

PRINCETON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
Minutes of Regular Meeting, April 28 2021– 7:30 pm
Virtual Zoom Meeting,
Princeton, NJ 08540

I. Opening Statement

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.

II. Sands opened the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Present were: Sands, Walker, Niedergang, Zemble, Tech-Czarny, Marcus-Levine, Watson, Persky, Soos, Symington, DiFerdinando (BOH)

Absent: Fichtenbaum, Jones

Also Present: James Purcell, Elaine Geren, Kim Dorman, Marisa Immordino, Evan Anderson, Leighton Newlin, Daniil Ivanov, Dr. Zeyuan Qiu

III. Approval of Agenda: A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda with the amendment that the order of the discussion items may change due to the availability of the presenters and that the following two items would be removed from the agenda – Quality of Local Waterways and the Solar discussions.

IV. Minutes:

a) March 17, 2021 – Special Meeting

b) March 24, 2021 – Regular Meeting

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

V. Public Comment:

There was no public comment at this point.

VI. Discussion/Decisions:

a) Council Update: Niedergang reported that Council has added a land acknowledgement to its agenda for every meeting; the Open Space Manager position has been put on hold due to the resignation of the Executive Director of the Recreation Department – the municipality will review the Parks and Recreation Department and its current functions; Council held a special meeting last night (4/27/2021) to discuss a Resolution declaring the Princeton Shopping Center and some surrounding properties an “Area in Need of Redevelopment.” and after public comment the Council voted unanimously to approve the Resolution; the new municipal Administrator will begin on Monday May 3,

2021; Princeton University President Christopher Eisgruber met with Council to discuss a diverse range of issues including sustainability and transportation - the municipality is hoping to continue to build a strong relationship with the university; and lastly, the budget has not been approved yet because the municipality is waiting for Federal Funding to help offset the deficit in the budget to avoid a tax increase.

- b) **Forest Management Bills:** Sands discussed Assembly Bills A4843, A4844 and A4845 and presented the PEC with the Shade Tree Commission's (STC) recommendations on these bills. The PEC held a brief discussion and it decided to support the comments made by the Shade Tree Commission. PEC stated that an unfunded mandate will not produce good results especially when such a mandate fails to address underlying issues (e.g. invasive species, carbon sequestration, habitat). PEC also expressed concerns about the possibility of the municipality being removed from its own land management.
- c) **Guidance/Position Papers:** Sands discussed the possibility of the PEC developing "position papers" on certain topics to make it easier when these topics arise in the future. Some areas of discussion were on the topics of adaptive reuse/tear downs and artificial turf and how it would be helpful to have some guidance on the topic so the PEC does not have to start at square one each time one of these applications comes before the Commission. The "position papers" would be available to the public so that people understood the general stance of the PEC on the topic. The general consensus was to proceed with the "position papers" but Niedergang will check with the municipal attorney to make sure this is an advisable approach for the PEC to proceed with.
- d) **Site Plan Review Memo Wording:** Sands said she received feedback about the PEC memos and it was suggested that the PEC address adaptive re-use in its development application memos. After a brief discussion a motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to add a general statement to its memos but will add more detailed information when it is warranted. Tech-Czarny clarified that adaptive reuse is about taking an existing structure, renovating it, and repurposing it. Some of the feedback PEC had received was inaccurate as describing preservation rather than adaptive reuse.
- e) **Green Building Checklist:** Sands reported that Councilman David Cohen suggested that the PEC look at the Green Building Checklist and add language specifically to areas C14 & C15 of the checklist. The suggested wording would be for applicants to evaluate the relative environmental benefits of preserving and reusing existing structures on the site versus replacement with new construction. A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to add wording to the specific areas noted in the conversation and once that is complete the PEC can go back and update the checklist where needed.
- f) **Development Application:** Sands provided an update on the Province Line Woods/Lanwin Herrontown Development applications. The Province Line Woods application is a site off Province Line Road of about 150 acres and the Herrontown site is off Bunn Drive on Herrontown Road and consists of about 90+ acres. These applications were reviewed a couple of times by the PEC in the past. With regards to the Province Line Woods application, the applicant came

back before the Planning Board in 2019 to request a change in one of the conditions of approval and has not come back since. The Herrontown application is scheduled to be heard by the Planning Board on May 20 2021 and she encouraged PEC members to attend and give comments on the application. She noted that she and Watson hiked both of these sites and they are the only two remaining old growth forests left in Princeton. It was noted that it is always good to visit a development application site; however, make sure permission has been granted so as to avoid trespassing.

