



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

**Via Village Webex Link:
Dial 1296808032@southorange.webex.com**

Thurs. February 24, 2022 from 7:30pm – 9:30pm

Adequate notice given to the public

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

ATTENDANCE Linda BECK (Chairperson), Bill HASKINS**, Karen Hilton**, Richard BELL* (Secretary), Barbara BOUR*, Robert ORGERA*, Jessica MILLER, Larry HIRSCH*, Lorraine GRAVES*, Andy STONE, Michael PARLAPIANO, Olivia LEWIS-CHANG***, Julia FLATH, Ilisia KISSNER, Beau SCHWEGMAN, Jenny AYLWARD, Isaac BEARG *=Commissioner, **=Trustee, ***=Alternate

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2021 MINUTES - APPROVED (with one minor edit by Walter Clarke)

1. POLICY UPDATES -

(Next BOT meeting: March 14th)

Leaf Blower Ordinance – changes to proposal - Linda notes that the times we put in there are placeholder times, so we are waiting for admin to get back to us with times that align. DPW sounds enthusiastic about electric blower possibilities. As long as we can make sure they can have electric equipment, they will hopefully be able to retire gas equipment, depending on funding. Regarding fines - they are aligned with MW ordinance and consistent with S4273 in NJ Senate. Education of landscapers has actually been done by MW, and we will continue to reach out to landscapers. Education of residents is through FAQs to get education out. Linda is looking for ideas on what to include in FAQs. Enforcement: we will lose the part about "polite conduct". Clyde (atty) will advise. Linda has updated the FAQ to say that changes are being made.

Linda sought input on the changes to the ordinance. What time on Saturday and Sunday for windows to use blowers? Larry asked a question about times: are they throughout the year? Linda: yes, this would be the windows of time for when you can use a leaf blower. She wanted to know if 10-2 on Saturdays and Sundays are ok. Ilisia Kissner asked whether it was only on weekends. Answer was yes. Beau Schwegman noted that restricting the time on the weekends mostly restricts the residents, not the landscapers. It puts a lot of restriction on the residents instead of quieting the commercial use. Walter noted that we are not targeting commercial landscapers but that it is just noise we are targeting. Beau felt that it was a short window for residents and that there needs to be a balance. He understands that there has to be restrictions, but they need to be reasonable. Larry notes that he doesn't want the hours to be early. Michael notes that decibel level can be considered - commercial leaf blowers are very high. Linda notes that they looked into it. Iliisa says that she has used a decibel meter to

measure the noise levels. Regarding fines, Linda asked what we thought. She will keep them the same as MW. Regarding the other points, Linda went over everything and asked if we were ok with the changes. There were no objections. Larry asked a question about what is banned. Linda noted that electric blowers will not be banned. Rob Orgera asked what the hours are being proposed during the day for gas blower restrictions. Walter noted they are 8 am to 6 pm.

Bill noted that the changes to fines is something we should think about and also he suggested a pilot period. Walter agreed that a grace period is a good idea as long as everybody knows. It's most helpful when there is active engagement and coordination with code enforcement.

Existing Tree Protection Ordinance – proposed changes (Michael Parlapiano) - the idea is rather than trying to go for entirely new ordinance, to see if we can't tweak the existing ordinance to get improvement quickly. He has a list of 11 or 12 things that need to be done. Getting things onto the permit application will help getting things enforced. Many of the applications are incomplete and not filled out. He can send the list to anyone who wants it. He has several changes that he shared which include removing exemptions and providing an additional level of protection regarding neighboring properties, water flow, canopy, etc. There is no mention in the ordinance about how much to pay into the tree replacement fund. He wants to add language for that. Also, language to require a site inspection. Updating the current tree list is also important. Linda asked if anyone had thoughts or whether we should just move it forward. Barbara Bour moved to push it forward. Walter seconded. Michael will take the process forward. Bill totally supports all the changes and said that they can be effective really soon. He suggested that we should take it to the Village Engineer Dave Battaglia, so he can work with the administration about making these changes happening. Barbara noted that Cherry Hill had issues with tree removal. She will follow up to get more info. Rob noted that it might be good to see how the suggestions are carried through and do a markup of the ordinance. Michael agreed.

Proposed Memorial Bench and Tree policy - Linda says it is very new and came out of the Rec Committee. There are many notes and thoughts. Linda says that they have run into challenges with people trying to buy benches and trees for parks. The Village wants to get control over it to avoid different types of plaques, etc. and making sure that the right trees are being chosen. Linda wants to know what role the EC plays - how many memorial items can we fit in here with plaques? Also, they need to be maintained. Linda spoke with Pete Travers, who likes the idea of tree purchases and bench purchases, but maybe there is one location where the acknowledgements are. Linda notes that she doesn't want to see plaques everywhere.

Richard noted that he had never heard of plaque pollution for benches and wanted to know if he was missing something. Walter noted that being able to put plaques on benches is easier to do, so it may encourage having more benches than trees donated. Larry noted that in Riverside Park in NY you have to use an existing bench, not a new bench. Olivia noted that it could go into a fund as well. Richard noted that he purchased a bench this week for Farrell Field Park and that he thought there was a process in place already. Walter said that they were just trying to clean up the process. Richard agreed that a central location for acknowledging donations is a good thing, especially for those who can't afford a bench or tree. Linda notes that we will continue to look at this policy.

2. BOT/PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE - (Haskins/Hilton)

Native Plant Areas - Linda listed several spots for native plants. DPW is on board.
Electric Blower Research - DPW is feeling positive about making the switch.

