

MINUTES—final (by A. Stone—secretary)

SOUTH ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Thursday, March 21, 2024 – 7:30 PM (Virtual WebEx Meeting)

Attendance: Commissioners: Kathleen Grant (Chair), Linda Beck (Vice Chair), Beau Schwegman (Treasurer), Andy Stone (Secretary), Rob Orgera, Katie Skebninski, Trustee Liaison: Olivia Lewis-Chang; Village Staff rep: Walter Clarke; Others included: Julia Flath, Ben Vitale

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call meeting to Order: 7:33
2. Approval of February Minutes: approved
3. Presentation from Georgia Madiba - Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC): Georgia shared ANJEC background, purposes, and upcoming events.
4. Discussion of library renovation plans was cancelled for this meeting. Instead, the Commission is encouraged to participate at two upcoming forums for this—a Trustees meeting and a public presentation—and to submit written comments. Rob noted that some key information on energy systems did not seem to be available in the packet sent to us.
5. Presentation by Julia Flath, Chair of the Village's Walk/Bike/Ride (WBR) Committee. Julia provided background and shared 2024 priorities. She noted that the Village recently received a Federal SS4A ("Safe Street and Roads for All") grant to create a Safety Action Plan. She also mentioned a number of areas of overlap between WBR and the SOEC including reducing auto use (and emissions), the Greenway, and addressing leaf disposal (WBR's concern being the impediments to biking caused by piles of leaves in the Fall).

This led to a brief discussion of the fact that SO Public Works is considering leaf collection options, and the question of how SOEC could learn about these discussions (and have input). Olivia suggested attending a Public Works Committee meeting; Andy will reach out to Bill Haskins to ascertain whether the Committee might be getting a report on this at an upcoming meeting. Kathleen suggested that our Education subcommittee could consider

disseminating information on how homeowners can manage leaves on their own property.

6. NJ Community Energy Plan Grant Application (due 5/24/24):

Kathleen completed the application which needs a Resolution from the Village to file. This \$10K grant would enable the Village to (likely) enlist a consultant to create a plan for energy-related enhancement to municipal building and other municipal infrastructure. Ben noted that Village-owned vehicles could be included. This would include an audit of current infrastructure and energy use. Rob and others discussed the challenges when they tried to do this just for SOPAC. Receipt of this grant and completion of a plan would make the Village eligible for a \$1/4 million grant to help upgrade our energy infrastructure.

7. Other Updates

- Sustainable NJ application (Andy): Heading toward a mid-May submission. Several members are assisting; Andy would appreciate a timely turnaround from those helping.
- Greenway (Andy): Village reports progress in getting agency comments on new RFP.
- Discussion about Website/PR/Communications: More discussion is needed, including clarification on how more information can be pushed out. Olivia stresses that some of our future outreach should target young people. She notes that CHS, MMS and Marshall school have environmental clubs.
- Workdays: Andy will coordinate. He hopes to schedule these well in advance and to publicize. For now, he will work with Katie on Facebook posts once some of these are scheduled.
- Ordinance Team: Beau reports that a survey on leaf blowers has been finalized.
- Sustainable Essex Alliance update (Walter): Efforts are underway to offer participants a better rate and an increased percentage of electricity from renewable sources

NEXT MEETING DATE

Thursday, April 18th in-person

River Day - 5/5!

ADJOURNMENT: 8:55