



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

**Via Village Webex Link:
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Thurs. January 28, 2021 from 7:30pm – 9:00pm

Adequate notice given to the public

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

ATTENDANCE Bill HASKINS* (Chairperson), Walter CLARKE**, Barbara BOUR***, George FINLEY, Richard BELL* (Secretary), David KRAIKER*, Lorraine GRAVES*, Linda BECK***, Larry HIRSCH*, Rob ORGERA*, Jessica MILLER, Michael PARLAPIANO, Georgia MADIBA, Joann GAUGHRAN, Isaac BEARG, Whelan MAHONEY * = Commissioner, ** = Trustee, *** = Alternate

(Bill notes that we will be moving quickly through agenda tonight, so we can focus on the Master Plan and prepare comments for Topology - Richard, George and John have sent comments already.)

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 2020 MINUTES - APPROVED

PUBLIC COMMENTS - Jess points out that the school district is planning to put in artificial turf at Ritzer Field and nobody in the neighborhood was notified and none of them are happy about it - the entire green space is going to be eliminated and they don't think it is keeping with the Master Plan. She has shared her letter to the BOE with Bill and the neighbors have also sent letters. Two board members have written back. Everything had been delayed because of Covid. They have heard rumors about lights - can't get information. They are upset that no one has reached out to the neighbors. Bill encouraged her to keep pushing and advocating and possibly bring the students and teachers into the conversation. The block has changed a lot over the years, and the green space is important to the neighbors. Rob wants to know if we should go on record with the Maplewood Green Team in opposition to this. Bill notes that MW has started to oppose it already. The problem right now is that we do not know the details of what they are proposing. Annemarie Maini (BOE) told Jess that the Rec Departments of SO and MW were involved. Linda advises that bringing it to the BOT meeting in SO will raise awareness. Jess says she will do so. Walter notes that it was approved two years ago as part of the school re-bonding. He doesn't think they have gotten to the point yet of prioritization. Many things are not being processed quickly. He notes that the reason the Rec departments were attracted to the idea was because of the limited number of fields we have to use. He also speculates that the size of the field will probably be about the size of a soccer field. But plans are not drawn yet. Bill notes that

this issue happened with Dehart Park in MW years ago, so Jess might want to reach out to the people involved there. Also, George Finley can provide alternatives.

PROJECT UPDATES

1. Project updates

a. MSW / Recycling - The consultant RFP with Maplewood will be released on Monday and we will be looking for proposals. It's an RFP for someone to prepare a robust comprehensive solid waste plan for MW and SO. We will use the consultant's plan to deal with issues in the two towns. David Kraiker reported on Zero Waste Committee Meeting - combined with Tree Committee Meeting - not a very long meeting - talked about the RFP and collaborating with MW - it's one big step to be working with MW. The after-effect of the meeting and followup emails have been very positive - the idea was to get people out of the idea of "path dependence" on curbside recycling - we have to start now to work at the DPW and get people voluntarily going to the DPW - some people will do it, especially if it's a good deal for the town. Doug Newman (former SO mayor) had some good ideas about possible alternate sites for containers. David recommends also the parking lot at Waterlands Field. Need to have a place that trucks can get in and get out. Larry notes that they talked about keeping the DPW open longer so people can bring recycling there. They also talked about publicity. Trustee Karen Hilton had mentioned that the Gaslight was coming back - could put the recycling rules in there. Getting word out about how to better recycle is a piece of the puzzle. Jess suggests a public meeting about recycling rules. Bill agreed that would be a good idea and when we get a report from the consultant, that's an idea to pursue. Walter loves the idea of doing videos and post them on Facebook and the town's website. He notes that the idea of different locations - they could be located in different parts of town - it would be a feature/benefit that it is closer to their home. Also, we may want to keep in touch with the DPW as they revise and renew their facilities. The director is planning for roll-off, self-contained units, probably five of them - they can be housed outside the structure and it's easy to take them in and out. If they work as stand-alone items, we may want them to be put in other parts of town, which will work with the pick-up system they already have, and extend the range. David notes that we should think about the educational aspect of getting this information out to people. Bill says we could possibly hold an event and celebrate that we are trying to do something different. Rob notes that the Recycle Coach App is very useful.

