



SOUTH ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION Minutes

Thursday, December 18, 2025, 7:30 PM (Virtual WebEx Meeting)

Adequate notice given to the public.

Commissioner Attendees: Kathleen Grant, Andy Stone, Julianna Garreffa, Cindy Thompson, Lorraine Graves

Village Staff: Walter Clarke

Green Team/Public attendees included: Jennie Aylward, Lauren Sklaver, Julia Flath, Caleb Salmon, Susan Haig, Jessica Babb

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- 1. Call meeting to Order 7:33 pm**
- 2. Approval of Minutes of November meeting: APPROVED**

UPDATES ON NEW and CURRENT PROJECTS & ISSUES

Stormwater/Green Infrastructure:

Andy reported: There is a February 13, 2026 deadline for the next round of Sustainability Jersey PSEG grants. Of the EC's two most active program areas—Energy and Green Infrastructure (GI) for Stormwater—GI is the area where we have a “ready-to-move” project. Our tentative plan is to apply for \$2K for a program aimed at educating and assisting homeowners with stormwater management on their properties (keeping it from flowing onto the street and into the river). We would likely look to match that w/ \$\$ from our 2026 allocation from the Village (which makes our application that much more appealing to SJ)

This g.i program would likely have two components: 1) sharing info with S.O. homeowners about g.i. methods they can adopt; 2) developing demonstration projects on a few residential sites (based on homeowners applying) where the EC would provide a combination of technical assistance and materials). The Village is the recipient of SJ grants and needs to approve. Village Administrator Julie Doran has expressed her support for the idea.

Walter mentioned that there was an EC effort, some years ago, called “ReYard”, that addressed similar issues, and that Neil Chambers might be able to provide info on that. Walter also suggested that some homeowners may need to take steps to comply with Village regulations related to on-site stormwater retention. Susan Haig suggested that education about on-site stormwater management could also be put into a broader context—also encompassing alternatives to lawns, cultivation of native plants, etc.

Greenway

Andy and Julia Flath described a proposal by the Walk/Bike/Ride Committee to:urge the Village Council to allocate Capital \$\$ for a comprehensive Greenway signage program, and to reaffirm its earlier support for Capital \$\$ for two Greenway repaving projects—for the roadway between Chyzowich Field and Parker Ave, and for the Phase I Greenway section between Mead and South Orange Ave. Andy will prepare a written proposal for the EC to endorse these allocations (which will be sent prior to the January meeting for a January vote).

School Sustainability: Lauren described a meeting last week of Green Team leaders (parents) from all of the SOMA elementary schools, as well as CHS and MMS. They are hoping to meet quarterly.

She has not been able to gather further information on a recently signed contract between the school district and a recycling company, but will continue to work on that.

Energy: Re. Electrify SOMA (ES): “Maplewood Matters” magazine last month published a very comprehensive article on the program, which led to several requests from homeowners for assistance, and a synagogue requesting a presentation. ES will have a table at a Sustainability Fair, January 24, 1-4pm, at the Maplewood Library. In January, ES will meet to establish goals for 2026.

Walter reported progress on the Community Energy Plan Grant that the Village has received from the NJ Board of Public Utilities. The Village has hired a consultant, Gabel Associates to advance planning efforts, focussed especially on energy use for municipal facilities.

Food Sustainability: Jennie reported on the Meat Me in the Middle program—including the upcoming launch of “Veggie Vebruary.” Highlights of this will include: a showing of the film “Meat Me Halfway” scheduled for Sunday, Feb 1 at the Baird, dissemination of veggie “recipes of the week,” and possibly a “meatless challenge” from the two SOMA mayors.

Lorraine spoke of a project she will undertake shortly—“Love Your Leftovers.” Members of the public will submit recipes for using leftovers, and a panel of judges will choose the best. Lorraine intends to provide funds for cash prizes for the one or two top entries.

Walter reported on a program called “Table to Table”, an NJ-based “food rescue” organization, which is looking to expand their efforts in SOMA. They distribute leftover food from stores and restaurants to food banks and pantries.

NEXT MEETING DATE – January 15,2026

ADJOURNMENT: 8:40 pm