

## February 2021 Roxbury Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup> 2021; Virtual Zoom Meeting

Meeting started: 7:00 PM

Commissioner Attendance: F. Hall (Council Liaison), L. Darling, J. Vitiello, T. Fragale (meeting minutes), S. Ricucci, and A. Gale.

Absent: Bill Beckendorf

Members of the Public in Attendance: Andrea Van Bonschoten, Christine Smyth, Clint Robinson, Lisa Luciano, Ann Mauro, Molly Riley (NJ League of Conservation Voters)

### ***Pledge of Allegiance***

Ms. Vitiello began the meeting giving us an update on mail received; included: ANJEC annual fee invoice; a wetland permit authorization; Hercules notice to establish wetland markers; the Tidelands Newsletter; and garden registrations which have been forwarded to the recreation department. She also made note about the RHA Stream Cleanup in April which will have limited attendance (25 people per location). Additionally, Ms. Vitiello announced that Ms. A. Gale has volunteer to be the new garden manager; requested a vote. T. Fragale motioned to name A. Gale as the garden manager; S. Ricucci seconded the motion; all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

### **Members of the Public**

Members of the public were recognized in attendance; gardeners and interested members of the public.

- C. Robinson brought multiple issues/concerns to the table as follows:
  - *Native Plants.* Mr. Robinson noted that the Township has removed numerous native trees/plants from the parks. Questioned if there was any plan to replant native plants. F. Hall indicated that a replanting plan is in progress, specifically for Horseshoe Lake at this time. An estimated 20-30 new trees are planned for planting along the back of the park. F. Hall requested that the Env. Commission make recommendations of native species for consideration. Mr. Robinson indicated he would share a list of species suggestions.
  - *BioBlitz.* Citizens post species around the area; once posted, the Env. Commission/Township can view the listings to see what is in ground around town. This may help identification of areas in need of work, heritage trees, etc. J. Vitiello inquired if there have been any tree surveys completed in town. F. Hall indicated that surveys along the streets have been done, but not much elsewhere. Most of the survey work was in relation to limbs falling on power lines. F. Hall noted that the Township has a fund for tree replacement. S. Ricucci suggested Red Oak, Red Maple; cultivars that are disease resistant, etc. He noted that there are certainly invasive species in Town (Japanese Knotweed, Barberry, Phragmites). Mr. Robinson noted that the Northern Red Oak is the

largest supporter of caterpillars, which in turn, supports the birds; this tree is a great candidate for replanting, along with the Wild Cherry. A. Mauro also inquired about a tree inventory. She indicated that the State Forestry Program may be a good resource to use for species identification. She asked what age are the trees the Township is looking at replanting and noted that different stages of trees have different soil requirements; testing may be needed. F. Hall responded that the inventories have been primarily along the roadways, but that he would check with the Township Planner (R. Stern) to see if there has been any other work done. F. Hall indicated that the types of trees to be planted at Horseshoe Lake have not yet been decided one and that if soil testing is needed, it will be completed. Discussion was had about the cherry blossom trees at Horseshoe Lake; C. Robinson noted that the Chinese Chery Blossoms are not native. T. Fragale asked F. Hall to request that all tree plans/species lists be shared with the Env. Commission for review/comment prior to implementation of a planting program.

- Molly Riley of the NJ League of Conservation Voters noted that she came to the meeting to say hello and introduce herself. She noted that her organization can be used by environmental commissions as a resource for water and stormwater related issues. They also run the Flood Defense Coalition which works with ANJEC, Highlands Commission, Pinelands Commission, etc.)

#### **Administrative - Budget**

Tricia- No update. Waiting on formal approval of budget. ANJEC dues to be paid.

#### **Matters Presented by the Commissioners**

J. Vitiello inquired if there was any news regarding Suckasunny Day happening for 2021. F. Hall indicated that the Township is taking things one day at a time. Annual Egg Hunt is the next hurdle...things are fluid; hoping it will get better and easier to host activities as more people get their vaccinations.

