

**BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 11, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Jeffrey Lamborn (Chair), Helene Venizelos (Vice Chair), Sandra Benscoter (Secretary), Geoff Keiser, Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo, Geraldine DeSapio, Laurence Cleveland (Planning Board Liaison) and Glen Denys (Borough Council Liaison).  
Green Team: Gina Stravic

**ABSENT:** Jefry Tineo

**GUESTS:** Brendan Nally, Maureen Nally and Mateo Aguirre

The meeting is called to order at 7:30 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:** November 14, 2023. Minutes were approved on the motion made by Geri, seconded by Helene, and carried unanimously.

**II. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Sande reported no EC mail at the Borough Hall.
- B. Timarie reported she uploaded information on Christmas tree recycling on our social media sites. EC had over 2,000 views. A viewer on Instagram called to our attention the Ivy climbing Main Street trees. It is detrimental to the health of the trees.
- C. Sande will contact Patty Hunt concerning the agenda, meetings and inquire if additional info and pictures can be incorporated into the EC borough website.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

- A. 2024 membership and positions for EC and GT were confirmed by the Borough Council.
- B. Timarie produced an on-line link to a new volunteer application form. She suggested the form be included on our borough website.
- C. Mateo Aguirre, SHS Environmental Club, would like to incorporate a rain garden at the Somerville High School. Members suggested he contact Rutgers, Garden Club of Somerset Hills, and ANJEC for grants.
- D. The Borough Council will assume EC monetary needs.
- E. Jeff commented on the EC End of Year report. All went well when presented to the Borough Council.

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

- A.** ANJEC will host a round table virtual workshop on January 30, 2024 from 7 to 8 p.m.
- B.** Our EC has NJ UCF Accreditation for 2024. It was suggested we contact an arborist for a workshop to attain the CEU's we will need for next year.
- C.** Earth Day, April 22, 2024, and Arbor Day, April 26, 2024.
  - 1.** Gina will order seedlings for distribution. Distribution date not finalized. Order deadline is January 26, 2024.
- D.** Green Fair- April 20 or 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Jeff will confirm dates and site with Natalie Pineiro, the Executive Director of DSA.
  - 1.** Green Fair committee: Timarie, Helene, Rebecca, and Sande.
  - 2.** Suggestions for invitations to participate in fair: gardeners, beekeepers, farmers market participants, Solar Me, EV car booth, County Board of Health, etc.
  - 3.** Ask DPW to supply T shirts, bags, hats, etc.
- E.** Community Garden – Rebecca (Liaison)
  - 1.** Pick definite dates for meetings to be consistent.
  - 2.** Add additional planting beds to the current garden. Plan a second garden.
  - 3.** Tighten procedure application for assigned beds.
  - 4.** Wallace House – A plaque for the Salem Oak seedling and its birthday celebration in October during Journey Through History weekend.
- F.** Jefry will be responsible for the EC Kiosk. Updating quarterly.
- G.** Street Tree Planting for Somerville homeowners – Geoff (coordinator).
  - 1.** The ideal time to plant is Spring. Geoff will contact Rodney.
  - 2.** Outreach to community: post info in areas around town, through social media sites, E-connect, kiosk, etc.
  - 3.** Rebecca, Geri, and Sande volunteered to help distribute info.
- H.** Annual participation: Earth Day/Arbor Day (April), Green Fair (April), Rain Garden Pruning (Spring), G.S. Tree Arbor clean-up (Spring), National Night Out (August), NJ EV car show (October), and Journey Through History weekend at Wallace House (October).
- I.** Marketing outreach discussed.
- J.** There is \$143,000 available for the planting of trees at Peter's Brook.
- K.** Environmental Resource Inventory update.
  - 1.** Jeff will review the 2016 inventory. EC will discuss needed updates.
- L.** NJ Urban and Community Forestry Plan – formulated goals due in June for Council.
  - 1.** Each commissioner will review a section keeping in mind ANJEC has new objectives.
  - 2.** Larry will review the Tree Canopy with the Planning Board.
  - 3.** Suggested Tom Auffenorde (GT), Brendan Nally and Gina Stravic (GT) define the goals and lead the group.
  - 4.** June deadline for Borough Council. End of year for the Department of Environmental Protection.

- M.** Tree Removal Ordinance – submit to Council by May
  - 1. Glen was previously reviewing Somerville’s ordinance.
  - 2. State offers a bit more of a process for certain types and sizes of trees.
  - 3. Need to educate homeowners.
  - 4. Regulations for new development.
  - 5. Put review and discussion on the February agenda.
- N.** Review Somerville Street Scape and Green Infrastructure plans.
- O.** Jeff will speak with Natalie concerning the showing of a short ECO film during Movie Nights on Division Street.
- P.** Timarie will do the newsletter for the Regional ANJEC group.
- Q.** Gina will check into the Arbor Day Foundation Grant.
- R.** For additional SNJ points we need 3 businesses in Somerville to sign up for the NJ Sustainable Business Register.
- S.** Work on a 10-year plan for the Environmental Commission.

**V. REPORTS**

- A.** Planning Board – Larry Cleveland (Liaison)
  - 1. A new warehouse proposal in Bridgewater on Rt. 22 E. before Adamsville Rd.
    - a. Building and site has many issues. Somerville will continue to follow proceedings.
  - 2. The Foundry (Fairview Apartments) continues to submit the same plans with the same deficiencies.
  - 3. A firearms business is before the Planning Board. The location is at the corner of Gaston and Union Avenues.
  - 4. Mike Cole will still be responsible for a majority of Somerville plans.
- B.** Borough Council – Glen Denys (Liaison)
  - 1. Office of Emergency Management was well prepared and organized before, during, and after the recent storm.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Timarie.

Seconded by Helene.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

