

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Bencoter (Secretary), Geoff Keiser, Glen Denys, Geri DeSapio, Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo, Gina Stravic (Borough Council Liaison) and Larry Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison).  
Green Team: Timarie Diehl

**Absent:** Jeffrey Lamborn and Roberta Harmon.

**Guest:** John Guarino

The meeting is called to order at 7:38 p.m. by Helene. 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:** August 2023 minutes. Minutes were approved on the motion made by Geri, seconded by Geoff, and carried unanimously.

**II. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Sande reported no mail in the EC box at Borough Hall.
- B. Discussion concerning request for memorial tree planting on Borough property. Helene will send a reply to Cheryl Carrigan.
- C. Timarie updated members on the posting of meeting dates and times on social media. Also discussed a video with Revive Consignment, a local resale clothing store.
- D. Patty Hunt continues to work on updating the Borough website.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

- A. EV Project -During Somerville Street Fair - October 1, 2023. Open 11:00 am to 5:00 pm.
  - 1. Will be advertised on McLachlan Agency sign board.
  - 2. Allotted 30 parking spaces in front of Somerville Court House.
  - 3. Set-up and on-site help: Geoff, Timarie, Helene, Geri and Sande.
- B. Timarie, with assistance from John, worked on the new EC logo.
- C. Gina composing letter to Borough Council advising EC does not recommend NO-MOW MAY as a borough campaign.
  - 1. Gina suggests a letter to residents to promote the use of flowers, vegetables, pollinator gardens, flowering shrubs and fruit trees which do not conflict with Borough ordinances.
- D. As of this date, Helene has not heard from SNJ regarding our submittal status.

- E. Home Energy Residential Campaign.**
  - 1. Timarie asks if anyone would like to head the program for commercial buildings.
    - a. Application package and additional info for energy efficiency is available.
  - 2. There is a specific program for schools, also.
  - 3. RFP needed from energy contractors.
  - 4. Geoff, who has used the program, will participate with a borough official in a video to promote the home energy campaign.
- F. Received an \$18,750 grant from the NJ Tree Foundation for Walck Park.**
  - 1. DPW director will check the cost of purchase and hole preparation for the trees.
  - 2. Planting with volunteers from METLIFE volunteers scheduled for October 21, 2023.
- G. Janet will lead a local Girl Scout troop in pruning the rain garden located across from the YMCA. Date and time to be announced.**
- H. Somerville EC and ANJEC will sponsor a regional meet and greet on Saturday, November 4, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the new community meeting room.**
  - 1. ANJEC will cover the cost of food and beverages.

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

- A. Geri will supervise the EC program during Somerset County's Weekend Journey Through the Past at the Wallace House on October 8, 2023, from noon to 1:00 p.m.**
  - 1. One year celebration of the Salem Oak seedling planting.
  - 2. Flag ceremony by local girl scouts, songs by Van Derveer choir and a poem by Geri.
- B. Timarie suggested using Somervilleecnj@gmail to store EC information and photos.**
- C. A conceptional plan to move the Duke Farms Farmers Market to the town of Somerville within 18 months is being discussed. EC members interested in becoming involved are Geri, Rebecca and Timarie.**

#### **V. REPORTS**

- A. Green Team – Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo**
  - 1. Next meeting in the community garden. In the firehouse in the event of rain.
    - a. Discuss the program for the unveiling of the garden painting.
    - b. Ways to work with local Brownie and Girl Scout troops.
    - c. Investigate additional areas in town for a community garden such as planting on the Van Derveer school property.
- B. Planning Board – Larry Cleveland – Laison**
  - 1. Developer of a proposed large building (45 ft. high) on Fairview Ave. needs several variances.
    - a. A resident built a model of the proposed building to scale and brought it to the meeting to show the impact the building would have on the neighborhood.
- C. Borough Council – Gina Stravic – Laison**
  - 1. Sale of old police station meeting on October 30, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.
    - a. Held at new community meeting room at Avalon – across from RR station.
    - b. Outside person to facilitate meeting.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Rebecca.  
Seconded by Glen/  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.