

**STILLWATER TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

April 8, 2024

**Regular Meeting
In-Person/Zoom**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Branagan, Mr. Szabo, Mrs. Tracey, Ms. Wills, Mr. Dvorsky, Ms. Coriston

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mrs. Emmetts, Dr. Mattes

*Mrs. Emmetts attempted to attend the meeting by Zoom but was unable to do so due to technical difficulties and disconnected from the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Chairperson Coriston called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. with the statement that this meeting is in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. This was a regular meeting of the Stillwater Township Environmental Commission. Regular meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Stillwater Township Municipal Building located in Middletown, New Jersey unless noticed or it is a legal holiday.

The flag was saluted and roll call taken.

Minutes

Mr. Branagan made a **motion** to approve the minutes of February 15, 2024, seconded by Ms. Coriston.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Branagan, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Mr. Dvorsky, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

The minutes of March 11, 2024, were tabled until the next meeting due to the absence of eligible voting members.

Bills

Mrs. Tracey made a **motion** to approve the following bill, pending availability of funds, seconded by Ms. Wills:

Secretary: \$255.00

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Branagan, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Wills, yes, Mr. Dvorsky, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

At this point, this portion of the meeting was opened to the public at 7:07 p.m.

Presentation:

Christine Dunbar, Paulins Kill Watershed Coordinator/Foodshed Alliance was present to provide an overview of several topics pertaining to the Paulins Kill River. She distributed brochures entitled "Welcome to the Paulins Kill Watershed," which included a full map of the watershed area. Ms. Dunbar introduced **David deWit, Program Assistant, Paulins Kill Watershed.**

Ms. Dunbar and Mr. deWit discussed the following:

Paulins Kill River Watchers Needed: Volunteers are needed to ensure the health of the waters improve, swimmable surface waters, safe water recreation and native fish that you can catch.

Water Quality Testing: Current watershed monitoring locations were depicted on a map and two potential locations included Veterans Memorial Park site in Stillwater and one in Frelinghuysen.

Floodplain Forestry: Volunteering with a team to care for trees planted to create wildlife habitat, shade water and prevent erosion, while learning about riparian ecology.

River Friendly Farms: Certification is available for farms, a free program rewarding farmers for being good stewards of their land and the watershed. Ms. Dunbar noted she is not having much luck with this program or connecting with local farmers. They are very hesitant and there is a trust factor present. Free advice is provided, and it is confidential. Ms. Coriston suggested placing flyers at the Cooperative Extension. Ms. Dunbar stated she has been in contact with County Planner Autumn Sylvester and is working with Jack DeGroot, County Commissioner.

NJDEP Road Salt Study: Four measurements taken in Stillwater, there was a slight increase. Even without snow or cold weather, salt accumulates in soil and water. Swartswood Road measured 92 parts

per million – with 230 ppm being critical. Samples are sent to the Water Institute for total analysis and a final report can be found on their website.

Paulins Kill Watershed Clean Ups: The Foodshed Alliance will provide supplies and assist with planning a clean up event. A very successful event was recently held in Hampton on Junction Road with over 300 pounds of recyclables and trash collected. Please contact Ms. Dunbar if there is a need for a local cleanup.

Other items mentioned included:

-May 11th Blair Creek Preserve removal of invasives in conjunction with Ridge and Valley and the YMCA.

-Education programs at Sunrise Mountain, Hyper Humus, Swartswood and Kittle Field in Stokes State Forest for critter catching. Mr. deWit is also working with the Science Department at Sparta High School putting together a package with activities and studying in their own backyard. He assisted with helping the NJ School of Conservation get back on its feet.

-Spring Cleanup and Bike Ride was held in Hampton on April 6th.

-Forestry Program: 35,000 trees have been planted and volunteers are needed to take care of them.

-Paulins Kill Watershed waters are trout producing and trout sustaining which is unique to the state of New Jersey.

-Development pressures are increasing.