- g) **Working/Educational Session:** Niedergang reported that she heard from the Municipal Attorney who is on board and once it is determined who will be attending a few dates will be put on the table and sent to the PEC to see what date works best. Sands noted that it would be good if the Commission members could submit their questions in advance for the presenters.
- h) **Board of Health Update:** DiFerdinando reported that the Board of Health briefly discussed the PEC’s comment regarding artificial turf in Princeton. It is in favor of the PEC statement but felt it was a complicated issue and the BOH could not offer an expert opinion other than what was provided by others.
- i) **Sustainable Princeton Update:** Symington reported that the Sustainable Landscaping Expo that took place last Saturday was a great success. There were over 150 people who stopped by and great conversations were held on the topic. The next Great Idea’s Event – “Going Beyond: Climate Action and Local Environmental Health” will be held at 7:00 pm on May 5, 2021. There will be an upcycling event on May 15, 2021 at Monument Hall from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Sustainable Princeton has hired a new Team member, Josh Perlswieg, as the Program Coordinator. Regarding Sustainable Landscaping, the name has been changed to Changing the Landscape: Healthy Yards = Healthy People. Discussions are moving forward to poll people about an ordinance and some of the next steps will be to hold 2nd and 3rd meetings with Municipal Officials and Landscapers. Regarding Community Solar, the BPU has a successor program that is looking for stakeholder feedback. There will be incentives for community solar projects and right now the straw proposal comment period is open for comments and has been extended until May 27, 2021; anyone wishing to comment should do so. There was a discussion about making it easier for residents to get permits for solar and Tech-Czarny brought up a program called “Make Your Town Solar Friendly” and he will get information and circulate to the PEC. He said he could put a zoning ordinance together rather quickly. Symington noted that an ordinance will also get the municipality more points towards its Sustainable Jersey certification.
- j) **Open Space Assessment:** Watson discussed the Open Space Assessment model that was created by former PEC member Zoe Volenec. The model consisted of an Ecosystem Service Score, Ecological Value Score and a Vulnerability Score. He designed a community survey to reassess the open space in Princeton and how the open space on the Province Line Woods/Herrontown lots can be reevaluated. Once the survey is completed, the next steps will be to finalize the survey results and do an analysis of the Province Line Woods/Herrontown plots of land. The Commission discussed the survey asking for some changes to the

wording so as to express intent of the survey and perhaps adding definitions into the survey to make it easier for people to understand. A motion was made and seconded and the PEC voted unanimously to revise the survey with the changes as discussed. **Quantification of Ecosystem Services in Relation to Runoff:** This presentation was made by Daniil Ivanov and Dr. Zeyuan Qiu. The two models that were used were the Tree Canopy and the Tree Eco System for measurement data for the Province Line Woods and Herrontown plots of land. The values used to evaluate the two lots were Pollution Removal, Avoided Runoffs, Carbon Sequestration, Carbon Stored, Oxygen Produced and Structural Values. The Commission had a brief discussion about the significant tree removal in the 150 acre lot. It was requested that the NJIT team also include the same information for the number of trees that are proposed for removal and compare with the entire plots.

- k) **EVCS Ordinance:** Purcell said that this ordinance was placed on hold because Council just passed a parking ordinance and there seemed to be some inconsistencies in the EVCS ordinance and there were also questions about EVCS in the street and whether or not it constituted a parking space. He said he is reviewing the ordinance with the Zoning Officer to clean up the ordinance before it can be formally presented. There was a discussion about the amount of EVCS located in the municipality and whether or not they were for public use; 2 at the Spring Street Garage; 2 in the Chamber Garage; 2 at the Princeton Shopping Center; Princeton University has about 10 on site and has committed to building 64 more round the campus; 2 at the Hulfish Garage; Capital Health at 300 Witherspoon has 2; 6 at Thanet Circle; 2 at Princeton Community Village; 6 will be located at 21 Wiggins Street; 10 in the Avalon Bay Garage; and 3 for Humbert Street tenants. It was noted that the municipality should be incentivizing EVCS to developers and the zoning ordinance should be modified to allow EVCS as accessory uses and accessory structures in all zoning districts. Soos noted that she is disappointed that the ordinance is on hold however there may be legislation coming down the pike soon and municipalities will be required to install them. Tech-Czarny noted that he is working with a group at the state level to create a model ordinance. Purcell noted that the parking requirements are way out of date and will be reviewed during the reevaluation of the Master Plan. Tech-Czarny stated that the Master Plan does not need to be updated before passing an EVCS ordinance – he strongly recommended reconsideration of the EVCS ordinance. Purcell said he will provide the PEC with his comments on the EVCS ordinance so it can be redrafted.
- l) **Flood & Stormwater Committee:** Zemble reported the state required stormwater training should have been completed by all members of PEC by now. The redevelopment stormwater ordinance has been finalized. With regards to the stormwater utility, the Committee may need a consultant to review.
- m) **Planning Board Update:** Tech-Czarny reported that the Banked Parking Ordinance has been referred to Council and this ordinance will allow applicants not to fulfill the parking requirements. The first meeting of the Master Plan Subcommittee was held and staff was directed to develop a scope of work for the consultant. The Griggs Corner lot was approved and will proceed now to the

Landscape Subcommittee; and there was some discussion about the location of the dumpster and the visual impacts. The Humbert Street application was reviewed but was carried to another meeting. He also noted that Council approved the recommendation of the Planning Board to declare the Princeton Shopping Center an area in need of redevelopment.

- n) **91 Prospect Application:** Marcus-Levine asked the Commission look at the application and provide her and Soos with concerns or comments prior to the SPRAB meeting which will be held in two weeks. She and Walker will work on the PEC memo for that application so the Commission can review at its next meeting.
- o) **Adjournment:** A motion was made and seconded and the PEC voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Mercantini, Secretary

Date Approved: May 26, 2021