

Englewood Environmental Commission
Minutes for July 11, 2016
City Hall - HR Conference Room

Meeting called to order by Ellen Forman, Chair, at 7:04 pm

Role Call: Ellen Forman, Jack Silberman, Steve Wiessner, Crystal Brown, Sara Stroman; Excused: Anthony Davis

Guests: Kerry Swain, Maria Morningstar, Laura Vogel, Jill Lauren, Kevin Lake, Sandra Greenberg

1. Minutes of the June 2016 meeting were approved (Motion by Crystal Brown, seconded by Jack Silberstein)

2. Chair Comments and Correspondence

- a. Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests have been received and documents have been sent to the City government for responses
- b. Bridget Lyne sent an email offering assistance with gardening on City plots; someone will contact her
- c. "GovPilot - Municipal Digital Map" is being built on the City website
- d. The Hackensack Riverkeeper has offered to assist with a cleanup on July 31 in Mackay Park

3. City Trees: Carl Rossi and Edroy Jenkins (Englewood Department of Public Works)

Mr. Rossi and Mr. Jenkins shared information about how the City tries to maintain its trees and some examples of recent projects. These include the Community Gardens, the pollinator garden in Veterans Square, the Mackay Park cleanup, the Englewood Green Fair, and Arbor Day. Ellen Forman commented that we have worked closely with the DPW on these and other efforts. .

The City attempts to plant about 100 trees around the city, if available. The City Arborist issues requests for proposals. Currently we are operating within the second 5-year community forestry management plan. Recent efforts have earned a "Tree City USA" award. We conduct canopy assessments as part of our ongoing tree inventory. Next year the City will begin a ward by ward survey starting with Ward 4. The focus is trees on City rights-of-way.

Questions and concerns should be directed to the City Manager. Once planted, the DPW takes care of trees on City rights-of-way for 1 year. The City attempts to keep up with water bags, but welcomes assistance from homeowners and others. The City Engineer interacts with respect to projects that impact trees. City Arborist evaluates if a tree needs to come down. Questions were asked about whether such efforts can be done longer in advance of projects, especially with important trees. Many trees in Englewood seem to be at risk because they are nearing their end-of-life. As a commission, we can make recommendations to the Council.

Concerns from the Public:

- When a resident has questions about the care of City trees, a report goes to the DPW and a decision is made by the City Arborist.
- Concerns about trees at 319 Marlboro Rd developed because of street work.
- The Commission should develop recommendations about how to progress on caring for City Trees, especially with regard to dangerous limbs, sidewalk repairs, etc.
- In the past where there were no sidewalks and, in season, piles of leaves or snow, dangerous conditions led to fatalities on Booth Ave. and Jones Rd. The City should pay attention to such locations to reduce potential for future

- Enhancements to sidewalks, such as using bluestones, are possible at extra cost to residents.
- The City already has a trimming and pruning program. Only organic pesticides and fertilizers are used. Questions were asked about whether it would be possible to give attention to “priority” trees. The DPW staff is spread thin doing these tasks, but it is less expensive than hiring outside contractors.
- The City Arborist has made recent recommendations of planting 4 species, but a question was asked about whether it is better practice to use 6 to establish diversity that may be more suitable in case of diseases.
- Questions were raised about oversight policies. Examples include: Who supervises the City Engineer’s decisions? Who decides whether to wind around a tree or remove it? Who decides on clear cutting? What can be done to prevent over-trimming?
- BPU decisions give PSE&G and outside contractors considerable latitude—what constraints can the City and EEC exert? Can the City Arborist accompany crews? Are there guidelines?
- What notification process exists when the City plans repairs to sidewalks and streets which will impact trees? Who can residents call with questions about projects?
- What chemicals are permitted for landscaping and similar treatments? Recently, pesticides were applied on Herring Field with warning signs to stay off for 72 hours. However, no notification may have been given to the nearby schools and children were seen playing there within the time period. Who is responsible to notifying neighbors? Can it be done through e-blasts similar to street closings?
- Can sharing equipment and testing with adjacent towns reduce costs and improve efficiency?
- How well are regulations concerning herbicides and pesticides enforced? Do the Police know the applicable laws and are trained to enforce them? Landscapers are required to share tech sheets and labels, and spray only within specified wind limits in accordance with County regulations. But concerns were raised about whether people working for commercial companies are aware and capable of providing these.
- Concerns were raised about whether the City Arborist always follows best practices in deciding whether to save or cut down a given tree. Hammer, girth and root tests should be accompanied by binocular examination above the ground before making decisions, and questions were asked whether this is standard practice.
- It was strongly urged that the EEC become more involved with these concerns and make specific recommendation to the City Manager and Council. City projects where trees might be impacted are usually scheduled about a year in advance, so there is time for notification of neighbors. When large numbers of people speak out on an issue, the Council can be influenced.
- Could college and high school students assist the City staff with tree surveys? Can we meet with the new Superintendent of Schools to discuss creation of arboretums and other projects?

Open Business:

Planning Board Update – Anthony Davis reported in advance of the meeting that the Planning Board has not met for a month and had nothing to share with the Commission.

Environmental Commission By-Laws Document Update – Crystal Brown and Jack Silberstein will have a draft ready for the August meeting .

Sara Stroman continues to work on revisions to the EEC Mission Statement, which will also be on the August Agenda.

Crystal Brown explained that Commission documents should be shared with the City Manager and Councilman-at-large, and that the City Clerk brings our approved resolutions to the Council in the appropriate form.

Jack Silberstein reported that exploration continues about metering the lights at Herring Field to reduce costs. There was also discussion about the possible changes to the guidelines for the Third St. Garden and consequences for non-compliance.

Steve Weissner shared information about upcoming Flat Rock Brook summer camps & 5k run.

Public Comment:

Kevin Lake requested that paper copies of the Agenda and Minutes be available, and that meetings begin with reading the Open Public Meeting Act statement.

Questions were raised about ongoing construction at 282 Oakwood Road which has created clear-cutting and potentially dangerous runoff. The City Engineer has been notified.

Sandy Greenberg suggested that a nearby municipality may now forbid leaf-blowers and whether the Commission should recommend a total ban.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael J Passow