Recycling Facility - Yard is being organized and they are getting a new gate and signage.
Trees - 156 new locations in Tree Plotter. Barbara notes they need to know what neighborhoods they are going to do, so they know what locations. Price of the 75 trees that DPW will plant? Linda will let them know. Don has started to grind stumps.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

4. UPDATES ON NEW and CURRENT PROJECTS, ISSUES, etc.

Founders Park Conservancy - no report

Meadowland Park Conservancy - Linda said they are working on plan for Gold Star Garden - earthy amphitheater built into the hill. Exciting stuff.

Farrell Field Park Conservancy - Richard noted the bench purchase for Rich Bruno memorial celebration on May 15th.

SOMASD - Georgia Madiba and Jenny Aylward - they are putting together a video about food and the environment with the students.

Adopt-a-Storm-Drain (Isaac Bearg) - he wanted to follow up from previous presentation. All of our storm drains were clogged with leaves - he wants to help solve the problem. Adopt a Drain is happening in other NJ towns and it really helps relieve the DPW of the burden of clearing storm drains. Software costs \$2,000 per year. It will save DPW time and money. SO would break even on the cost. Westfield has 300 drains adopted. Barbara asked if it would help if people understood what the problems are with storm drains. Isaac noted that Westfield has a website set up to explain issues - we could add an educational component to help the community understand what storm drains do. The idea is that a family would adopt the storm drain and would check in on the website and note what they did to clean it. They commit to doing regularly. All of the data is downloadable. Linda moved to go forward and Walter seconded, to pursue this idea.

Development Committee Representatives - we sent notes on 2/23/22. Vose and 2nd recommendations were given about natives trees - we asked questions about the lighting plans and the sound of the generator. They are going to do gator bags and tree guards - the big news is that three EC commissioners were at the meeting and welcomed. Rob noted that he found a draft of a document about green building, sustainability and site planning - he will start editing it to introduce into the Development Committee.

Shade Tree - Barbara - they have agreed with DPW on strategy and met last week on next steps. They need to get out and look at DPW locations, and she will get a purchase list out to get an estimate and secure dates. She thinks they are ready to go. Linda thanked them for their work. Barbara notes the good news is that Seton Hall is paying for Tree Plotter and bought the most expensive option that can generate maps for residents to be able to see what tree is in their yard. Linda suggested sending a thank you gift.

Waste Nothing - Michael Parlapiano - they are looking at pilots that show a path forward on recycling. One is to do a cardboard collection pilot - a truck downtown where people can bring cardboard - to see if people will start bringing items. Second is to look at take out food containers. Could we do something with one restaurant to buy containers for them and see if we could get a loop going with them. He has been looking at the Open Space Trust fund to

possibly fund something like this. Walter noted that the Greener to Go campaign was with Ariyoshi. He said he could reach out to them. Michael also said the Reservoir was a good candidate. Walter suggested going through Main Street group in SO. Styrofoam will be banned for takeout as of May 4th so this is a good time to talk about this. Rob noted that "somebody's got to wash the stuff". Walter said that there is an organization that takes the items and cleans them - may need a bigger footprint than restaurants. Maybe we could reach out to them (TerraCycle).

Notable Public Trees – Walter has moved forward with Hero Tree Project and has a group of noteworthy trees - Old American Sycamore by the pond in Meadowland Park is one. We want to identify a number of trees in social media and send out info about their benefits to us. It will help make people aware of the value of these trees. A rare species choice is a southern magnolia on Fairview Avenue. Common species: red maple. Many others. If this is successful we can continue to make people aware of all our amazing trees. People can even nominate trees.

River Greenway - Andy Stone - top priority is getting the big capital project going. He asked if Bill had any updates. Bill noted that Village admin and engineer had a meeting on Feb. 20th to move the project along (2 hour meeting). Good news is that it's happening this year - will start at beginning of July. Hard to say how long the project will take. Right now supply chain is tough. When we get responses to RFPs, we will know more. Andy notes connectivity is a big issue and we will be going on a Greenway walk this coming Saturday at 10 am. We will be looking at the challenges and the thinking beyond this phase to how we can hook up with people for linkages to MW. Julia Flath has an idea to have an event this spring that would help promote the Greenway either through Phase 1, 2 or 3 and draw attention to the project. Linda suggests doing it after River Day. Stay posted.

Village Solar and Climate - Rob Orgera notes Linda can give summary best. Trustee Coalier asked them look into solar options for SOPAC. This week they were able to talk to their board chair and next week they have a meeting to discuss energy savings. Hopefully they will be able to pull in Cinema Lab as well. Rob notes that this is also a pilot for what we can do with other buildings in town, especially with private owners.

Rain garden/American Water Grant - Andy Stone - we will be applying to NJAW for a rain garden between the river and SOMS parking lot. Bill notes that the Joint Meeting of Essex County engineer sent a bunch of documents and said he thought it was a good idea. Next step is to talk with Village Engineer about the location.

Squier House – Developer to meet again with Planning Board March 7 - only update right now.

5. COMMUNICATIONS - Walter & Linda

FB: 869 (up from 851) followers), IG: 317 (up from 316) followers, also Walter noted that Gaslight had great reach for us.

6. WORK DAYS - Most Sundays, 9:00 am - 11:00 pm

Linda asked Trustees if they had any updates. There were none.

7. NEXT MEETING DATE – 03/24/22 - 7:30 pm

8. ADJOURNMENT