

**PRINCETON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of Regular Meeting, November 17, 2021– 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 7:32 p.m.

**Present were:** Sands, Walker, Tech-Czarny, Soos, Persky Fichtenbaum, Symington, Watson (arrived at 8:17 pm)

**Absent:** Zemble, Marcus- Levine, Niedergang, Jones, Hodach-Avalos

**Also Present:** Scott Sillars, Julien Chen, Lietta Kahn and Richard Rein

**II. Approval of Agenda:** A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda with the amendments that included moving the Open Space Assessment report up to when Harrison is able to arrive and also hearing the Reports from Liaisons prior to the discussion of the development application.

**III. Minutes:**

a) October 27, 2021

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

**IV. Public Comment:**

There was no public comment at this point.

**V. Discussion/Decisions:**

- a) **Council Update:** Sands reported the agreement with Rider University for approximately 200 parking spaces has been signed and is part of the Permit Parking Task Force efforts to solve the parking issues. The Bond Ordinance for the 153 acre

purchase was approved by Council and the details of the purchase are being worked out. The Witherspoon Street design project was approved and the construction will begin in early 2022. The Graduate Hotel on Nassau Street was presented to Council at its November 8, 2021 meeting and the members of the PEC were encouraged to review the presentation as it was included in the Council agenda packet. Regarding the proposed easement at the Barbara Boggs Sigmund Park, it is extremely unlikely the request will be approved. A presentation establishing a dog park was approved by Council and moved to staff to work out the details. Deanna Stockton and Jeff Grosser were promoted to Deputy Administrators to better manage municipal functions. Regarding Sustainable Landscaping, work is being done to determine who will do what, and what the final aspects of responsibility for registration and enforcement are. Currently the municipality is in the process of hiring an enforcement officer. There are still many questions from residents – the ordinance has been adopted and the only question that remains is the seasonal timings.

- b) **Artificial Turf White Paper:** Sands noted at the last meeting comments from the PEC members were solicited. Since that time Fichtenbaum has revised the paper and she asked for a motion to approve the document. Fichtenbaum thanked Marcus-Levine for her help and thanked Hodach-Avalos for clarifying the Board of Health concerns. Sands noted this will be the PEC’s first white paper and once approved it will be placed on the PEC website. A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the whitepaper.
- c) **Plastic Pollution Reduction Act:** Sands thanked Persky for a well written Letter to the Editor and for working with Sustainable Princeton to move forward with this. Sands also noted that she and Jones will be presenting information on this to the Princeton Merchants Association in the future. The Commission had a brief discussion about the enforcement piece and how it will be enforced in the municipality.
- d) **Non-Toxic Communities:** Sands noted the PEC wanted the group to come to a PEC meeting to speak about how they could support the PEC next year. They were unable to attend this meeting but a date will be determined for them to attend in the New Year.
- e) **Annual Goals:** Sands stated she is in the process of writing the annual reports for 2020 and 2021 and has reflected on the PEC goals. It was suggested that when thinking about the goals for next year, it should be kept in mind that resources are strained and site plan reviews are a primary role of the PEC. She suggested members of the PEC register for ANJEC’s training on site plans reviews that will take place in the spring. Right now there is a core subcommittee of the PEC that works on the site plan reviews; it would be beneficial if everyone contributes to these reviews. She also noted that there will be some “carry-over” goals into next year and the Climate Action Plan and the ERI will need to be updated in 2022 as well. Another important goal the PEC should think about and work on is developing open lines of communication with local, county and state officials.
- f) **Sustainable Princeton Update:** Symington reported the Energy Aggregation Program 18 month contract will be coming to an end at the end of next month. Residents are starting to receive letters that their energy will be transitioning back to PSE&G. The timing to go out to bid depends on when the electricity markets are

more favorable. The PSE&G new rates will be published in February and that is when the municipality will want to go out to bid to see what prices they can get to compare to the rates published by PSE&G. Another option the municipality could consider is to join a coalition with other towns that are doing energy aggregation programs, such as the Essex County Coalition that is led by Maplewood. Sustainable Princeton also launched a landscaping transition fund to help small landscaping companies transition capital costs to purchase battery operated landscaping equipment. So far \$12,875.00 has been raised with a goal of \$35,000.00 by December 1, 2021 in order to start distributing money to eligible landscaping companies.

