

## DENNIS TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes: December 19, 2014.

Regularly scheduled meeting held at 5:30 p.m. at the municipal building.

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

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: All

ABSENT: None

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

The commission discussed the ARC application scheduled for public hearing on December 19 before the Land Use Board. The applicant seeks variances allowing ARC to host weddings and other events at its property, the Falkinburg Estate. ARC states that it needs to generate revenue to maintain the historic property.

One member of the public addressed the commission regarding the application.

Members discussed numerous concerns including the status of trees on site some of which have been listed as historically significant for the township. Ms. George pointed out that the commission has no authority to tell private property owners what they can do with trees on the property. Mr. Rosenthal suggested, and the commission agreed, that Mr. Rebmann, the crossover representative to Land Use, should request a tree survey of the property.

Other issues raised include noise, drainage, insufficient rest rooms on site, traffic, parking, as well as other uses allegedly occurring on the property which is currently limited for office use by ARC (under a 1989 Planning Board decision which originally approved ARC's move to the Falkinburg site).

After lengthy discussion, Chairman Penrose summarized issues relevant to the commission which include: 1) possibly endangered trees on site, 2) how parking will be handled (paving or no), 3) effect of parking close to trees, 4) conducting a tree survey including which trees would be cut to facilitate ARC's plans (if any), 5) the presence of pesticides on the site and whether ARC has been conducting a landscaping operation at the site.

Ms. George asked if the commission could have a member testify orally at the Land Use hearing to voice the commission's concerns. Committeeman DiCicco advised that Mr. Rebmann, as crossover, would perform that function by way of questioning the applicant.

Mr. Rebmann reported that he had read Lyman Hoffman's book about significant trees in Cape May County. Ms. Slotterback had brought the book to the November meeting for members to examine. The book is a collection of photographs/names of trees with locations. Mr. Rebmann culled the entries related to Dennis Township and separated them into four sections (two hamlets per section). The idea is to distribute the sections to commission members so that new photos and measurements can be taken. All commission members would be involved in the process. This survey is a requirement under the Community Forestry Plan.

Ms. Slotterback suggested that the survey include GPS points. This would allow computer tracking of the tree locations. In response to Mr. Penrose question as to how that works, Mr. Rosenthal noted that cell phones can easily perform the task.

Use of GPS will facilitate listing the locations on line at some point.

Ms. George advised that surveyors cannot access private property without permission and the commission will develop a public communication, letter and/or press release, announcing the project. Mr. DiCicco suggested that a commission member address the subject with township committee at one of its meetings. The commission agreed to begin planning in early 2015.

Mr. DiCicco congratulated commission member Ms. Leatherwood on being named a state finalist for Teacher of the Year. Ms. Leatherwood then led a discussion about ongoing efforts to utilize technology to advance the commission's work. She suggested that the commission develop a mission statement which would state the overall goals of the commission which could be readily communicated to the public.

Mr. Penrose proposed a three member technology subcommittee to work on the mission statement and explore the possibility of a web site for the commission.

Joining Ms. Leatherwood on the subcommittee are Chris Castor and Sue Slotterback.

Ms. George cautioned about possible costs for a web site, given the commission's budget constraints. Mr. Castor noted that there are applications available for website development that cost little (or nothing).

Ms. Leatherwood again asked for member input in utilizing the growing Facebook presence she is developing in the community.

Mr. Rebmann asked if Ms. Leatherwood could arrange for a technology training session, possibly at the school and open to the public. The commission was receptive to the idea as it would allow members to become more familiar with the technology applications being developed while offering members a chance to interact with interested members of the community.

Ms. Leatherwood proposed initiating a Community Awareness Day in 2015, possibly in spring. Ms. George added that the commission should develop a list of its goals for 2015. Mr. Rebmann will list both items under New Business for the January 21 meeting.

Mr. Rebmann advised the commission that he has invited Jody Carerra, area contact for ANJEC, to address an early 2015 commission meeting. No date has been set. He will contact Ms. Carerra again and ask her to attend February's meeting.

The commission's Community Forestry Plan is nearing completion. The subcommittee assigned the task has been reviewing, updating, refining, and formatting the plan which should be ready in early 2015. Mr. Rosenthal pointed out that the administrative codes being used should be reviewed to make sure that there have been no recent changes.

In other business, Ms. George informed the commission that it may be eligible for some tree seedlings. She has been in touch with NJ DEP about the Tree Recovery Plan and suggested that the township could receive up to 2000 seedlings (varied, unspecified). The program will be available in 2015.

Mr. Rosenthal advised that an educational component would be needed under the Community Forestry Plan. The commission will consider including a presentation about trees, tree care, and proper planting at the local public school.

The commission will look into applying for the program at its January meeting.

In open discussion, Mr. Castor suggested gearing commission "outreach" programs to the particular season in which the event takes place.

Ms. George noted that the commission's segment on the township web page has not been listing agendas for monthly meetings. Mr. Rebmann will contact the webmaster to have the problem corrected.

There being no other business, correspondence, or bills to pay, Mr. Penrose adjourned the meeting.