

DENNIS TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes: July 16, 2014.

Regularly scheduled meeting held at 5:30 p.m. at Dennis Township Municipal Building.

Chairman Bob Penrose led the flag salute to open the meeting.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: George, Leatherwood, McManus, Penrose, Rebmann, Rosenthal

ABSENT: Slotterback

The committee voted to approve the minutes of the June 18 meeting and Mr. Rebmann will contact the webmaster to have those minutes posted to the township website for public consumption.

There were no guest speakers scheduled.

Mr. Rebmann reported on the July 10 Land Use Board Work session concerning Driftwood Campground's application to build a maintenance garage on a previously developed site on Route 9. After briefly explaining the application, Mr. Rebmann noted two concerns that were of interest to the commission: 1) the nature of materials to be stored on site, 2) landscaping for the front of the property.

The applicant agreed to address the first concern in more specific detail when it presents the application to the full board on July 24. The project's designer also agreed to include the use of "native" plantings, where feasible, in the final plan for the project.

There were two items under correspondence. The first was a press release concerning the 2015 Watershed Ambassador program. The current ambassador, Zach Nickerson attended the June 18 commission meeting at which he explained his duties and specific work he'd been doing in Dennis Township (See June 18 minutes).

The second item was about the state's annual Environmental Excellence Awards. Mr. Rebmann made copies of both items available for commission members.

There was nothing under new business. However, the commission did continue discussion of a number of old business matters.

Ms. George reminded commission members about National Night Out (August 5). She showed several items of recyclable material that she planned to use as part of a display at the NNO event. She urged fellow members to bring examples of "unusual recyclables" to future events to show the public and increase awareness of the variety of materials that are in fact recyclable.

Ms. George indicated that she will be able to supply a tent for at least part of the event. Mr. Rebmann will email Vernon Champion, Public Works Supervisor, requesting two tables for NNO. The museum will supply folding chairs.

Mr. Rebmann advised the commission that Linda Crumbock from the Cape May County MUA will be joining them for part of the NNO event.

Moving on, Mr. DiCicco said that he had not yet set up a meeting with DT School Superintendent Mark Miller. Recycling at the school will be one of the topics. Mr. Penrose will attend the meeting representing the commission. On the topic of school recycling, Mr. Rebmann noted that Ms. Crumbock had informed him that the MUA does offer educational programs for school staff if requested.

Mr. McManus updated the commission on work at the museum and township hall parking area.

“We established an angled walkway through the milkweed in the center of the garden (municipal). A work detail has also raked and cleared debris from the front and side areas. Commission members indicated that they would like to schedule another work session before the next meeting, schedules permitting.

Mr. Rebmann said that he’d posted a temporary sign describing the municipal garden but hopes to replace it with several laminated signs in the near future. Mr. McManus added that he hopes to include signs naming each of the plants in the garden.

There was also discussion about including a bench and bird and butterfly boxes at the garden. Mr. Rebmann speculated about involving boy scouts interested in undertaking an Eagle Scout project to do the work. Mr. Penrose indicated that he’d look into that possibility. Mr. DiCicco added that the commission should advertise idea on the township web page.

Mr. McManus told the commission that the weeding and mulch work at the museum is finished.

“The girl scouts finished their work and volunteers helped put down five cubic yards of mulch,” he said.

The scouts, under the direction of Dennisville resident Roberta Nuss, are planning to install a butterfly garden at the museum. Mr. Rebmann has already advised Ms. Nuss to let him know what materials would be needed.

A letter was sent from the commission thanking the scouts, with copies forwarded to Jackie Justice for the township committee.

Regarding the letter Mr. Rebmann has drafted for local businesses soliciting help (plants and related materials) for the municipal garden, Mr. McManus advised that contacting local nurseries and landscapers for donations of native plantings can proceed after

whatever mulching (brush from the township) is completed, with the planting to be done in the fall. He repeated his earlier offer to store any donated items until they are needed.

Regarding the Community Forestry Plan, Mr. Rebmann indicated that he had read the current plan and could do most of the work updating it.

Mr. Rosenthal reminded him that a certified professional forester would need to sign off on the plan before the DEP is likely to accept it. The DEP must review and approve the plan, he pointed out.

There is grant money to help pay for the project, Mr. Rosenthal noted. It requires a short (one page) application that either chairman or vice-chairman can complete.

Ms. George offered to investigate how much the commission can do on its own and if doing the work in house would produce a significant savings. She reminded the commission that the last plan cost \$3000. She added that the commission has to be involved in the process whether “we pay to have it done or not”.

Mr. Penrose suggested a three member committee to undertake the work and named Ms. George, Mr. Rosenthal, and Mr. Rebmann.

There being no further discussion among commission members on agenda items, Mr. Penrose opened the meeting to the public.

Six members of the public were in attendance, along with committee member Al DiCicco. The public had come to the meeting to discuss the pending outdoor wood boiler ordinance. All currently operate have devices at their homes and were concerned that if the ordinance passed, they would be compelled to give up their use.

The commission indicated that their work on the ordinance was advisory and that the matter was presently before the township committee. Asked how the ordinance was created, Mr. Rebmann replied that ordinances from other municipalities, counties, and states were examined along with samples offered by NJDEP and PADER. He added that he also read a sample ordinance provided by a manufacturer of the devices.

Public comment touched upon a number of areas where the ordinance is not applicable, including health and environmental concerns while stressing the economic benefit derived from using the devices and indicated that it was unfair to single out these devices while fireplace, wood stoves and indeed outdoor campfires were unregulated. Other areas of concern are the added costs of permitting and inspection and enforcement of the ordinance. There were also questions about the setbacks required by the ordinance.

Commission members agreed that the ordinance was crafted with the idea that there are more densely developed areas of the township (Dennisville was cited as an example) where the use of the devices might not be appropriate.

Mr. Penrose noted that under the proposed ordinance, building inspector would address installation while code enforcement would handle certain usage complaints. Smoke complaints are currently handled by the Cape May County Board of Health.

Mr. DiCicco pointed out that the ordinance is now in the hands of the committee where it has been “tabled”, pending review by the solicitor and committee members.

“We have many of the same concerns as you. Obviously we don’t want to penalize people trying to save money on their heating bills.” He also expressed concern about the enforcement aspects of the ordinance, noting that at present, no one is trained to handle enforcement duties.

“You need to come to a (committee) meeting to express your concerns. The Environmental Commission did exactly what we asked them to do. They crafted an ordinance.

Mr. Penrose explained that the ordinance makes no attempt to ban outdoor wood boilers but is more an effort to provide oversight for their installation and operation to show fairness to users and neighbors alike.

Asked if any of the commission members had seen one used, Ms. George described observing one in operation. She recalled problems with smoke and fumes.

“Maybe the operator was using treated wood,” she suggested.

One area the ordinance emphasizes is use of the proper material (untreated wood) for burning.

There being no other business to discuss, Mr. Penrose asked for motion to close the meeting which was seconded and passed.