

## DENNIS TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes: November 18, 2015.

Meeting held at 5:30 p.m. at the municipal building.

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

ROLL CALL: All commission members were present.

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

The meeting opened with Joanne DeVeschio, Executive Director of NJ Campground Association. After describing that organization's mission, Ms. DeVeschio spoke about ecotourism and the association's desire to work with local groups like this commission to develop local venues and better communicate that information to visitors. Specifics include signage marking particular points of interest in Dennis Township (Dennis Creek, Magnolia Lake). She recommended developing an inventory of township natural, recreational, and historical attractions and facilities that would be of interest to campers.

There was also discussion about the types of activities campers enjoy such as birding, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and "agritourism". Wineries and microbreweries were included in this category. Ms. DeVeschio described today's camper: 28-58 years old, with families' looking for a more diversified experience than the traditional tent/campfire. Campers tend to prefer RVs or cabins to tents.

Commission members, noting changes at campgrounds within the township, asked about the possibility of campers becoming "permanent residents". Mr. Diccio added that one of the biggest complaints received about campgrounds at the committee level has been about that issue, the size of units and the prospect of people living in them year round.

Little Oaks Campground Manager, Judy LaPorte noted that there is a strictly enforced limit on camper stays.

Discussion continued onto the topic of wood burning (camp fires), with commission members suggesting ways of ensuring that campers don't bring unseasoned wood onsite.

The campground representatives advised that campers are not permitted to bring their own wood and that campgrounds sell properly seasoned, disease-free firewood. However, they pointed out that they cannot control the wood that is sold by roadside vendors. The

commission recommended developing literature to educate the public about selling/using properly seasoned wood. This would reduce smoke emissions, a source of neighbor complaints.

Mr. Hoff asked if the campgrounds had heard any complaints about area road conditions. Ms. DelVeschio cited the road to Sea Isle City but added that most campers understand that traffic in the summer is “part of the shore experience”.

Mr. Rebmam will submit a piece about Dennis Township’s many attractions for possible publication in the association’s annual publication.

Moving on, Mr. McManus told the commission that he and Ms. Slotterback have placed markers about the municipal garden naming specific plants that will have signs. Mr. McManus said he had looked at metal signs about 18 inches long and will obtain a sample for the commission to consider.

He also commented on vandalism at the Christmas tree at the museum. Witnesses reported a young person with a hatchet hacking at the tree.

Mr. Hoff asked about installing surveillance cameras outside the museum. Mr. Penrose added that some sort of No Trespassing signage should be posted, there being possible liability issues for the township. Mr. Rebmam will post temporary signs on site and ask Public Works for more permanent signage.

Next on the agenda was the recent dam breach at Ludlam Pond, reported at the October meeting by Mr. Diccico. That problem has been resolved for now thanks to quick local and state response.

Mr. Rebmam contacted the US Army Corps of Engineers and NJDEP about the status of other dams in the township. He read the reports he received from each organization, stating that local dams are in poor condition. Mr. Penrose pointed out that local dams drain into the meadows so failure would not result in extensive property damage. Mr. Castor asked about Beaver Swamp dam which was not included in the original reports.

Mr. Rebmam will follow up. He will also furnish the information he has to Township Committee.

Following up on an item from October’s meeting, the commission discussed ideas for a memorial for the late Eileen Turner. Mr. Hoff suggested a plaque naming a parcel of township owned property in her honor. He has examined the township tax map and has found several potential sites. Mr. Diccico asked the commission to send Township Committee a synopsis of what they’d like to do.

Justin Turner, Eileen’s son, thanked the commission for its interest and asked that the family be kept informed of any decision in the matter.

Three commission members attended the recent NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference and shared their experiences with the full body. Mr. Penrose recommended future attendance by any members who have not already gone for “core training”. Mr. Castor spoke favorably about a particular session on proper tree maintenance. Ms. George echoed that in comments about making a better effort to teach correct tree planting methods, especially during events like Arbor Day and the annual seedling giveaway.

Mr. Rosenthal informed the commission that the county Open Space program has expanded its eligibility categories and has funds available for qualified projects. He urged commission members to devise possible programs for 2016.

Ms. Salimbene informed the commission about ongoing efforts to bring a bike path through the township. Share the Road signage is being prepared now. Mr. Castor asked about the route. It will begin on Route 550 where Woodbine’s path ends. The path will eventually link to Middle Township’s path.

During the discussion period, Ms. George revisited the subject of rumble strips on area roadway medians. A resident along Route 9, she noted that she hears cars crossing them at all times of day and night and they do not seem to be working as intended, adding that for her, it has become a quality of life issue.

Discussion of possible commission action followed. Consensus reached was that only a large number of property owners complaining might result in change. Groups like Dennisville Historic Homeowners Association are trying to expand the historic district (on Route 47) as one way of addressing the problem in that area.

Mr. Rebmann motioned to devote a future meeting to serve as a public forum on the matter. He will invite representatives from the state (DOT) and county (Engineer and Health Departments) to discuss the issue. The motion met with no opposition. He will also ask the county to conduct noise readings along both roads and provide the findings to the commission.

Ms. Slotterback asked if any other municipalities in the county have had complaints about rumble strips. The commission will look into that matter as well.

There being no other business, Mr. Penrose closed the meeting.

