

DENNIS TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes: August 20, 2014.

Regularly scheduled meeting held at 5:30 p.m. at Dennis Township Old School House Museum.

Vice-Chairman Ray Rebmann led the flag salute to open the meeting.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: George, McManus, Rebmann, Rosenthal, Slotterback

ABSENT: Hoff, Leatherwood, Penrose

The committee voted to approve the minutes of the July 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 August 7 Land Use Board Work session concerning ARC of Cape May's application to hold weddings and fund raising events at its property, the historic Falkinburg House on Route 47 in South Dennis. In briefly explaining the application, Mr. Rebmann noted that the applicant was not asking to build at the site. The board's concerns included the size of the events to be held, hours of operation, food and beverage handling, waste disposal, parking, noise. These concerns were passed along to the applicant who will address them when the application presented to the full Land Use Board at its September meeting.

Under new business, Mr. Rebmann raised the possibility of developing a newsletter for the commission and asked that members think of ideas for articles, photos, etc. Mr. McManus talked about distribution of such a newsletter, suggesting that including it in mailings of annual tax bills might be feasible. The newsletter would also be available on the township web page and print copies could be obtained at all township buildings.

Lisa Salimbene, attending as a member of the public, added that such a newsletter could be utilized by township schools for staff and students.

Mr. DiCicco suggested meeting with school superintendent Mark Miller about this and other issues.

Ms. George added that emails should be sent to teachers announcing the idea. Mr. Rebmann noted that commission member Ms. Leatherwood is a teacher at the school and might serve as a point of contact between the two bodies.

Ms. Salimbene also offered to be a contact point at the school where she works and suggested Debbie Beamis as another potential contact.

Ms. George asked about including Bishop McHugh School and the commission will contact that school's principal.

The commission agreed to discuss the matter in greater detail at its next meeting when chairman Penrose will be available for input.

Reviewing ongoing work at the gardens, Mr. McManus told the commission that work at the museum garden is finished, adding that Roberta Nuss and the Girl Scouts will be returning to create a butterfly garden there.

Mr. McManus also reviewed work already completed at the municipal garden and Mr. Rebmann showed the commission laminated signs that will be posted at the entrance. Mr. McManus noted that mulching should take place in the near future. Letters have been sent to area businesses soliciting donations of plants for the garden, with September being the suggested deadline for replying. Also, JoAnn Sopchak, Horticulture teacher at the Technical High School is scheduled to attend the September commission meeting to discuss her class's participation in future work at the garden.

Ms. Salimbene described the situation with natural habitat gardens at the schools and difficulties sustaining interest in maintaining them due to the retirement of staff members originally involved.

Ms. Slotterback, who has extensive experience working with schools on such projects, pointed out that at least two teachers should be involved in order for such projects to succeed. Supportive administrators are also essential.

"It's an outdoor classroom," she said. "It's not there just to make the grounds look nicer."

Ms. Slotterback expressed a willingness to conduct training at the Academy Road School if any staff members there express interest. Ms. Salimbene recommended contacting Amanda Unkle and Marni McCann, teacher advisors for Middle School Peer Leaders, for possible help at both schools and at the municipal garden. The commission agreed to reach out to them after the new school year has gotten under way.

Mr. DiCicco suggested establishing a commission subcommittee to deal with the school on this and a number of issues. Mr. Rebmann will submit the idea to Mr. Penrose and list it on the agenda for next meeting.

In other business, Ms. George reminded the commission that the township's Forestry Plan expires this year. Mr. Rosenthal indicated that it might not be sufficient to comply with state requirements to simply update the current plan as Mr. Rebmann had suggested at an earlier meeting.

"Guidelines change. You really need to have someone who's informed on any new developments."

The commission has until the end of 2015 to submit its new plan. After some discussion, the commission agreed to let Mr. Rebmann review and revise the current plan, with commission member input and submit it with the idea of learning in the review process what areas need correction/elaboration. If that initial effort doesn't succeed, there would be sufficient time to secure the services of a professional.

Those services, however, would require an outlay of as much as \$3000.

Mr. DiCicco agreed that township committee might look more favorably upon incurring such a cost if the commission can demonstrate that it had first attempted a less costly in-house effort.

Ms. George also reminded commissioners that, as part of certification requirements, is attendance at certified core training programs. In addition to herself, representing DTEC, either a township employee or public official must participate.

Mr. DiCicco asked about cost of attending. Ms. George replied that the total should be \$300-320 for three people. Mr. Rebmann will contact CFO Glenn Clarke regarding the availability of funds.

The training takes place October 24-25 in Cherry Hill. In addition to Ms. George, Mr. DiCicco will contact Vernon Champion (Assistant Supervisor of Public Works) who had reported at an earlier commission meeting that he might be able to attend.

In the public segment of the meeting Lisa Salimbene discussed a new habitat restoration project in the works at the Hagen Road School in the large field adjacent to the school. Working with officials from Fish and Wildlife and obtaining donations of materials from local businesses, volunteers are using a two acre tract to plant native species and set up bird boxes.

The commission commended the project and Mr. Rebmann will write a letter to Township Committee expressing the commission's support.