

WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Sept 14, 2023

The September 2023 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, September 14, 2023 via Zoom with Ephraim Buhks calling the meeting to order at 7:31pm.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, place and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Township bulletin board, and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL

Members: E. Buhks; S. Parratt; L. Katz; I. Singh

Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisors: D. Parris

Guests: Andrea Mandel, WWT Council President

Shirin S., Home Garden Gate

Council Liaison: S. Gawas

Vaishnavi R., Clean Water New Jersey

Sristy S., Home Garden Gate

PUBLIC COMMENT – Vaishnavi R., WWP North student, gave a presentation on Clean Water New Jersey which is a student-lead nonprofit organization that focuses on raising awareness of lead and carcinogens in tap water. Their mission is to educate and reintroduce safe drinking water to local communities as well as provide education on water pollution. The organization has recently conducted interviews with local politicians on these topics and is currently planning to host a trail cleanup event. They plan to conduct a webinar in October 2023 on PFAS chemicals with speakers from the USGS. PFAS are human-made chemicals widely used in non-stick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain resistant fabrics and carpets, products that resist grease, water, and oil, and food packaging (like pizza boxes and microwave popcorn bags). D. Dobromilsky and E. Buhks had provided the suggestion to contact the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission rangers to coordinate a cleanup effort as that is a local source of drinking water. Vaishnavi R confirmed they are in the process of completing the required paperwork and scheduling an event. Details will be shared with EC once finalized to allow members and volunteers to participate. D. Dobromilsky suggested they contact the Watershed Institute as an additional source of coordination for participating in a cleanup activity. E. Buhks thanked her for attending the meeting and providing the information on their organization.

Shirin S. and Sristy S., WWT Girl Scouts, gave a presentation on Home Garden Gate, their non-profit organization that is run by WWP High School North students which strives to create a more environmentally friendly community by making and selling high-quality homemade gardening supplies. The profits gained from their activities are donated to various charities, of which the Arthritis Foundation was chosen for this year. The organization has currently been selling various seedlings and plants in biodegradable pots as well as providing face painting services at local community events. Last year they sold garden supplies including high quality moss poles, trellises and seed bombs. Additionally, they posted informational videos via social media on how to make and maintain drip irrigation systems. HGG plans to continue encouraging the WWT community to access sustainable gardening resources by hosting gardening events and encouraging youth in the active gardening movement. I. Singh inquired if they have additional ways to sell their products besides the West Windsor Community Market. Sristy stated they do have order forms available via social media and at the various community events they participate for individuals to complete and submit requests. A. Mandel inquired if they ensure the plants selected for inclusion in their supplies are native to our local community and specifically benefit local pollinator populations. Sristy responded that most of the current plants were chosen due to their familiarity with organization members as opposed to specifically native species. A. Mandel offered EC members as a source of information and guidance to include more native plant choices in the future. E. Buhks inquired if they have a website. The HGG website is currently undergoing construction and updating and will be made available again in the future. HGG expressed interest in being involved with West Windsor Community Day. E. Buhks and D. Dobromilsky stated the EC members will discuss the potential and will contact them to determine if it is feasible. E. Buhks suggested they attend the remainder of the meeting to hear about current projects such as the Pollinator and Rain gardens which may interest them.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 9, 2023 S. Parratt motioned; L. Katz seconded;
Minutes were approved as presented with one grammatical correction.

NEW BUSINESS:

WWT Community Day 2023 – D. Dobromilsky reported that Community Day 2023 will be held on Saturday, September 23, 2023 from 12-4pm. The EC will share a table with the township council and Shade Tree Commission and will be located near the Electric Vehicle display to incorporate them as well. E. Buhks stated Human Relations Council will have their own table at the event as well. STC is planning to have a build a bug or build a pollinator activity for kids again this year. The girl scouts will participate with their Spotted Lantern Fly trap demonstration and provide information for community members to build their own. D. Dobromilsky stated he received a request from another Girl Scout who is currently involved with installing a pollinator garden to be able to participate and provide information on her project at Community Day. S. Parratt stated he would be willing to discuss it with her and incorporate the information with his planned presentation. He suggested creating and providing a QR code for individuals to scan which would reduce or eliminate the need for paper materials in the future. S. Parratt voiced his support in promoting activities and interactive displays to encourage community interest and involvement in the event as opposed to only providing informational materials. D. Dobromilsky suggested recruiting HGG to provide face painting services, specifically focusing on pollinators if possible. After some discussion, Sristy S. responded that HGG could provide that service and she would check with the organization's members to ensure they have individuals available to attend. A. Mandel stated the 6th Annual National Drive Electric Week will be promoted at Community Day and encourages anyone to register and attend who would like to participate.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Master Plan Conservation Plan Element Draft Review –D. Dobromilsky reported the PB held a preliminary public hearing to introduce the draft Conservation Plan Element of the WWT Master Plan. The response was generally favorable with a few comments and corrections suggested for implementation. The next step will be for the PB to schedule an additional public hearing and final adoption. Once the date is determined he will share the information for any interested EC members to attend. He thanked all EC members for their work and involvement during the review process.

