

**PRINCETON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of Regular Meeting, February 23, 2022 – 7:30 pm**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting,**  
**Princeton, NJ 08540**

**I. Opening Statement**

Land Acknowledgement: *"We gather today on the land of the Lenni Lenape. As members of the Princeton community, we aspire to show appreciation, respect, and concern for all peoples and our environment. We acknowledge the genocide and continuous displacement of indigenous peoples and the harm inflicted upon the indigenous communities and people of color across the country. We honor the Lenape and other Indigenous caretakers of these lands and waters, the elders who lived here before, the Indigenous today, and the generations to come. We further acknowledge the millions of enslaved Africans and their descendants on whose backs this nation was created."*

Adequate notice of this meeting as required by Sections 3d and 4a of the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided and filed with the municipal Clerk.

I. Sands opened the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

**Present were:** Sands, Fichtenbaum, Walker, Soos, Persky, Marcus-Levine, Watson, Zemble, Symington, Niedergang, Deieso,

**Absent:** Tech-Czarny, Jones, BOH Rep

**Also Present:** Erica Mosner, Ed Truscelli – Executive Director of Princeton Community Housing

**II. Approval of Agenda:** A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

**III. Minutes:**

**a) January 26, 2022**

A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written and amended.

**IV. Public Comment:**

Erica Mosner, resident at Princeton Community Village spoke about the construction outside of her apartment and how she was blindsided by it. She and many other residents did not know about the approved 25 units at the site and we surprised to see the construction and the destruction of so many trees.

Ed Truscelli spoke about the project and how Princeton Community Housing (managing entity of Princeton Community Village) had a Resident Advisory Board to keep everyone informed of the project as well as using other means to communicate with the community and noted how PCH values the input from its residents.

The Commission held a lengthy discussion about how to become more involved in the community and ways in which Ms. Mosner (and others) can become more informed.

**V. Discussion/Decisions:**

- a) **Council Update:** Niedergang stated the public hearing for the Special Improvement District Ordinance (SID) will be held at the February 28, 2022 Council meeting. Council met to set its goals and the goals will align with staff goals; and Council will be meeting with the Boards, Commissions and Committees to discuss the 2022 goals. Phase 2 of the Witherspoon Street project will begin in the near future. Council had a discussion about the dangerous intersection at Rosedale Road and General Johnson Way which resulted in the municipality reaching out to the County to encourage them to move forward to make the intersection safer. On March 1, 2022 Council will hold a special meeting to hear from the Permit Parking Task Force. At the March 14, 2022 Council meeting, Princeton University President Christopher Eisgruber will have his annual conversation with Council. On March 29, 2022 Council will hear from the Cannabis Task Force regarding the zoning for retail dispensary stores. On April 11, 2022 Council will be discussing the planning for the sewer system infrastructure and possible available grant monies. Council also passed two Resolutions one asking the State of New Jersey to pursue regional solutions to flooding within the Millstone River Basin and the other was a Resolution in support of the ability for municipalities to adopt regulations to protect public health, safety and welfare for threats of flooding. A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to support Councils Resolutions.
- b) **Stream Clean-up:** Sands noted this event will take place on April 24, 2022 from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. The location is yet to be determined but must be in an area that has safe access for volunteers and provides parking.
- c) **Memberships:** Sands discussed the Commission memberships noting that ANJEC is offering a course “Fundamentals for Environmental Commissions” – anyone new to the Commission should attend this, it is very informative and anyone interested in a refresher should also sign up. Regarding the ICLEI membership, it is very similar to that of ANJEC yet offers the Clear Path tool. She noted she has not seen much activity with ICLEI and the membership may be reevaluated next year when the membership is up for renewal. She noted Tech-Czarny was interested in the Community Climate Story and she is not sure whether or not he attended it. Symington noted they had a member orientation meeting to learn what other communities are doing. The Clear Path platform is a good tool to track the

greenhouse gas inventory data and this year the town is updating the municipal greenhouse gas inventory and it would be good to have an additional site where the data is kept. Sands noted that if the PEC is keeping it for only one set of data that may not be comparable to the baseline data then we will need to reevaluate the membership.

**d) Annual Goal Status:**

- i. Site Plan Reviews:** Lisa Marcus-Levine noted there was not much to report, she is currently working on a site plan review and will forward to the Commission members when the draft is completed. She was looking for mapping of the waterways specifically C1 in the town and had reached out to the DEP but has not received any information. Deieso noted that there is a GIS mapping system on the DEP website.
- ii. Open Space Update:** Sands noted Watson will go into the presentation but she did do a little research on the name of the Rogers Wildlife Refuge and noted how she was able to find a lot of information on the website. It was originally called the Princeton Wildlife Refuge and was later renamed to memorialize Charles H. Rogers from Princeton University who played a key role in establishing the sanctuary. Watson noted that he and Cindy Taylor are gathering information for the update to the ERI and he is gathering information on the Rogers Wildlife Refuge. He gave an overview of the refuge area noting it was renovated through grants obtained by the Friends of Rogers Refuge. It is maintained by the municipality and supported by New Jersey American Water and the Friends of Rogers Refuge. The area currently contains observation towers, a bird blind, trail development, interpretive signs and an environmental inventory. In order to update the ERI, Taylor needs the flora and fauna species at the refuge as well as ground truthing for the trail maps, and the Friends of the Rogers Refuge should gather information on the animal life in the refuge, specifically amphibians, mammals and reptiles. One benefit of gathering the information is to have a community scientist event at the Rogers Refuge, the Princeton Library advertised a Nature Explorer Backpack Program as this will help to apply for grants to bring to the Library to provide another backpack program and he will be working with Sustainable Princeton and other groups to advertise this event once it is set up and in place. Soos shared an idea for open space with the Commission. ANJEC is offering small grants (up to \$1500) to Environmental Commissions who put together projects that will support open space stewardship. She suggested applying for the grant to put together a “nature trail booklet” or podcasts.
- iii. Plastic Pollution Reduction Act:** Persky stated she will be meeting with Josh Zinder and Sustainable Princeton to discuss updating the merchants about the law and its enforcement; this meeting will take place on March 3, 2022. There was a question about the enforcement on the local level and who

