

BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES - JULY 8, 2025

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

Green Team: Gina Stravic.

GUESTS: Andrew Van Dyke (Food and Water Watch) and Siva Krishna.

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

A Zoom presentation was made by Jennifer Snyder, Director of Partnerships, at Solar Landscapes concerning community and commercial solar installations.

I. MINUTES: June 10, 2025. Minutes approved on the motion made by Geri, seconded by Geoff, and carried unanimously.

II. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Stormwater ordinance – Glen & Geoff

1. A meeting with the mayor to discuss the ordinance is pending.

B. Skip the Stuff - Jeff, Geri, & Sande

1. A meeting with the DSA Board for approval is scheduled for Monday, July 14.

C. Tree removal/replacement ordinance – Geoff, Glen & Jeff

1. Geoff revised section of tree removal qualifications.

D. National Night Out – Sande & Jeff

1. Reviewed items needed for the event.
2. Sande will send out a 'gentle reminder' to members a week before.
3. Timarie received the bookmarks purchased with grant money from PSE&G.

E. SNJ – Helene, Sande & David

1. Members continue to work on actions.
2. Send documents to Helene for OK prior to adding to portal.

F. Peter's Brook Habitat Restoration – Tim and team

1. \$20,000 SNJ & PSEG grant.
2. Jared Rosenbaum, Wild Ridge Plants, will be consulting on how to move forward.

G. Downtown Street Trees – Jeff

1. Borough allocated \$3,500 for a tree inventory.
2. Borough requested EC to develop a pilot project.
 - a. Paul Cowie agreed to help and suggested emulating the DSA's downtown streetscape proposal.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Community Forestry plan - Gina

1. Original returned.
2. Gina contacted Zina to resend to new representative for passage.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

A. No mail at Borough Hall for EC.

V. REPORTS

A. Green Team – Rebecca & Geri

1. Rebecca reached out to Tapastre to display a sign promoting EC community garden.
2. Geri reported that a small flower garden was planted around the Wallace House sign on their property on Somerset Street.
 - a. Discussion on ways to get water to the garden.

B. Planning Board – Larry Cleveland - Liaison

1. High Arch Design submitted a concept proposal for the Granetz building on West Main Street. It will be called Granetz Lofts.
2. Gateway East proposal for a 4-story apartment and retail building on East Main Street and Veterans Memorial Drive was discussed.
3. In building EV charging stations are still under discussion.

C. Borough Council – Glen Denys – Liaison

1. Meeting with Hathaway Solar concerning solar project on Somerville Borough Landfill site.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Helene.

Seconded by Geri.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