T. Fragale noted that several fire hydrants are still covered. Understands that Township is working hard at making them accessible. Suggested an adopt—hydrant program or request residents with plows to help. J. Vitiello noted that the Township cleared the hydrant at her house. A. Mauro inquired why some hydrants have flags and others don't. J. Vitiello indicated that the flags are expensive. F. Hall indicated that some areas have flags and others are marked on the street, but he would like to propose that they are all flagged.

T. Fragale inquired about ice skating/hockey areas in town; why there are no Township-monitoring skating ponds. F. Hall indicated that he often skates on Conklin Pond, but noted that Township maintained skating areas are a huge liability issue. He noted that in the past, the recreation department had flooded the volleyball courts at Horseshoe Lake to creating a hockey pond. T. Fragale inquired about synthetic ice rinks at the parks. F. Hall said he would look into it, but it may be very expensive. T. Fragale suggested that the Township consider removing metal and wood that protrudes from LedgeWood Pond to prevent possible injuries to skaters/ice fisherman.

J. Vitiello indicated that the Trails Committee is still seeking to build some kind of bridge over the stream that feeds Ledgewood Pond. She would like the Env. Commissioner to issue a letter response as to why we don't think a permanent bridge should be built. F. Hall asked why we wouldn't want a bridge here; he noted that the Trails Committee is trying to link the trail at Ledgewood Park to the Morris Greenway. S. Ricucci noted that building a bridge would require a general permit, application, plans, etc. that would likely cost thousands of dollars. Noted it's doable, but expensive. J. Vitiello noted that our stream sampling point is downgradient of the proposed bridge location and the stream, which is designated as C-1, has been recovering. F. Hall noted that someone came to council with plans for the entire trail and that council was ok with moving forward with their plan and engineering work. He noted that they were hiring Dennis Kennan of French & Parillo to look to evaluate the system they proposed. J. Vitiello asked S. Ricucci to draft a response letter and provide to the commissioners for review/comment.

### **Planning Board**

Nothing to report currently.

Fenimore – F. Hall- No update as of now. Will investigate any developments with Township Manager.

### **Ongoing Matters/Projects**

Succasunny Day 2021; pending decision by town as Corona virus numbers change and people are vaccinated. Ideas of the EC table will be needed if the event happens.

Stream monitoring for 2021 results; Commission will sponsor streams LB01 - Ledgewood Stream and FB01 - Flanders Brook.

RHA Stream Cleanup scheduled for April 17 (9a-12pm). Due to COVID regulations, only 25 participants will be allowed at each cleanup site. J. Vitiello inquired if we would like to host a second site. If so, who would be the coordinator. T. Fragale indicated that the RHS Environmental Club may be interested in working with us on the stream cleanup; perhaps they could co-host the second site.

### **Public Outreach**

Spotted lantern fly education; 3 signs are in the shed at Horseshoe Lake; Brett pulled them in with others to prevent them from getting damaged in the winter months. Other signs will be placed back out in the parks once the snow is gone and spring breaks. An educational piece should be sent to the newspaper.

T. Fragale reached out to the RHS Environmental Club advisors to re-connect and see how we might be able to work with the kids more. The Env. Commission has been invited to attend their next meeting; T. Fragale will attend the Google Meet on Feb. 17.

- Andrea Van Bonschoten suggested T. Fragale discuss the “Trout in the Classroom” program to the RHS Environmental Club when speaking with them. T. Fragale noted that the program has run at Lincoln/Roosevelt in the past.

### **Garden/Apiary Matters**

New Garden Manager - A. Gale.

J. Vitiello asked A. Gale to prepare an introduction/announcement letter to send out to gardeners.

Andrea Van Bonschoten thanked A. Gale for taking on the garden manager role. Spoke about discussing the “Trout in the Classroom” program to the RHS Environmental Club when T. Fragale meets with them.

Owl boxes need to be hung.

### **For Discussion Next Month:**

Upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Motion to adjourn 8:23 PM by T. Fragale; Seconded by S. Ricucci.

Next Meeting: March 11, 2021, 7pm via Zoom