

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 8, 2023**

PRESENT: Jeffrey Lamborn (Chair), Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Benscoter (Secretary), Roberta Harmon, Geri DeSapio, Gina Stravic (Borough Council Liaison) and Larry Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison).

Green Team: Paige Greenfield, Timarie Diehl and Jefry Tineo.

VISITORS: Nicole Vuono, (Landscape Designer), Brian Freno (RideWise), Sara Catherine Lichon (RideWise), Andi Sjamsu (NJ Electric Vehicle Assoc.) and James Meister (SHS volunteer).

Meeting is called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Jeff. 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: July 2023 minutes. Minutes were approved on a motion made by Helene, seconded by Geri, and carried unanimously.

II. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Sandra reported no EC mail.
- B. Jeff participated in several online webinars including Storm Water Utility Forum.
- C. EC received the Sustainable RideWise grant.
- D. An app from Urban Community Forestry called I-Tree is a tree canopy assessment tool.
- E. Helene reported our social media updates are drawing attention online.
- F. Email from ANJEC suggested we host a regional collaboration with other ECs.
 - 1. Gina suggested ways to engage a group: start at the Community Garden and proceed to a meeting at the firehouse adjacent to the garden.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Jeff stated National Night Out was a great success.
- B. Timarie discussed the new logo.
- C. Helene reported no feedback from SNJ regarding our submission of July 27, 2023.
- D. Home Energy Efficiency Outreach: Planned online cohort meeting will include five municipalities.
- E. Members discussed and were not supportive of the “No Mow May” idea.
 - 1. Gina will draft a response and forward it to our members for approval.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** Roberta called to EC attention the county shredding event on August 12, 2023.
- B.** The Borough uses a Microsoft app for online collaboration. Patty Hunt will check for a less expensive app for EC.
- C.** Brian Freno (RideWise), Sara Catherine Lichon (RideWise), Andi Sjamsu (NJ Electric Vehicle Assoc.) made a presentation concerning an EV Ride and Drive Event. EC will further investigate doing the event. Ride electric week is mid-September to mid-October.
- D.** Fall event: EC will contact Dawn Delnegro (leader) to determine a date for Girl Scouts of Troop #84 to clean-up the rain garden across from the YMCA.
- E.** A \$143,000 grant for planting trees along Peter's Brook was awarded to Somerville.
 - 1.** Trees between 6 ft. and 9 ft.
 - 2.** Planting possible during the first 2 weeks in November.
 - 3.** Rodney Hadley, Somerville DPW director, will be project manager for the planting.
 - 4.** Grant was written by Gina Stravic, Councilwoman and Borough Liaison to EC.

V. REPORTS

- A.** Green Team – Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo – Liaison (Report by Geri)
 - 1.** The garden meeting is planned for August. 9, 2023.
 - a.** Focus on ways to involve local girl scouts.
 - b.** Suggestion to plant milk weed seeds in area.
 - c.** Discuss a public event when the mural is completed.
 - d.** \$500 donation from Cusick Funeral Home to pay for artist's supplies.
- B.** Planning Board – Larry Cleveland – Liaison
 - 1.** Application for the new Dunkin Donuts on Rt. 206 N will be submitted in October.
 - 2.** Approved new Avalon Apartments.
 - a.** Borough meeting room will be completed for occupancy by Oct. or Nov. 2023.
- C.** Borough Council – Gina Stravic - Liaison
 - 1.** Potential redevelopment of Park Ave. is tied to development on East Main Street.
 - 2.** End of October will be both a public discussion of the current police station sale and a public envisioning event.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Helene.

Seconded by Geri.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47 p.m.