Foodshed Alliance: Nourishes people, supports farmers and respects the earth. Strengthens sustainable and regenerative farming, increases access to local and healthy food and protects the environment for all members of the community.

Watershed Stewardship Plan for the Paulins Kill River: At this point in the presentation, Ms. Dunbar provided an overview of the Watershed Stewardship Plan and Wild and Scenic designation process. It provides guidance regarding how to best proceed in the restoration and protection of the entire Paulins Kill River Watershed. The designation would also make funding opportunities possible. The Musconetcong River has completed the Wild and Scenic designation process and now enjoys positive social, economic and environmental outcomes daily. Ms. Dunbar would like to attend a future meeting to discuss the plan in further detail as main stakeholders (towns) need to want this for it to move forward.

Items being requested:

-Adopt a letter of support (samples provided)

-Select an EC contact person

-Help to build community knowledge and support by encouraging participation in the stewardship activities listed in the brochure provided.

-Adopt a resolution of support for the Wild and Scenic River designation.

-Volunteer

Ms. Dunbar will email a PDF background and presentation to Mrs. Wunder for the EC. It will benefit everyone to have a stewardship plan. Mr. Szabo asked if there would be any limitations on such things as hunting, fishing, trapping, etc. Mr. deWit stated the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Act references rivers running through privately owned properties with no effect on zoning. Ms. Coriston stated she would need to know how the designation would affect landowners in Stillwater before considering a letter of support. Mr. deWit and Ms. Dunbar would provide information addressing their concerns during the presentation. It was agreed the presentation would be provided to the EC at their May 13, 2024, meeting. Mayor Chamings would then report back to the Township Committee and inquire if they would be interested in having Ms. Dunbar and Mr. deWit appear before them. The EC thanked Mr. deWit and Ms. Dunbar for their time and presentation and look forward to hearing from them at the May meeting.

Dr. Bob Lippencott briefly addressed an email he sent to the Planning Board Secretary, copied to the EC, indicating there was an inconsistency on the site survey the EC submitted for 907 Saddleback Road. The site survey indicated wetlands are not present, but the NJDEP GeoWeb indicates wetlands exist at the premises, in addition to T&E Species habitat and sightings both terrestrial and aquatic in the Paulins Kill. Also, the report indicates no recharge areas are present, but the NJDEP GeoWeb indicates portions of the property recharge groundwater at maximum rates (16 to 23 in/yr). The EC acknowledged the

information provided by Dr. Lippencott and he agreed to show Mr. Branagan and Mr. Szabo how the NJDEP GeoWeb is accessed for information such as this when conducting site survey inspections.

There being no further members of the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 7:50 p.m.

Correspondence:

-Email recv'd 3/19/24 from Christine Dunbar, re: April 6th Spring Cleanup and Bike Ride in Hampton, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

-Email recv'd 3/19/24 from Christine Dunbar, re: NJDEP/Watershed Institute water quality sampling at three Paulins Kill Watershed locations

-May 5th Water Safety Fair, 1:30-4:30 p.m. Fairview Lake YMCA, sponsored by the Stillwater Recreation Commission

-NJDEP Application Notice recv'd 4/8/24: 927 Hardwick Road application to repair a septic system which may be located in the wetland/transition area

Old Business

TREX Program Update:

Ms. Coriston reported that 420 pounds have been collected to date, with a goal of 1,000 pounds by the end of November. There was a large collection from town hall this week. She is proud of the community for coming together on this project.

Stream Water Study Subcommittee:

Dr. Lippencott reported the analysis is progressing and he should have a final report by June. He thanked Mr. Szabo and Mrs. Wunder for their assistance with obtaining prior testing results that he needed to review with respect to a difference in the last analysis.

Fishing Line Collection:

Opening day of trout season was April 6th. The water level was very high and moving fast. From this point, fishing line collection will increase. All lines are to be cleaned of litter/leaves, hooks and lead sinkers. Lead sinkers are to be provided at the meeting for recycling.

