

# WWT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

December 14, 2023

The December 2023 meeting of the WWT Environmental Commission was held on Thursday, December 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; E. Gordon; L. Katz; S. Parratt; I. Singh; H. Shankar  
Liaison: D. Dobromilsky Advisor: D. Parris; Council Liaison: Andrea Mandel, WWT Council President  
Guests: I. Levy, student

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – I. Levy, introduced herself to the EC members and expressed her interest in becoming a student advisor for the WWT EC. She has an ongoing interest in environmental issues, currently volunteers with the Watershed Institute, is enrolled in an AP Environmental Science course and is a co-officer of the student-run Green Team/Environmental Club at her school. After some additional questions and discussion with EC members, E. Buhks thanked I. Levy for attending the meeting and communicating her desire to be a student advisor. He stated any EC membership applications and requests are forwarded to the township mayor's office as he is the one to determine all appointments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** May 11, 2023 S. Parratt motioned; L. Katz seconded;  
Minutes were approved as presented.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS: Project Review/Update

**Community Park Gardens and Meadow** – S. Parratt gave an update on the rain garden stating that after recent heavy rainfall, the pathway remained dry and free from overflow proving the garden is continuing to perform as intended. Planned maintenance for the spring includes clearing leaves from both gardens, edging to prevent grass encroachment, pruning some of the aggressive-growth plants, replacing current signage with a more waterproof laminate version and adding mulch to both the gardens and nearby trees. D. Dobromilsky offered to gather cost and availability options to purchase commercial-grade waterproof signage. S. Parratt expressed he hopes to plant an additional fifteen (15) Eastern Red Cedar trees along the skate park fence, enhance the rain garden website, and install the bench along the path as discussed at a previous meeting. He is continuing to plan and work on the implementation of the additional project to install the meadow and paths at the Community Park. Additional comments and discussion were had regarding the potential to involve various volunteer groups or scouts in the planning and implementation stages of these projects. S. Parratt offered to develop a preliminary timeline and scope of work and discuss it with D. Dobromilsky, as well as other EC members, to determine the feasibility and availability to incorporate the involvement of other groups and volunteers.

**Planning Board** – A. Baig was unable to attend the meeting. D. Dobromilsky confirmed the final version of the Conservation Plan Element of the West Windsor Master Plan was approved in November. Application PB22-02 ER/UDC West Windsor LLC was presented at the December 14, 2023 meeting, which consists of the installation of a QuickChek convenience store with fuel pumps located at the corner of Princeton-Hightstown and Southfield Roads and McGetrick Lane, across from McCaffrey's as well as a preliminary proposal to include a 4,541-s.f. restaurant with drive-thru service. At the time of presentation, the tenant of the proposed restaurant is unknown. There are variances requested for signage and loading space and design exceptions for parking, access design and related relief. The hearing for the application is continued to the PB meeting on February 7, 2024. Application PB23-09 Market Fair – South End Improvements is scheduled for the December 20, 2023 PB meeting. The application consists of replacing the current EMS sporting goods store with a new

restaurant and seeks minor site plan approval with waivers for updates to the south end of the MarketFair mall including a new mall entrance and a new restaurant entrance both with signage. D. Dobromilsky briefly reviewed the various steps, timeline and approval process for PB applications as requested by E. Buhks.

Township Council Update – S. Gawas was unable to attend the meeting. A. Mandel, Council President, reported that the Health Department received approval to purchase the township's second EV. The fully electric Ford SUV will replace a gas-powered Jeep SUV which has recently become unreliable for the township to maintain. There was a lengthy discussion regarding pedestrian safety after a recent vehicle accident resulted in the tragic death of a minor resident. A. Mandel stated the topic is being reviewed and addressed by several departments and individuals within the township to identify current deficiencies and if improvements are necessary. Pedestrian safety improvements can include various solutions such as increased education for pedestrians and motorists, installation and maintenance of proper crosswalks and signage, potential visibility improvements, and ensuring street lighting is properly maintained or reported to utility companies as needed. E. Buhks extended sympathy and condolences to the families and individuals involved in the incident on behalf of the Environmental Commission. S. Parratt mentioned a recent newspaper article that analyzed pedestrian safety in the United States compared to other countries and identified a large component of the increase in the number of instances documented within the last decade to the use of technological devices and the distraction they cause.

Solar Energy – H. Shankar asked who would be the best point of contact in the township for the solar lighting project located on Carlton Place behind Walgreens. D. Dobromilsky advised that she should contact Assistant Engineer J. Taylor to obtain additional information on the recently completed project.

Community Solar Update – L. Katz gave a update on the Community Solar Project being made a permanent project by New Jersey BPU. The bidding process was opened for 2024 for developers to bid on 225 megawatts of solar power. Within three weeks of the bidding being opened, 300 developers expressed interest in over 300 megawatts of solar power. Due to the large demand, the BPU has already begun to work on the development of projects for 2025.

Recycling Project – I. Singh stated he is nearly finished gathering information and finalizing his presentation and would be prepared to present it at a future EC meeting. D. Dobromilsky confirmed he would incorporate it into an upcoming meeting agenda.

#### NEW BUSINESS: Update on New Science Developments

E. Gordon gave a presentation on recent studies indicating a mutant protein within our chromosomes that makes certain individuals more susceptible to high cholesterol. A proposed solution involves injecting an engineered RNA-based protein into the individual which internally identifies the chromosome and alters it to immobilize the production of the mutant protein. As the study and treatment are still in clinical trials there is ongoing discussion that, if proven successful, how this same type of treatment could be utilized to target and treat other various chromosomal abnormalities.

E. Buhks shared and discussed an article he had recently read in the November 2023 issue of Chemical Engineering News regarding increasing polyester recycling. Eastman Chemical company is starting a new recycling plant to take in materials that mechanical recyclers avoid such as polyester clothing and carpet fibers, green and brown-tinted PET bottles, and food packaging. This would allow improved recycling systems to capture more of the objects we use and depolymerize PET into raw materials that can be turned into reusable items such as polyester fibers that can be incorporated into fabrics for use in clothing materials. This could allow for an increase in consumer involvement and efficiency in the recycling process.

E. Buhks shared information he had recently found regarding concerns and the current ability to recycle lithium-ion batteries. Recent studies have continued to show that lithium-ion batteries, such as those used in electric vehicles, have a longer lifetime expectancy. Although it may not be an immediate concern, it is encouraging to see the industry is currently focusing on the issue and the development of recycling procedures implemented to address the future demand.

D. Dobromilsky stated that Arbor Day will be scheduled for April 20, 2024, in coordination with the Shade Tree Commission.

D. Dobromilsky reported the recent Stormwater regulation changes from the State have required the township to update the Tree Ordinance for the community, specifically regarding tree removal. Single-family residences have been exempt from obtaining tree removal permits in the past. However, these new regulations will require extensive revisions to the permit process and will now require permit applications to be obtained by all property owners as well as incorporating specific replacement requirements depending on the number and size of trees being removed. If a replacement tree cannot be placed on the owner's property a fee would be collected by the municipality to plant a replacement in an alternative location. The ordinance will be under review and development by the Shade Tree Commission and township staff and has a deadline to be officially adopted by May 1, 2024. He will provide updates to the EC as the process continues.

E. Buhks stated E. Gordon proposed changing the start time of the EC meetings from 7:30pm to 7:00pm. After some discussion, all EC members were in favor of changing the start time for the meetings to 7:00 pm beginning in 2024.

Motion to adjourn by S. Parratt, seconded by I. Singh. Meeting was adjourned at 9:13pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Samantha Tomaro, Administrative Secretary  
WWT Environmental Commission