

Dennis Township Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes July 15, 2015

Mr. Penrose led the flag salute. All Commission members were present except for Sue Slotterback and Frank Hoff who reported absent due to medical circumstances.,

After the minutes for June were approved by voice vote, guest speaker Meredith Brown presented a power point program about water conservation. Conservation Coordinator for the American Littoral Society, Ms. Brown discussed the Dennis Creek Watershed and the effects of salt water intrusion on it. She also described the township's source of drinking water, the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer. Water amounts drawn from the aquifer are allocated to each municipality by the state, based upon a Master Water Use Plan, which is supposed to be updated every five years. The current plan has NOT been updated since 1996.

In response to Mr. Rebmann's question about the reason for this, Ms. Brown indicated that the ALS, along with ANJEC (the commission is a member of ANJEC), are lobbying the state to update the plan.

Ms. Brown went on to recommend the web site, www.sjwatersavers.org for finding educational materials about water conservation. She then presented a number of tips on basic domestic water saving. These include:

- 1) use of low flow shower heads and faucet aerators
- 2) reduce shower time (save 2.5 gallons per minute)
- 3) install low flow, 1.3 gallon, flush toilets
- 4) turn off tap when brushing teeth or doing dishes
- 5) don't water lawn daily (lawns require about one inch of water per week)
- 6) leave lawn clippings and set mower blades higher

Mr. Rebmann asked about rain barrels, water collection units that save rain water drained from roof gutters. He hopes to organize a class for township residents interested in making the barrels. Mr., Rosenthal advised that food grade barrels, suitable for such a project, might be obtainable from Coca Cola in Marmora. Ms. Brown noted that there will be a class in Cumberland County (cost \$35 per person). She added that she recently conducted a class with 7th grade students from Bridgeton where students decorated barrels, an idea that appealed to commission members. She advised testing water collected in this manner before applying on vegetable gardens.

Ms. Brown also recommended that businesses conduct water "audits" (check for leaks) and farmers should install flow meters and use drip or low spray irrigation and capture run off for re-use. Overhead spraying is both more costly and wasteful.

Ms George described Shore Gate Golf Course, owned by the Turner family as an example of an operation that diligently practices water conservation.

Ms. Brown advised the commission to maintain contact with her about its future activities, including the rain barrel class, which the commission hopes to pursue in the fall with possible involvement from the local school. Ms. Brown also advised that she will try to attend National Night Out and will provide literature on the topic of her presentation.

Mr. McManus next reminded the commission about the work session scheduled for Sunday, July 19 at the municipal garden. Volunteers were advised to bring shovels, rakes and wheel barrows to deal with the three cubic yards of wood chips waiting to be spread over the paths laid out in the garden. There will also be weeding and maintenance on the pond.

Ms. Leatherwood updated the commission on the progress of its Facebook presence which continues to draw attention in the community. Interested in generating increased participation with the local school, Ms. Leatherwood suggested adding a student liaison to the commission. Discussion among members focused on the role the student would play. Ms. Leatherwood said the idea would also generate more parent involvement in the commission. The student could also report to the school board about relevant commission activities. Participants would be selected on a volunteer basis.

Mr. DiCicco suggested that township committee might have to revise the original ordinance establishing the commission in order to allow for a student participant (even a nonvoting member). He added that the school should also be approached to okay the idea.

Ms. Leatherwood said that she would contact an administrator regarding the latter and Mr. Penrose suggested revisiting the idea in October after the new school year has started.

National Night Out was next on the agenda. Mr. Rebmann will contact Kim Herron, Rec Department, to inquire about two tables and space (same as last year), Ms. George offered the use of her tent. Mr. Castor volunteered to set up a display about septic based on his attendance at a conference on that topic. A subcommittee will meet Sunday, July 26 at 1 pm to go over the plans.

There was nothing new to report on the rumble strip issue. Residents continue to complain and the commission continues to research how other communities have handled the issue.

In the general discussion before the end of the meeting, Mr. Castor suggested that the committee needed to avoid “special interest publicizing”...this in response to Mr. Rebmann’s previous query about the commission’s parameters of activity. Specifically, the commission should avoid involvement in any issue that might result in material benefit to a particular party (class action lawsuit, charities, for example) no matter how laudable.

The commission agreed that there are plenty of issues to consider that are of interest to the general community of Dennis Township. With that, Mr. Penrose closed the meeting.