b. Trees - Tree Grant - Barbara gave updates - NJ Urban Forestry Grant - we are moving forward with that and Barbara is doing outreach with park conservancies. She has already done Founders and Farrell. She met with Grove Park today. They have agreement now on location of the trees - they will not be near the wet areas of the park. Bill notes that he and Barbara met with Meadowlands Conservancy and they are working on tree locations with them. Tree Ordinance - Bill notes that last week at the Tree Committee meeting they discussed how it could help save historic trees on private property. Clyde Otis, the Village Attorney is working on a draft as we speak and we should have a draft soon. Barbara has comments from others, too. Wanda Knapik in Environmental Studies at Seton Hall is helping us and has sent us a document with 15 ideas. We will keep doing things with Seton Hall this spring and beyond.

c. Eco Guide - Georgia Madiba is working on a Home Eco-Guide for her Rutgers Environmental Steward Program. She has been doing the course-work and this is her project for the class: an Eco-Guide that tells people what they can do for the environment besides

recycling. It will be eight pages long and she working with a designer in South Orange. She is also working with Matters Magazine to make this an insert for their April issue. The guide is written so it is easily digestible by everyone - kind of like a menu - user friendly. She is now looking for a real estate sponsor who can underwrite the printing of the guide. After she has gone through a few more revisions with professors and classmates she will finalize. David puts together welcome packs for Academy Heights, so he will be in contact with Georgia to get them for the packets. Lorraine also is the welcome person for Tuxedo Park and Linda for South Mountain. Georgia also took into consideration everything that she heard at our meetings and tried to include our ideas in the guide.

d. Planning - David Kraiker - he explained how it works at the Planning Board - the Environmental Commission has a rep for site plan review - David is our rep - the Board is basically asking people if they have their paperwork in order - they, as planning board members are, "backup" - sometimes David will catch something. Once they get their paperwork in order, they will come back again. That's what they do. E.g., someone wants to tear down their house and build two new homes. David showed examples of cases that they reviewed. There was one from Seton Hall. This is kind of like a hearing. The public can ask questions. At the end, you can make a statement, but he thinks you have to be there - can't send it in. David wants to point out that if we don't have an ordinance on it (trees, green infrastructure, etc.) he can't argue with the presentations or point out problems. The Planning Board is more of a "finishing board" - making the plans adhere to the laws and "quirks" of South Orange. If we want to do something, we need to come up with an ordinance. Walter notes that we can't just go above state standards in our ordinance - we can't make a law that requires more than what the state requires - we can set it as a goal, but can't require it. David wonders if that is correct because we are a "home rule state". Walter said that it applies to specific rules like stop sign rules, etc. Rob wants to know if splitting your lot in half is covered by these requirements. David notes that ANJEC is tightening up on stormwater retention. Bill notes that stormwater retention is not really an environmental solution to problems - it deals with flooding, which is good. ANJEC is a good resource for us.

2. Master Plan

The Master Plan draft is almost done - we all helped put this together and they drafted it. We are now asked by Topology and the Village to give feedback on changes we want to see in the final draft. Bill notes there is a lot of good stuff in there. The plan is aspirational, not prescriptive. He did want to respond with ideas about the Master Plan collectively. He is now trying to put the comments together to submit. Three people submitted comments to Bill: George Finlay, John Nettleton and Richard Bell.

George had three areas he looked at - climate warming, history and traffic calming. George notes that the focus on climate change is important especially with the effect of storms on infrastructure - it's time to get our power off of the pole lines and underground. Also, the impact on potable water is important and should be addressed in the MP. He notes that traffic calming is also an issue. Also, Electric Vehicles in town is important to pursue. Rob notes that they did touch on underground lines in the MP. George feels they are not giving enough weight to it. Barbara notes that electrification has counter issues - it actually gets more expensive the more you use it. Our infrastructure works against it in many ways. There are barriers to electrification. Walter

notes that the utility itself becomes a barrier. He notes that micro-distribution by neighborhood becomes more attractive. Barbara sent out a YouTube link by Saul Griffiths that fits in with the Mobility section of the MP. Worth watching. Very funny. Bill will send it, too.