Project Review/Update:

Community Park Gardens and Meadow – S. Parratt gave an update on the Rain and Pollinator Gardens at Community Park. Many plants have been flourishing this year and there is evidence of a multitude of native pollinators taking advantage of the gardens including bees, ladybugs, monarch butterflies and moths. He will continue conducting ongoing maintenance and trimming as needed. The Eastern cedars planted earlier in the season have begun to flourish and continue to grow. Additional ones will be planted in the fall to continue the efforts to provide a buffer along the fence line of the skate park. S. Parratt inquired if the township would have wood chips or mulch that could be used around the bases of the trees to expand the area and assist in preventing damage caused by lawn mower blades. D. Dobromilsky stated he would request and coordinate with DPW to determine if that could be arranged. S. Parratt also gave a brief update on some additional gardens he has been involved with through the Rutgers Environmental Stewards, including one at Zaitz Farm and a 2400 sq ft one located at the Hopewell branch of the Mercer County Library System.

Planning Board – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky reported that there are several projects in various phases of submission but no further report to provide at this time.

Township Council Update – S. Gawas was unable to attend the meeting. A. Mandel reported the Rabbit Hill Road project is moving forward and the Council recently approved an ordinance to reduce the speed limit from 50MPH to 40MPH. The Township Council will be promoting the Shop West Windsor initiative again at Community Day this year. The council is also encouraging pedestrian safety with a Walk West Windsor Initiative that included recently handing out reflective arm bands at National Night Out to promote visibility of pedestrians while walking in low light areas and conditions. L. Katz reported that a resident attending a recent Parking Authority meeting had expressed concern with pedestrian safety at the train station during the redevelopment project. It was inquired if a temporary pedestrian walkway could be installed while some of the sidewalks are temporary blocked or affected by ongoing construction to ensure resident safety from the train

station in the evening. D. Dobromilsky stated this issued was recently brought to the Township Land Use and Engineer's attention as well and is actively being reviewed and addressed to determine a solution. A. Mandel announced that WWT has approved the purchase of their first electric vehicle which will be a Ford Econoline van. The vehicle will be primarily used by the Buildings and Grounds department to transport their employees and equipment to various locations as needed. D. Dobromilsky reported the township project which included installation of solar lighting at the walkway between Carlton Place and Berkshire Drive was recently completed and all lights are functional.

Solar Lighting – H. Shankar was unable to attend the meeting. E. Buhks reported he was recently made aware of a mobile solar power station at the Mercer County tennis courts which is set up to provide illumination on an as needed basis. The battery powered unit can be connected to a vehicle and moved to various locations as identified when solar powered illumination is needed. He reached out to the Mercer County coalition to gather additional information and offered to share it with D. Dobromilsky and EC members to determine if this type of unit could be utilized within WWT as a solution to any existing or future issues. He suggested inviting a representative from the vendor to attend a future EC meeting and give a presentation on their products and services.

Recycling – I. Singh reported that he has continued to work with local students on recycling concerns and promotions and would like to arrange a presentation on their findings at an upcoming EC meeting. D. Dobromilsky asked him to provide a brief overview of the topic and he would incorporate it on an upcoming meeting agenda.

Fireworks Environmental Considerations – There was a brief discussion to review previous information gathered and provided on the ongoing concerns pertaining to the environmental impact of fireworks displays. D. Dobromilsky reported he had recently come across videos showing the use of laser light shows as an alternative to traditional fireworks as well as the utilization of drones being incorporated within fireworks shows. I. Singh state he will conduct some additional research into these environmental alternatives and report back with his findings at a future meeting.

Community Day – There was additional discussion on the appropriateness of incorporating and providing the face painting services of HGG at Community Day 2023. Many EC members supported the idea and stated the importance of having an interactive service to encourage attendance at the table and the importance of encouraging the plants being promoted by them are ensured to be environmentally friendly. D. Dobromilsky will contact them and ask H. Shankar to coordinate with any logistics such as parental permission or required paperwork if needed for participation in the event. A discussion ensued to determine if EC members would prefer one or two shifts to cover the timeframe and allow members to volunteer to cover the tables during the event. D. Dobromilsky will circulate information with two shifts for EC members to sign up to volunteer as available.

Motion to adjourn by L. Katz, seconded by S. Parratt. Meeting was adjourned at 9:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary
WWT Environmental Commission