

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES – MAY 9, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Jeffrey Lamborn (Chair), Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Benscoter (Secretary), Geri DeSapio, Geoff Keiser, Rebecca Reitman Garofalo, Glen Denys, Roberta Harmon, Gina Stravic (Borough Council Liaison), and Larry Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison).

**Green Team:** Timarie Diehl

**VISITORS:** Tom Mitchell (Borough Council) and Paul Soltis (Interpretive Specialist for Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage).

Meeting is called to order at 7:02 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. This meeting is being held on the property of the Wallace House.

**I. MINUTES:** April 2023 minutes. Minutes were approved on the motion made by Roberta, seconded by Geoff, and carried unanimously.

Paul Soltis shared background of the Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage. In 2026 NJ will celebrate its 250-year anniversary and the anniversary of the Revolutionary War. Paul Soltis led a walk-a-bout of both properties and discussed their future initiatives. The discussion led to ideas and ways the EC could be involved.

**II. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. A gift certificate was suggested as a graduation gift for Bridget, our senior high school social media person.
- B. Timarie will now be responsible for social media communication.
- C. Photographer and others posted photos of our Earth Day Fair and Arbor Day planting of seedlings at the Somerville YMCA with the children.
- D. Jeff suggested including the kiosk information on the borough website with a link to show the location.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

- A. Remaining oak seedlings will be planted in the Girl Scout Tree Nursery.
- B. Geoff needs volunteers to go door to door for tree replacement in neighborhoods where trees were removed by PSE&G. PSE&G will supply trees.
- C. Discussion of Earth Day Fair.
  - 1. A suggestion was made to have leaflets distributed for the fair.
- D. Helene made the committee aware of the Friday, May 12, 2023, deadline for SNJ application. Discussed what is still needed to submit.

- E. Reviewed NJ state tree ordinance. Suggested making our additions/corrections and forward the revised ordinance to the Borough Council.
- F. Participation in the Home Energy Efficiency Outreach with PSE&G and SNJ.
  - 1. Ways to reach residents.
    - a. National Night Out program.
    - b. Schools.
    - c. Division Street Friday night programs (Arts on Division).

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Timarie brought images for a proposed logo for our EC.
  - 1. A vote was taken, and the majority chose #2 - the logo with a picture in the center.
    - a. The county building in the center will be replaced with a picture of Somerville's Borough Hall.
- B. Suggested summer volunteer opportunities for Middle Schoolers – Chrystal Wessel.
  - 1. Clear rain garden across from YMCA. BS Troop 84 did it last year and offered to do it again.
  - 2. Clear invasive species along Peters Brook.

#### **V. REPORTS**

- A. Green Team – Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo.
  - 1. Garden open – additional 2 planting beds complete.
  - 2. Planning a gardening workshop.
- B. Borough Council – Gina Stravic – Liaison
  - 1. Redevelopment planned for the East end of Somerville.
  - 2. Encouraged everyone to attend the next Borough Council meeting.
- C. Planning Board – Larry Cleveland – Liaison
  - 1. Borough Council seeks to change ordinance on sidewalk cafes.
    - a. The Planning Board suggested the Council review existing rules.
  - 2. Parking deck behind 50 Post Office Plaza not safe.
  - 3. DSA wants to eliminate review by ARB (Architectural Review Board) for signs.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Helene.

Seconded by Geri.

The meeting adjourned 9:37 p.m.

