

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 10, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Helene Venizelos(Vice Chair), Geoff Keiser , Glen Denys, Roberta Harmon, Rebecca Reitman – Garofalo, Gina Stravic (Borough Council Liaison), Larry Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison), Geri DeSapio

**Absent:** Jeffrey Lamborn, Sandra Benscoter

**Green team:** Jefry Tineo, Paige Greenfield  
Absent: Timarie Diehl

**Guests:** Kevin More, James Meister, John Guarino, Mike Cole (Borough Engineer)

The meeting is called to order at 7:35 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:** September 13, 2023. Minutes were approved on the motion made by Geoff seconded by Glen and carried unanimously.

**II COMMUNICATIONS.**

**A.** Helene read a thank you note from Mayor Sullivan for condolences sent by the EC.

**B.** Social media: posts have been placed on Instagram and our websites for the EV/Street Fair, Journey Through History Weekend at the Wallace House, and the Fire Museum celebration.

**C.** Timarie posted tips for making Halloween green: green trick or treats, buying locally grown pumpkins, using the whole pumpkin and more.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**A.** Duke farmers market: this item has been tabled for future discussion because Jason Kraska was not in attendance.

**B.** The EV car show was a great success; our table was in a wonderful location with high visibility. Helene will send out a press release.

**C.** SNJ Silver Certification

**1.** The SNJ luncheon will be held on Nov. 14 in Atlantic City. Gina will attend.

**2.** Roberta presented a floral arrangement to Helene from the EC to thank her for her leadership in guiding us to attain Silver Certification!

**D.** Bridgewater has expressed an interest to join with the Somerville Environmental Commission.

**E.** Home energy, efficiency, outreach, by PSENG, SNJ

**1.** Paige reported PSE&G filming went well; included was a clip of comments from Mayor Sullivan.

**2.** Roberta initiated a call to PSE&G for her home energy inspection, and was very pleased. New aerators put on faucets, more efficient light bulbs were installed and her furnace was inspected.

**F.** “No Mow May” Helene mailed a response letter on October 9.

**G.** Fall events: Peters Brook Planting Plan, and Rain garden Pruning.

**1.** Gina reported that on October 21 at 8:30 AM, 35 trees will be planted at Walck Park funded by a grant from the Arbor Day foundation. A variety of trees will be planted by MetLife volunteers and EC members There is no rain date scheduled.

2. James Meister, Somerville H.S. Student, will reach out to the high school Environmental Club to ask for student volunteers.
- H. Regional ANJEC Meet and Greet - November 4, 2023,**
1. Registration 9:00 – 9:30 AM  
Meeting 930 - 11:30 AM. ANJEC will cover the cost of food and drink. Registration details will arrive in an email from ANJEC.
- I. Somerset County weekend, journey through the past at Wallace house.**
1. Geri reported that the Boston's Tea and Salem's Tree event was well attended. The Girl Scouts, the Van Derveer School Chorus, and Geri's poem: "A Sense of Belonging", commemorated the 1st anniversary of our Salem Oak Seedling planting. The program concluded with a recitation by storyteller Queen Nur of one of Hetty Saunders poems. Paul Soltis, NJ Parks Interpretive Specialist, hosted this event.
- J. TREE REMOVAL ORDINANCE Revisit- Glen**
1. Glen stated there is a need for an ordinance for tree removal on private property.
  2. Gina stated we need ordinances in place for green infrastructure and building flood control.
  3. Glen suggested the town create a subcommittee in January 2024 to study all town ordinances, and forestry plan.

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

##### **A. Parcview Playground**

1. Mike Cole, Borough Council Engineer, came to review the proposal for the creation of a children's playground at the Fairview Apartment Complex. Following a lengthy discussion, a statement was drafted by the EC and will be emailed to the Somerville Borough Council with the Environmental Commission's recommendations.

##### **B. Ice Storage Ordinance Review and Discuss**

1. The EC has reviewed the ice storage issue, and has determined that the state template is adequate for use and needs to be enforced.

##### **C. Ribbons in memory of Whomever -wrapped around trees**

1. Gina stated that ribbons wrapped around trees are potentially damaging. She suggested educating the public by putting information on our social media websites, including a statement in the tree ordinance specifying a time limit for ribbons to be left on town trees.

#### **V. REPORTS**

##### **A. Green Team - Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo**

1. The mural by artist, Les Floyd, has been installed in the Jay Scott Community Garden. The work was funded by Lauren Bowser, co-owner of the Cusack Funeral Home.
2. The Green Team planted milkweed seeds in the Jay Scott Community Garden and started the garden clean-up.
3. This year's gardeners will be invited to a final potluck on Sunday, Nov. 5, from 11-2pm to share their experiences as the first cohort in the community garden. Rain date is Nov. 12.

##### **B. Kiosk - Roberta Harmon**

1. Roberta reported that the EC kiosk is updated for the 4th quarter. Postings include PSE&G flyers, cooking safety information, leaf pickup dos and don'ts, the Environmental Commission's mission statement, Safely Drive Week, the shredding calendar for Oct. 14 and Nov. 18, Halloween Safety tips, and SNJ information.

2. Roberta stated that at the EV show, Rob Edgar of the Universal Unity Church on Cliff St., having similar interests and goals as the EC, would like to collaborate with the Environmental Commission. Gina suggested that he be invited to the Walck Park tree planting on Oct. 21.

**C. Planning Board - Larry Cleveland**

1. Larry reported that he will follow up with the Planning Board and the engineer to find out what happened and what the approval said about the trees and parking at the Avalon Complex.
2. There is a proposal for a drive thru at the proposed Dunkin' on 206 N.
3. Several variances requested by a developer on Fairview Ave. have not yet been approved.

**D. Council Liaison Report - Gina Stravic**

1. The Somerville EC will host the ANJEC Meeting of Regional Environmental Commissions on November 4, at 24 Robeson, the Somerville Civic Center.
2. Leaf pick-up information should be rerun on our websites and community encouraged to compost their leaves.
3. Root 22, a cannabis distribution center, is scheduled to open at the intersection of Gaston Ave. and Rte. 22 E. in Jan. 2024.
4. Obtaining permits for restaurant outdoor seating is an on-going issue.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Geoff  
Seconded by Roberta  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.