



## **May 5 Dennis Township Environmental Commission Meeting MINUTES**

This meeting is DTEC's first ZOOM meeting, hosted by Dennis Township Committee member Scott Turner.

Present at the meeting in addition to Scott Turner were: Bob Penrose (Chairman), Justin Turner (Vice-Chairman), James Herlihy, Ray Rebmann, Brad Rosenthal, Lisa Salimbene, and Sue Slotterback (Members)

Following roll call, members briefly discussed whether to record the meeting. It was agreed that Mr. Rebmann would take minutes. Minutes from last meeting will be approved at next meeting.

Mr. Penrose introduced two items of correspondence. The first, an April 3 letter from the Pinelands Commission concerned a septic application from single dwelling resident James Schute, 13 Fish Hawk Lane. The second letter was from an engineering firm representing 47 Developers. The letter indicated that Wawa intended to apply for a CAFRA freshwater wetlands waiver for a property located on Route 47 in Dennisville. That property is owned by "Filthy Rich", Phil Risko, principal.

According to Mr. Penrose, no plans were submitted with the letter. However, it appeared that Wawa intends to build a full service "Super Wawa", with four fuel dispensers at the site. No application has been submitted to the Dennis Township land Use Board to date.

Mr. Rebmann asked if it was unusual for an applicant to apply to a state agency before obtaining approvals at the local level. Justin Turner advised that it was not unheard of. Scott Turner added that the subject might have come up in conjunction with the state's Route 47 work.

Mr. Penrose asked if the Cape May County Open Space program would consider buying the site of the current Wawa in Dennisville. He was advised that there have been ongoing "septic problems" with that location over the years.

Mr. Penrose added that there had been no Land Use Board activity since the last meeting. However, Scott Turner noted that that board has an agenda for May which includes applications for building a fence and for a subdivision.

Concerning the next item on the agenda, Mr. Penrose updated members on the status of the municipal garden. He asked Ms. Slotterback to help inventory the plants and develop a list of names so the commission can create signage describing each plant type. He also indicated that he'd cleaned the paths in the garden. Ms. Salimbene proposed a "garden party" to do further clean up of the grounds and do maintenance on the small pond on site. The township has already left a supply of mulch at the site.

Members agreed to a Saturday May 16 work party. Time for that event is 9am.

Mr. Penrose suggested bringing various garden tools as well as twine to secure the fence. Mr. Rosenthal will provide a lawnmower.

Under new business, Justin Turner led a discussion about a possible plastic bag ordinance for the township.

Noting that Dennis Township has a "different demographic" from other municipalities, he suggested more than a simple review of sample ordinances from other municipalities. The commission should also reach out to local businesses to learn their concerns and determine how they can be accommodated in the process.

Ms Slotterback suggested a "smaller" ordinance, such as a ban on balloon release as a possible starter toward eventually enacting a plastic bag ban.

Ms. Slotterback noted that she frequently interacts with residents and tourists to towns that have such ordinances (Stone Harbor, Avalon, and Brigantine, for example). She noted that the public appears to have embraced the concept. She has also communicated with workers at various Wawas ( a significant user of plastic bags and supplies) and has been told "It's coming".

She suggested that some businesses are waiting for municipalities to act before taking action at the store level.

It was pointed out that these are more tourism oriented communities than Dennis Township. Justin Turner added that each ordinance is significantly different and such a measure would have to be tailored to our particular community.

The model ordinance created by ANJEC was discussed as a possible starting point but members agreed that before any work is done on a draft, thresholds should be established to learn who is going to be most affected so that the township can determine how far it wishes to go.

Ms Salimbene asked if Wawa would use paper instead of plastic. Ms. Slotterback replied that the Stone Harbor Wawa does. That store also offer reusable bags and have replaced plastic straws with wooden ones. She recommended contact Surf Rider to obtain more information on that subject.

Ms. Salimbene then asked if the commission could reach out to Wawa corporate office to learn what they have to offer on the issue.

Mr. Turner indicated that whatever type of ordinance the commission develops, a key area of difficulty will be enforcement.

Mr. Penrose added that, with the current pandemic situation, the state of the economy is likely to be uncertain for the indefinite future. Resolving the issue could become a matter of economic survival versus eco-responsibility.

Mr. Turner suggested drafting a letter as a starting point. Asked what the letter would say, he indicated that it would be "general, asking for input". In particular, Wawa would be targeted since that business is likely to be more affected than others. Ms. Salimbene added that other businesses, such as the Gem Store, and other food take-outs, will also be affected.

Members discussed encouraging replacement of polystyrene containers with cardboard, a move that has been proven successful in other areas.

Members agreed that an education campaign, showing best practices and alternatives options would be an essential ingredient of any ordinance. Ms. Slotterback again directed members to Surf Rider Foundation which has an education outreach program for municipalities considering ordinances governing plastics.

There was some discussion about the tree seedling program. Mr. Rebmann informed the commission that he'd contacted Alec McCartney, in charge of the state program, and expressed the township's interest in participating next year, as it was too late to sign up for the current year.

Members discussed tree cutting activity in the township, particularly along Route 83 and Hagen Road. Mr. Penrose noted that new home buyers seem to be engaging in extensive cutting on their properties. Also, applicants before the Land Use Board are often asked to leave trees standing as part of their application approval and this can cause some difficulty because of drainage problems related to the development.

Mr. Herlihy added that recent storm damage which resulted in many downed trees, "scared a lot of people", resulting in this form of preventative maintenance. Justin Turner added that, with many of the applications coming to Land Use being "mixed use" (commercial/residential), the project densities often require more tree cutting.

In final business, Mr. Penrose directed members to give some thought to ideas for "giveaways" at National Night Out and other events in which the commission will participate.

Scott Turner indicated that the next (and possibly future) meeting will be held via Zoom.

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