- g) Planning Board Update:** Tech-Czarny noted the Planning Board recently approved the Princeton University Environmental Science Building; the Princeton University Health Services Building; the 21Wiggins LLC application started but will be carried to a future meeting; the Lanwin application will be heard at the December 6, 2021 meeting; and lastly, Princeton University presented an art/photo gallery space that will be located on Hulfish which was also endorsed by the Planning Board.
- h) Open Space Assessment Presentation:** Watson stated he began working on this project where former PEC member Zoe Volenec left off. Her work included (but was not limited to) quantifying the contribution of open space, ecological values, vulnerability, ecosystem services based on the categories she developed such as prioritizing scheme scores as well as a GIS score map. Some future questions remained such as how do we weigh the aspects of metric when calculating a score; do we value all the ecosystem services the same or should we put more weight on services like stormwater management; do we value ecosystem services and habitat value the same? Or should each score equal 20 points? Watson followed up on where Volenec left off with two studies. He did an analysis of the ecosystem service contributions of two of the largest plots of existing open space in Princeton called the Lanwin plots. A survey that seeks to define a new weighing for the original variables through community feedback was created. The Lanwin Ecosystem Services study evaluated the priority scheme created in the original model; contained two of the largest open spaces in Princeton; contained the last old-growth forests in Princeton; and despite size and context, the plots have low ecosystem service scores. He worked through a series of data in collaboration with Daniil Ivanov and Dr. Zeyuan Qiu – both plots of land were evaluated (153 acres and 90 acres) on the following; pollution removal; carbon sequestered; carbon stored; oxygen produced; and the overall value in terms of the structural value. There were 346 responses to the survey and the input was very valuable to reweigh the scores from the original model. Forty percent of the responses recommended keeping the categories equal. Within the categories vulnerability to suburban development was the most important component with access to vulnerable communities and whatever other options people thought of that were important. Ecological values discussed included connection to other preserved lands and green spaces; preserving large, old forests; homes to local plants and animals; and connectivity. While discussing Ecosystem services, the following areas were presented; reduce carbon dioxide caused by pollution; prevent flood/reduce floods from stormwater; protect bee's and other animals that pollinate local plants; and to provide outdoor recreational activities. Lastly, he noted that he is

reweighing the model to evaluate new outputs with the Lanwin plots of land and new open space and will coordinate with the new Open Space Coordinator to move forward with this. Sands connected the open space assessment efforts by PEC and NJIT with successful secured donations for the town's preservation of the 153 acre plot. Sands thanked Watson for all of his hard work on this and asked for a motion to approve this report and place it on the PEC website. A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the report and have it placed on the PEC website.

- i) **Development Application (Princeton University Dillon Gym):** Sands thanked Marcus Levine and Walker for all of the work they put into the memo and to everyone who provided comments prior to the meeting. It was suggested that moving forward, all of the PEC memo's regarding development applications should include the file number for ease of referencing. The executive summary was discussed whereby adding information and deleting some information. There were no changes made to the Stormwater area. Other areas discussed were Stormwater, Building, Landscape, Demolition and Waste, General Comments and the Detailed Recommendations. It was also decided that any and all positive feedback should be located in the beginning of the memos. A motion was made and seconded and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the memo with the revisions as discussed at this meeting.
- j) **Climate Action:** Soos stated she will forward a link to a simulation at MIT about Climate Change for everyone to read.

**VI. Adjournment:** A motion was made and seconded and the PEC voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Debra Mercantini, Secretary**

**Date Approved: December 15, 2021**