2023 Annual Report:

Mr. Szabo noted that after reviewing the 2023 Annual EC Report, he realized the action of members submitting environmental articles throughout the year was not included in the report. He felt this was important and although they were included in the minutes they should also be recognized in the report.

New Business

Site Surveys:

Stillwater Farms LLC, 999 Stillwater Road, Block 2401, Lot 19.07, to construct a 4800 sq. ft. pole barn.

Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to accept the site survey, seconded by Mr. Branagan.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Branagan, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Wills, yes, Mr. Dvorsky, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

The Nature Conservancy, 907 Saddleback Road, Block 3501, Lot 2.01, to construct a gravel parking area.

Mr. Branagan made a **motion** to accept the site survey, seconded by Mr. Szabo, acknowledging the email from Mr. Lippencott during the first Open Public Session.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Branagan, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Wills, yes, Mr. Dvorsky, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

Volunteer/Member Recognition:

-Mr. Branagan, Mr. Szabo and Dr. Mattes for conducting the site surveys.

-Dr. Lippencott for his work with respect to the 2018 and 2020 stream water testing reports and Mr. Szabo and Mrs. Wunder for their assistance in obtaining the reports.

Stream Water Testing 2024:

Mr. Branagan stated testing would normally be conducted in the fall of this year and he asked Dr. Lippencott if the EC should move forward with doing so. Mr. Lippencott responded that the final report will include recommendations for the testing such as parameters, testing timing, a more focused study, etc. He recommended not testing for ammonia in the future as there has been sufficient testing done and there have been no issues. He will be prepared to present his report in the next few months.

Mr. Dvorsky spoke about several agencies including the NJDEP, the Nature Conservancy and the Paulins Kill Watershed that have done water testing on the same sites tested by the EC. He asked about addressing this issue, consolidating the testing and who would take the lead. Dr. Lippencott will be looking into aggregating and consolidating the data, and this will be part of his presentation. He will be addressing state data in his report with respect to this matter.

Endangered and Threatened Species:

- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Bobcats

At this point, this portion of the meeting was opened to the public at 8:36 p.m.

There being no members of the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 8:36 p.m.

Planning Board (PB) Liaison Report: Ms. Wills

-A discussion was held with respect to becoming a more proactive board and more discussions will be taking place in the future with respect to this topic.

Township Liaison Report: Mayor Chamblings

3/19/24 Township Committee Meeting:

- The 2024 Budget was introduced.
- Capital items included paving Veterans Memorial Park (VMP) in the QP area and resurfacing the tennis courts at Stillwater Park, possibly making them into a pickle ball court depending on future grant funding.
- Grants applied for included local recreation, AARP, Teen Mobile and a LEAP grant with the County for Community Center programs.
- Four township owned property sales will be held in June.
- Two disabled veterans tax exemptions were approved.
- The Open Space Recreation Plan update was awarded to Jessica Caldwell.
- Flooding on West End Drive is an ongoing issue with public discussion and resident concerns.

4/2/24 Township Committee Meeting:

- Pinwheels planted for Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Sandy Hull will attend a May TC meeting to provide a presentation on the proposed Delaware Water Gap redesignation.
- Agendas and notices will be posted on the board located outside the meeting room on an ongoing basis.
- Crandon Lakes dam has been repaired and the lake can be refilled.
- Boardside Productions concluded their movie on Old Schoolhouse Road.
- Pink flags displayed on local trees indicate those trees to be trimmed by Nelson Trees.
- Free electronics recycling will be held at SCMUA on Saturday, April 13th from 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Stillwater will hold a shredding event on April 20th from 9 a.m.-noon in conjunction with Clean Up Day.

ANJEC 2024 Spring Report:

Mr. Szabo asked the EC to review the report.

ANJEC will hold an in-person seminar entitled “Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions,” on Saturday, April 13, 2024, in Somerville.

Mayor Chamings reported the Harmony Hill Church is collecting solar glasses to be sent to South America for the next eclipse.

With no further business to come before the Commission, Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m., seconded by Mr. Branagan. In a voice vote, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wunder, Secretary