

VOORHEES TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
MAY 14, 2013

The Chairperson called the meeting order. It was stated that this meeting is being held in compliance with the "Open Public Meetings Act and has been duly published and noticed as required by law."

FLAG SALUTE:

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Hale, Mrs. Schwartz, Mrs. Atkinson, Mr. Wu, Mrs. Brown, Mr. Garbowski,

Absent: Mr. Rashatwar, Mr. Gaffney, Mr. Belson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mrs. Schwartz made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2013 meeting as distributed; seconded by Mrs. Brown. The remaining present board members were all in favor.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES:

SUSTAINABLE VOORHEES – Mrs. Schwartz advised everything was progressing really well. She wanted to thank Ed Hale who has done all of the bureaucratic work getting all the documents together. She also advised that Ed gave a review of the Sustainable Jersey certification process. At that time at the meeting we said there were 155 points which are completed for submission. Mr. Hale advised there are now 175 points. He went onto say there are two more actions that require memos from the town, which he'll work on this week. Then there is the NRI, which is being completed, the money was approved for that. Then there is the OSRP, our acquisition racking list – both of those will have to be approved by the Planning Board and added to the Master Plan. They will not be ready before our first submission but we will be able to have it done before the final deadline in October. Mr. Hale anticipates they will submit 235 points and probably have 225 of them accepted which leave 125 points to silver of which Rhonda Erkwitz of Cross County Connection has 35 points for us toward silver. Within the next 12-18 months we should be silver. Mrs. Schwartz advised that we really had to thank Mr. Hale as he was the one who has been pro-active and working directly with Township Committee and using all of his connections.

Mrs. Schwartz went on to say they came up with a logo with the help of a graphic designer from Cross County Connection. It ties in with the Township logo. The three pillars, the three leaves is representative of the three pillars of sustainability which is community, environment, and economy. The green is for the plants, blue for water, brown for the earth and we're all pretty happy with it. There is also a mission statement which is on the Sustainable Voorhees website. There was also a speaker Terrance Smith. They're trying to organize some clean up events on the North and South branches of Cooper River. We're also thinking of turning that into some environmental education and get some groups involved. The NRI is one of the priority actions. She also advised that the Township Committee asked the Commission to take this on, to get the town certified. At that time they had asked her to be Chairman and she said at that point and time she would like to co-chair. She didn't feel we were getting as much input as we really require. She advised she felt that we needed someone more engaged in the community, has a little bit more of a cheerleader kind of personality who's willing to really branch out to

all the organizations in town. She asked the Commission if they knew of anyone that might be a good candidate then to please keep it in mind.

Mrs. Schwartz then went on to talk about the Green Fair. It was held on Voorhees Environmental Park on 4/21/13. There wasn't much planning in advance but it was a really good turnout for an initial fair. They should be applauded for getting that done. For next year, what we're thinking is let's partner with them – as the Commission, as Sustainable Jersey, and hopefully a few other groups within the town. Mrs. Brown asked if she thought it would make sense to do it the same time the Township has theirs. Mrs. Schwartz said the only thing with that is that it's right next to Earth Day. She felt that maybe next year we make this more of a community wide event with these organizations and the Township would be thrilled to have something done like that. It's so early and we really need to think about if we were going to do it, we need an event that draws in the public like that kite flying event. We have to see it as an education opportunity – what do we want to passively teach to the people who would be there. Mrs. Brown felt that was great but also that we should have a table set up at the Township Fair – even if we don't man it.

Mr. Hale advised the Committee that he was approached by someone in Public Works. They wanted us to investigate the use of plastic bags for picking up leaves and grasses. Right now the Township ordinance allows people to use bags. Once you miss the cutoff for having them right at the street, they don't require you to have them in trash cans with lids. You can actually have as many plastic bags as you want out. Then they have these guys that come out and slit the bags – or what's worse than that, they'll send a trash truck and the disposal fee goes from \$12 to \$52 each time because you can't send leaves in a bag to the landfill. They would rather see us switch to a paper bag but we'd just be shifting the environmental impact from plastics to paper. He was asked to do a little research on just plastic bags and when he started looking through some of the stuff, it's incredible. They use 100 billion plastic shopping bags in the United States every year and 8 of those bags contains enough gas to send a car a kilometer. Also, plastics don't biodegrade – they photo degrade but they just keep breaking into smaller particles. He gathered a bunch of facts for him and then went over the ordinance we already have. Mr. Hale handed out a copy of the ordinance and explained that what was struck through was what it originally said and the things that are in bold italics basically say use a trash can instead of a bag. That way they can just pour it into the truck. Also, trash cans they can put a smaller hose on the machine and come with a leaf vacuum and suck them right out of the can instead of slitting every bag. Mrs. Atkinson asked about twigs and clippings. She went online and our website states they're not supposed to be in a can, they're supposed to be bundled by the sidewalk. She just wanted to say she thought we had to be clear when communicating about the trash cans. Mr. Hale then advised he just wanted everyone's thoughts on the matter as this person wants it to come from either Sustainable Voorhees or the Environmental Commission. He prefers it come from the Environmental Commission.

Mrs. Schwartz stated whatever would be decided would have to get out to everybody. The best time to do that is with the annual tax bill as a letter as it's the one time you know you're going to get everybody in town except renters. She also felt it was tough and asked if anyone knew how it worked in other similar towns. Mr. Hale advised a lot of other towns are making the mistake of taxing or banning plastic bags. Mrs. Schwartz then stated she has a gardener and he basically blows the leaves into the street. She'd say probably 80% of the homes have their leaves curbside before the collection dates. What is seen after the collection dates are plastic bags. So the problem is the cans because these are people who are putting out 20 bags a piece and they don't have 20 garbage cans. Mrs. Atkinson advised she was more intrigued by the economic side of this rather than the environmental side. Mr. Hale then explained that what they did in Berlin was if you put something out in a trash can or if your trash can

weighs over a certain amount they red tag it. Then if they come back the next day and the red tag's there, you get a citation. He then stated he wanted everyone to look at the handouts and email any thoughts to him and he will ask Joe Lovallo to attend the next meeting. Mrs. Schwartz stated she thought it may be a good idea to take a trip to a sorting station to see the process and understand exactly how it all works so they could better educate the community.

Mr. Hale then advised the Commission that they managed to get \$6,000.00 from Township Committee so they could finally get an NRI. He then turned it over to Joe Giddings for an update. Mr. Giddings then went through all the maps that he had on the overhead TV's and explained each one to the Commission and asked for suggestions as he went along. Mr. Hale had to caution the Commission that we had to watch our budget. He stated that CME was gracious enough to lower their fee and his prime concern at this point is that we cover ANJAC requirements. It would be great to have additional things if we could afford them, but if CME runs short, he'd like make sure the bases are covered. Mr. Hale then wanted to thank Joe for his time and hard work.

Mr. Hale then asked for any other comments from the board. As there were none, he opened the meeting to the public. Seeing no public, a motion was made and seconded to close public portion and then to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Merkh
VEC Secretary