

MINUTES---S.O. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

OCTOBER 17, 2024

Prepared by Andy Stone

Attendance: Members: Kathleen Grant, David Kraiker, Andy Stone, Rob Orgera, Larry Hirsch, Lorraine Graves; Village Reps: Olivia Lewis-Chang (Council member), Walter Clarke (Sustainability Coordinator), Public/Green Team members: Jennie Aylward, Jessica Weitzman, Elizabeth Payne, Chris Sidwa, , Alysa Aronson, Juliana

7:33 pm, Meeting Begins

September minutes approved Will be posted on Village website soon.

Greenway

Andy shared updates from the Village Administrator. RFP for construction of Phase 2—Waterlands is expected to be approved this month.

Information is presented on important potential next steps in the Greenway--repaving of the rutted roadway between Chyzowich Field and Parker Avenue, to effectively accommodate bikes and pedestrians along with limited auto access, as well as reclamation of an area behind the Board of Ed maintenance building. Both efforts present special challenges due to jurisdictional issues (the lands are in Maplewood but owned by South Orange). Trustee Olivia Lewis-Chang and Andy agree that this might ultimately come before the Municipal Partnership Committee (Villages of S.O. and Maplewood plus Board of Ed). Next step: Andy to coordinate with Olivia and reach out to our Village Administrator for information sharing.

Energy

Regarding the recently received Board of Public Utilities (BPU) Energy grant (to analyze municipal energy use and recommend steps to increase use of alternative energy), Kathleen needs to convene a committee. Walter

agrees to be a municipal rep and Rob and Larry volunteer as public members.

This effort (looking at municipal energy use) is separate from the current Electrify SOMA effort, which focuses on residential use.

Communications

Kathleen stressed the continued importance of this, despite not having an EC member to chair the effort. Several attendees expressed a willingness to write and place articles or notices. Members agreed we'd benefit from a list of topics to publicize; this can be discussed at the next meeting.

Sustainability Guide to Local Restaurants

New Green Team member, Jessica Weitzman, described a project she worked on with the Chatham Green Team---a sustainability guide to restaurants. This guide covers practices including availability of local and/or organic food and various waste reduction measures.

Jessica agreed to coordinate an initial exploration of this idea for S.O., and Jennie and Lorraine offered to help.

Upcoming EC Presentation to the Village Council

There was discussion of the EC having a new sharper focus/goal statement, and communicating that to the Council. This goal statement may center on climate change, with an effort to align several efforts (energy use, green infrastructure/storm water management, waste reduction) under that rubric.

Kathleen is slated to give a very short presentation on the EC to the Village Council at their Oct. 28 meeting and may introduce this concept (or leave that for a 2025 presentation).

Other Topics

- Olivia said that a revised tree ordinance, with greater focus on trees on private property, is slated to come up at the next Council meeting.

- Questions were raised about the status of a revised leaf-blower ordinance. Olivia said this was delayed (perhaps partially due to a desire to first deal with the tree ordinance).
- Seton Village Bulb Planting, Nov 2, 10am:
<https://www.setonvillage.org/upcoming-events/community-planting-day>
- Green Team workdays: Oct 27, 9:30—pollinator garden; Nov 3, 9:30—riverbank across from Flood's Hill.