John Nettleton had some comments. First one was about traffic enforcement. Mobility Hub was another area. Residential over Commercial was another observation he had. He had some Housing comments and some Climate Change comments as well. Also impervious surface and tree canopy were covered by John. Regarding tree canopy should we be looking for species that are south of us for planting?

Richard gave specific language that his South Mountain/Farrell Field Conservancy working group thinks should be in the Master Plan. There were four recommendations regarding Open Space and they were organized by bullet points with requested revisions and adjustments to coincide with the specific pages of the Draft Master Plan. They included a recommendation to subdivide the large tax lot that contains the DPW, Farrell Field Park and nearby woodlands into two tax lots - one for DPW and one for protected Open Space. Also a recommendation was made to designate the current temporary Parks and Rec building at 298 Walton as permanently dedicated to Parks and Rec. There was also a request to include information in the MP about the new bridge and hiking/biking path to be installed in Southern Segment of the River Greenway near these plots of land. The submission emphasized that South Orange is still short of needed open space based on Green Acre's estimates.

Meadowland Park has been mapped and is the 4 to 5 acres according to Linda. Neil has done a great map. Barbara notes that we should think about acquisition of land - figure out way of funding purchase of parcels - not something that taxpayers pay for, but find space. Think of long term acquisition. Bill notes that with the open space deficit is not a new idea - all of the plans in the past have identified this ongoing issue. Bill thanked Richard for his efforts on the MP.

Lorraine had comments, too - wants to see an integrated solid waste MP and gave suggestions for the business community. Doesn't want to see demolition and have everything go to a landfill - we just had a whole block torn down in South Orange. There is a market for the re-use. For the future she would like to see more deconstruction. She has another recommendation about the usage of the building at 298 Walton - have it dedicated to place for "restore" - people can bring things that need to be repaired - a repair/re-use program. That would be a good location and repurpose of that building. Bill asked Lorraine to submit comments on the composting section.

Neil Chambers looked at the plan about the transit hub/village green. He sent thoughts which Bill will forward to us. Neil has an idea do "everything" and Bill showed a graphic representation with a more expansive structure with green space on the top. It's an interesting thing to think of, outside of the box. Rob noted that enhancing the green-space in front of the train station is really important - his view is that the long term goal is to connect green spaces. Bill notes that you can now see the public library from

Spiotta Park - and Stone House Brook is going to be covered with construction. If we had thought about this years ago, would we have been able to have a stream running through South Orange? Larry pointed out that Orange has built nice buildings near their train station. He thought the MP was unrealistic in encouraging people to "bike downtown" - people who live uphill will not want to do that. Rob notes that we want to accommodate some growth, but in a gentle way and adding a huge structure is not the way to go.

Rob has a few comments, too. In Land Use and Community Form, bullet number 4 - green building standards - the guts of that needs to show up at the back of the MP - his concern is that somebody needs to implement the Master Plan - who is going to do it? Bill notes that they are goals - they are aspirational, but who is going to do it. Richard pointed out that this Master Plan, though, is important because it is going to be officially adopted and will be legally binding in future disputes about different issues regarding development and open space. Rob notes that there should be a mandate from the Environmental Commission. Walter pointed out that in Brookline, MA they said that no new buildings will have gas or oil infrastructure connections. If we are going to be aspirational, it should be in our MP.

Bill asks that we send him any last comments by Saturday. He will try to pull it all together by Sunday and will send it Topology. Monday is the deadline. Bill's big comment is to move "Quality of Life" to the beginning of the report - talk about Environment first, instead of on page 219. Move it to the front. Environment seems to be left for last too many times. How could you not lead with "Quality of Life"?

Next meeting date: February 25, 2021

ADJOURNMENT