has the responsibility for that. The Health Department is enforcing the straw ban but it is unclear who will enforce the plastic ban.

- iv. Sustainable Landscaping Practices:** Sands stated the advocates for transforming landscaping in New Jersey will be holding an “invitation only” meeting on March 11, 2022 which will focus on ways to catalyze a statewide transition towards cleaner, quieter and healthier land care practices. This is still being worked on a local level; Sustainable Princeton is working on “beyond the gas leaf blowers” and Non-Toxic Communities and Sands are working to read through the NOFA and Rutgers certifications. PEC may include reference information on NOFA on the PEC webpage, as well as sending a letter to the editor. Symington noted that Sustainable Princeton will be working on education outreach to property owners who hire landscapers to encourage them to work with their landscapers to adopt more sustainable landscaping practices. Persky inquired about the invasive plantings along the roadside. Niedergang stated she will inquire about what is being done municipally, especially when roads are being redone. Symington noted perhaps building a plan for private property owners and then have another plan for municipal property and all of the lands should be targeted.
- v. Community Energy:** Soos stated at the end of last year the PEC received information from the BPU about Energy Planning Grants and a lot of time was spent trying to figure out how PEC could write a grant that would meet the criteria that it would need to meet because the grant was not for implementation but for planning; ultimately it was decided that the grant would not be pursued. Tech-Czarny, Symington and Soos discussed a company called Solar Smart who can offer technical assistance to communities who are interested in implementing solar energy projects. Also discussed were the installation of solar canopies and perhaps placing them in one of the municipal parking lots; there are grants available for this. Lastly, she discussed the RGEA (Community Energy Aggregation Program) and noted the municipality needs to determine whether or not it wants to do this again and if so, does the municipality want to continue to pursue it alone or does it want to join the Essex County Consortium. Niedergang stated that Council is waiting for the right time to bid and also noted anyone who is on a payment plan with PSE&G cannot be included in this. Once the consultant gives Council the ok, it will continue. Symington noted the default program has to be at a lower cost and it needs to be determined when the best time is to go out for bid – either the municipality can do it on its own or by joining the Essex County Consortium.
- vi. Drinking Water Quality:** Zemble reported she went on the NJ Analytic Labs website to see what the basic costs were to do water testing. They have a full water scan that is \$399 and the Cancer Prevention scan is \$559. It may be beneficial to devote funds to get the report done for one or two houses. It was also suggested to ask New Jersey American Water (NJAW) to pay for a third

party to perform the testing. She also noted that she has been following water quality discussions on “Next Door” and asked if the PEC could set up an area on social media for the public to comment about their drinking water. It was decided that Mercantini and Niedergang would look into it and report back to Sands. Lastly, on March 16, 2022 the Watershed Institute will be having a session to discuss “What’s in your drinking water in New Jersey” and she will attend. She also discussed the exceptions to the fracking ban.

**vii. Electrification/Net Zero:** Fichtenbaum noted there was not much to report. She did announce that a while back, she and Symington gave a presentation to a group in northern New Jersey on sustainability and the different development project that were going on at the time. She said Madison, New Jersey is doing a passive house affordable housing project for 44 units and she is hoping some of Princeton’s affordable housing projects also include passive house.

**viii. Board of Health:** Sands noted the Board of Health will not be attending the PEC meetings on a regular basis this year but they will be collaborating with the PEC on some issues such as sustainable landscaping, drinking water, and threats of flooding. The next Board of Health meeting will be on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 if anyone is interested in attending.

**ix. Sustainable Princeton:** Symington noted the developer in Madison, New Jersey is RPM who is the same developer of the Herrontown Road affordable housing project. Sustainable Princeton will be having a “Sustainable Minds” talk series this year; the first discussion will be about stormwater; the second about community solar; and the third will be about building electrification (net zero). They will be partnering with Isles on sustainable landscaping practices to help promote weatherization programs to low and moderate income single family housing.

**x. Flood & Stormwater Committee:** The committee is currently discussing the prioritization of stormwater mitigation, mapping programs for GIS, a stormwater mitigation plan, stormwater utility, and that they are committed to looking at stormwater holistically. The redevelopment stormwater ordinance has been put on hold indefinitely. It was suggested that Councilman David Cohen come to a PEC meeting to discuss why the redevelopment ordinance was put on hold. Niedergang stated she will look into it and will brief the PEC when she obtains more information. Zemble also noted that she will not be able to attend the next Flood and Stormwater Committee meeting and Deieso volunteered to attend in her absence.

**VI. Adjournment:** A motion was made and seconded and the PEC voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:57 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Debra Mercantini, Secretary**