

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – JUNE 11, 2024**

PRESENT: Jeffrey Lamborn (Chair), Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Benscoter (Secretary), Geoffrey Keiser, Geraldine DeSapio, Timarie Diehl, Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo, Jefry Tineo, Laurence Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison) and Glen Denys (Borough Council Liaison).

Green Team: Gina Stravic and John Guarino.

Guests: Kevin More, resident, and James Meiser, SHS student.

The meeting is called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Jeffrey. This meeting is called to order in accordance with the open public meeting law. Notice of this meeting is posted on the Somerville website. A copy of this statement will be included in the minutes.

I. MINUTES: June 11, 2024. Minutes approved on a motion made by Geri, seconded by Tim, and carried unanimously.

II. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. No mail for EC this month.
- B. A resident on Mountain Ave. reached out concerning the Street Tree Program.
- C. Discussion of participation in the Adopt A Drain program.
- D. Consideration of planting a rain garden around East High and Culver Streets.
- E. Timarie reported Ava, our H.S social media representative, included the county shredding schedule on our sites and is working on information for free range eggs.
 - 1. Ava will be graduating in June. A high school student is needed to continue Ava's role as H. S. social media representative.
 - 2. Graduation gift will need to be purchased.
- F. Corie Papandrew of Babe Social NJ is hosting a town clean-up project for women.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Geoff completed the EC recommended Tree Removal-Replacement Ordinance proposal.
 - 1. Motion made to forward recommendations to Borough Council by Jeff, seconded by Helene and carried unanimously.
- B. Downtown street tree update.
 - 1. DSA had a contract for the removal of a tree in front of Kyma at a cost of \$30,000.
 - 2. EC suggests using this as a pilot program by removing the planter surrounding the tree, remediating the roots and bricks instead of removing the tree.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Jeff thanked the members of the EC for all their cooperation and effort. He has submitted his resignation as the Chair of EC at the end of his term.
- B. Community Forestry Plan – Gina, Tom and Brendon.
 - 1. The Committee will meet in July to begin updating the plan.
- C. James Meiser suggested members of the Borough Council and the EC present a program at the high school to discuss civic responsibility and our work with the environment.
- D. Wallace House – Geri (Liaison)
 - 1. Geri discussed with Paul staking the oak tree to keep it growing straight.
 - 2. Discussion is going forward with the goal to revive the garden behind the Old Dutch Parsonage to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026.
- E. Grants
 - 1. Somerville High School was awarded a \$26,000 grant towards their sustainable curriculum.
 - 2. EC received a \$1500 grant for the community garden.
 - 3. Gina will investigate the Arbor Day Foundation grant through METLIFE and the DOT/RIDEWISE grant.
 - 4. Somerville was awarded \$10,000 from SNJ Municipal Building Grant for energy efficiency.

V. REPORTS

- A. Green Team – Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo – Liaison
 - 1. Girl Scouts have completed the painted rocks project and returned them to the Community Garden.
 - 2. A workshop discussing composting, fertilizing plants and beneficial insects will be held in the garden on 6/29/24 from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- B. Planning Board – Larry Cleveland – Liaison
 - 1. Continued discussion on speed bumps.
 - 2. Old Sunoco gas station on Rt. 22E, next to Fullerton Auto, has applied as a Cannabis retail store.
- C. Borough Council – Glen Denys – Liaison
 - 1. Parkview property – waiting to hear from Mayor Gallagher.
 - 2. Reviewing professional planners for the borough.
 - 3. Approved engineering company to review the old head wall where Ross Brook meets Peters Brook and give recommendation.
 - a. Suggest contacting the core of engineers.
 - 4. Two Boy Scout Eagle projects
 - a. Update Mercer St. Park: clean-up, bench and native flowers.
 - b. Erect a kiosk at Lepp Park.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Timarie.
Seconded by Helene.
Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.