation on the next Council Agenda.

Chairman Blumetti brought up that he'd like to create subcommittees within this Commission to discuss the various projects and events discussed in past meetings, explaining there would be e-mails sent, as well as some Zoom meetings scheduled in between the regularly scheduled Commission meetings, but reminded everyone that if there are 4 members or more, it would be considered a public meeting and would have to follow the notice requirements.

Councilman Chiariello commented that we may need to ask the Township Attorney about public meeting requirements and that it may only be considered public if existing policies are being discussed, implemented, or changed, as you cannot circulate plans or policies that is meant for public comment without involving the public, so subcommittees for specific projects should be OK.

Sparta Day Booth, June 4th Station Park. This Commission thought it would be a good idea to have a booth at Sparta Day to talk to the public about what we do, who we are, listen to questions and see what the public's concerns are. He explained that ANJEC has "free to borrow displays", but that we need to reserve and pay for a spot, borrow a tent and tables as well as have enough volunteers on board between 9:30 am to 5:00 p.m., at least 6 volunteers covering 2 ½ hour shifts with at least 2 people together at once for breaks.

Ms. Dunbar made the suggestion in line with the plastic bag informational session, that throughout the year this Commission could have one or two informational sessions on various environmental topics; i.e. recycling, household waste, where their water goes, septic systems; and/or something about Sparta's community like where the local parks and trails are located. She suggested at Sparta Day put a sign-up sheet out, "What topics would you like the Environmental Commission to present at an informational meeting in the future" and see what ideas the public has. The other members mentioned backyard composting, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, or mini projects for people to do around their property.

Mr. Gall stated that he would like to see a Rain Garden in front of Town Hall for visibility but Chairman Blumetti explained that it was on the original list last fall and that the grant money through Rutgers required that it had to be part of the Delaware River drainage, which Town Hall drains into the Wallkill.

Mr. Sauerwein thought ANJEC had a \$1,500 grant that might be able to use for another Rain Garden on Township property, then the members discussed the other costs involved as well as manpower.



Ms. Dunbar brought up maintenance and suggested asking the other Township Committees if they would partner in this beautification project at Town Hall, i.e. Recreation, Senior Advisory, Cultural Affairs, etc., as well as joining the Green Team for the Sustainable Jersey Certification. A Rain Garden in front of Town Hall would really engage people because of the visibility and location.

Chairman Blumetti commented that this Commission clearly shows interest in creating a visible rain garden project but added that our current on-going project with Rutgers at Pope John with the grant money already in place and is our immediate project. The application for the ANJEC grant money of \$1,500 is due in the beginning of May and we may not have time to apply for that with our other pending and more immediate projects.

Chairman Blumetti would like to set up a Sustainable Jersey Recertification subcommittee. Mr. Sauerwein has offered to look into renewing and maintaining our Bronze Certification status but advised that the first step is to re-establish a Green Team as well as asking this new subcommittee to create accounts on the Sustainable Jersey website to review what actions need to be taken by the first May 22nd deadline.

Rutgers Rain Garden Project at Pope John: Ms. Dunbar reported that she met with Chris Perez from Rutgers and discussed the site plan for the original parking lot with all the drainage basins that Craig Austin provided from Pope John and that Rutgers was satisfied with this plan because it emphasized that all the drainage from the new turf field is not going to go into the existing parking lot but will be channeled into the storm drains onto Route 517. Ms. Dunbar also discussed with the Environmental Teacher at Pope John the timeline for the installation, planting, maintenance as well as stormwater testing with the students

New Business:

Mr. Sauerwein mentioned during the Diamond Chip Application at the Planning Board that two local attorneys have organized a group, pro bono, to stop the development of the warehouse and scheduled a meeting at Lake Mohawk Country Club on March 31st. Ms. Dunbar added that the meeting is going to emphasize legal recourses as well as explaining what ordinances could be passed to prevent further warehouses.

Meeting Adjourned @ 8:52 pm by Motion made by Ms. Dunbar and Second by Ted Gall.