



SOUTH ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION Minutes
Thursday, January 16, 2025 – 7:30 PM (Virtual WebEx Meeting)
Adequate notice given to the public.

Commissioner Attendees: Kathleen Grant, Andy Stone, Lorraine Graves, David Kraiker, Rob Orgera, Olivia Lewis-Chang (Village Council)

Village Staff: Walter Clarke

Public: Julianna Garreffa, Alyssa Aronson, Jennie Aylward, Rick Kalish

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call meeting to Order 7:35 pm
2. Minutes of December 2024 meeting: **APPROVED**
3. **UPDATES ON NEW and CURRENT PROJECTS & ISSUES**

Climate Superfund Act: Kathleen and Rick Kalish spoke about this act, which Rick reported was approved in December 2024 by the NJ Senate Environmental Committee, and needs support to move further. The Act holds certain NJ polluters accountable for climate change damages. Both NY State and Vermont have passed similar acts. The Commission voted 5 to 0 to recommend that the Village Council pass a resolution in support of the Act. Olivia said that the Council is aware of the Act and she will inform Mayor Collum of the Commission's request.

Rain Garden: Andy reported that the Village supports a proposal he is working on (with Kirk Barrett), to obtain \$2000 from Sustainable Jersey for a rain garden which would handle stormwater from the South Orange Middle School parking lot, preventing it from flowing into the river. The Village will provide matching funds and some assistance from Public Works.

Alternatives to Meat: Given the contribution of meat production to global climate change, the Commission is supporting efforts by several Green Team members to address this. Jenny has helped convene a committee to work on this and described a two-pronged strategy: a) a local public information campaign, and b) planning a "restaurant week" type event, involving SOMA eateries which will highlight vegetarian dishes. Olivia suggested that this group host a table at River Day and at the next Health Fair. Kathleen suggested that Jenny forward to her a small budget, for possible funding out of the anticipated SOEC 2025 allocation.

Electrify SOMA: Julianna reported on a plan by this group to try to obtain funding for an electrification consultant who can help Electrify SOMA volunteers in assisting local homeowners with electrification advice. Apparently there may be funds remaining from an earlier energy aggregation program, earmarked for public education, that might be tapped for this. Annette DePalma from Maplewood was mentioned as the custodian for these funds.

Walk/Bike/Ride (WBR) Agenda and Budget: Julia Flath, Chair of the WBR Committee presented their budget priorities for 2025, seeking the EC's support. Olivia urged WBR to: a) in addition to advocating for on-the-ground change, focus on education (e.g. about the various benefits of providing more accommodations for pedestrians and bikes); b) seek private \$ where possible. Walter urged tapping into NJ Transit programs that support bike commuting to stations. EC members expressed

support for Kathleen to endorse WBR's budget requests as part of her February 4 budget presentation to the Village Council.

Leaf Blowers: Olivia and David are scheduled to meet to discuss how the EC can help the Council to advance a revised ordinance aimed at a more complete ban on leaf blowers.

River Day: EC and Green Team members intending to have a table at River Day should contact Kathleen prior to our next meeting. Walter has gotten commitments from Rahway River Association and State DEP to be present. Lorraine spoke of the value of having information about local wildlife; perhaps DEP could have a display and/or materials on that subject. Julie Flath raised the issue of having this year's Greenway Bike Parade occur on the same day, directly following River Day. There are pros and cons and this was not decided.

4. NEXT MEETING DATE –February 20, 2025, 7:30pm

5. ADJOURNMENT: 8:45 pm