

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES – NOVEMBER 14, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Jeff Lamborn (Chair), Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Benscoter (Secretary), Glen Denys, Geoff Keiser, Roberta Harmon, Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo, Geri DeSapio and Larry Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison).  
Green Team: Timarie Diehl

**ABSENT:** Gina Stravic (Borough Council Liaison)

**GUESTS:** John Guarino, Kevin More, James Meister

The meeting is called to order at 7:37 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:** October 10, 2023. Minutes were approved on the motion made by Geri, seconded by Glen, and carried unanimously.

**II. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Sande reported no EC mail at the Borough Hall.
- B. Timarie posted photos of the tree planting on social media sites.
- C. Timarie responded to Mateo Aguirre (SHS student – Environmental Club) concerning composting options.
- D. Geoff uploaded pictures on our website of the Peter’s Brook tree planting.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

- A. Gina accepted our Sustainable New Jersey silver award at the SNJ luncheon in Atlantic City, NJ.
- B. In November PSE&G will distribute door hangers to promote energy efficiency.
  - 1. EC will display long banner across Division St. and Main. St.
  - 2. Timarie led discussion concerning promotional items we might purchase with the allotted funds.
  - 3. Working with Sustainable NJ but funded by PSE&G we’ll apply for a commercial application in time.
- C. Helene, Jeff, Janet, and several volunteers helped to prune one of the rain gardens in Carol Pager Park across from the YMCA.
- D. Jeff reported the ANJEC Regional Meeting Somerville hosted at the new Civic Center went extremely well. In order to continue cooperation among the 5 counties, Jeff volunteered to compile and forward a list of the attendees and topics for discussion at future meetings.

- E. In May 2024 all towns must adopt a local tree ordinance. Glen reviewed Somerville's Tree Ordinance and found coverage in different areas repetitive.
  - 1. Glen suggested updating and unifying our ordinance.
  - 2. He also suggested increasing the cost which is now \$650 to a higher fee but will need to confirm costs with Rodney.
- F. Some members attending the special Borough Council meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup> voiced their vision for West Main Street Development. Less apartments, a community theater and/or recreation facility.

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

- A. Jeff was approached at the rain garden clean up by a local resident, landscape architect, who volunteered to do a design plan for our rain gardens.
- B. Gina will contact BOE members concerning the Trees for School grant available.
- C. Discussion concerning EC request for annual budget for 2024.
  - 1. Asking for \$1,500 for marketing (advertisement and promotion), educational and community garden necessities.
- D. Add to our calendar: 5-year Community Forestry Plan.
  - 1. Start in January 2024 and complete it by June 2024. (79 pages)
  - 2. Present to Borough Council for adoption prior to the due date of 12/24.
- E. Geri and Timarie attended the virtual Tree Risk & Management seminar for CEU's.
- F. The annual EC get-together will be held on December 12<sup>th</sup> at Helene's at 7:00 p.m.
- G. Jeff will be presenting our end-of-year report to the Borough Council on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>.
- H. Membership discussion held.
  - 1. Roberta submitted her resignation at the meeting. We greatly appreciate her steadfast dedication over the years and wish her well. She will be missed!
  - 2. A resume should be sent to Jeff for the 2 open positions on the commission.
    - a. Resumes will be posted to the current EC members prior to voting.

#### **V. REPORTS**

- A. Green Team - Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo (Liaison)
  - 1. Advised gardeners to clean out their beds.
  - 2. Potluck dinner will be held for gardeners.
  - 3. Suggestions prior to next season.
    - a. Higher fee to participate. A percentage to be returned end of season after beds are cleaned out.
    - b. Commitment prior to applying for a space.
    - c. Encourage apartment dwellers/residents without green space.
    - d. Display flyers in apartment buildings and the Somerville train station.

**B. Planning Board – Larry Cleveland (Laison)**

- 1.** Application for restaurant (Tacoria) on Division St. in old firehouse.
- 2.** Development on Fairview Ave. 4 major variances. Unwilling to change.
- 3.** New Dunkin Donuts on Rt. 206 N. Installing better buffer. Applicant working with neighbors.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Geoff.

Seconded by Geri.

Meeting adjourned t 9:35 p.m.