



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

**Via Village Webex Link:
Dial 1296808032@southorange.webex.com**

Thurs. October 21, 2021 from 7:30pm – 9:45pm

Adequate notice given to the public

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

ATTENDANCE Linda BECK (Chairperson), Bill HASKINS**, Karen Hilton**, David KRAIKER* (Planning Board Rep), Richard BELL* (Secretary), Lorraine GRAVES*, Barbara BOUR, Walter CLARKE***, Robert ORGERA*, Jessica MILLER, Georgia MADIBA, Larry HIRSCH*, Joel LEVIN, Jennie AYLWARD, Heather SASLOVSKY, Wynnne-Fred VICTOR HINDS (Newark EC)
*=Commissioner, **=Trustee, ***=Alternate

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 2021 MINUTES - APPROVED

LEAD IN SOUTH ORANGE PRESENTATION - Lex van Geen from Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University gave a presentation. He studies impact of lead on humans. South Orange is an interesting location for them. Their campus is in the Palisades with a Geochemistry Building. He showed a map put together by an investigative team from Reuters. CDC compiles child blood-lead data but Reuters FOIA files requests for every state. The map shows what the data looks like. Philly is much higher than the rest of the country. 2 or 3% of children exceed the threshold for the entire country. He showed East Orange, South Orange and other areas by zooming in. In South Orange 9% (2700 children) exceeded the threshold. What is the source of lead and what can we do about it? He did an experiment in his lab to test how lead is ingested (paint, soil/dust, water). We don't know which is dominant. Lead can be measured now with a kit - an instant lead test. The question he has: who might be interested in participating in testing in South Orange? A high school in Pelham, NY did so for three years and they are now writing a paper. It is essential to have community participation. South Orange is in a transition zone and it would be valuable from public health point of view to have a community group participate. Linda asked if soil/plant germination is penetrated by lead. Lex notes that as long as you wash veggies well, you should have no worries. She also asked about Home Depot having a test kit that she saw. Are they tracking results? Lex did not know of Home Depot doing so. NYC provides free tests. Others noted that the Home Depot kit was a marketing tool to sell water purifiers. Barbara noted that the Great Swamp Watershed Assoc. offered water testing for free. Jess had a question - when she lived in Brooklyn in 2013 her son was tested - she asked whether the levels he has today are current and he said yes, at least until 2015. Walter asked what Lex's goal is. Lex notes that he wants to interest communities in collecting their own data. He would like to see exposure lowered. Vailsburg is really high. He's curious to see how people respond. he can help write some grants and get some funding. Barbara asked how much participation he needed. He needs at least 50 houses from each of the three towns (W. Orange,

South Orange, East Orange?) Bill asked what exactly would be tested (paint, soil, water). Lex feels it should focus on soil and paint, but water can be included. Bill asked if there is a big difference between water at service level to water at the tap level. Answer - yes. Walter noted that from experience on the water commission it is a big issue. Jess asked about paint testing. He has found that swabs from 3M do very well. David notes that you need at least 5 houses from each neighborhood to participate. Wynnne (from Newark EC) points out that Newark has a high rate of renters - would that make a difference? Hard to get landlords to participate? South Orange has a lot of renters, too.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - Wynnne-Fred Victor Hinds from Newark Environmental Commission is visiting. David wants to give a planning board report. There is a recommendation for planning at Founders Park. The planning board and Topology recommended that the applicant come to the EC. Maybe we should have an ad hoc meeting. Also, at the beginning of November there will be a presentation for "The Peaks" on Irvington Avenue. Hopefully, they will keep recommending having consultations with EC. Jess notes that with the storage facility they are putting all of their stormwater into the storm drain and there are issues with solar, too. Barbara notes that you should look at the limit of disturbance that will effect a public area like Founders Park. We need to be on the look-out for issues ahead of time. We also need to divide up the workload for planning board issues.

TRUSTEE REPORT - Bill - update:

- DPW - they had a meeting this morning and covered usual issues about status of paving, etc, but what was exciting was they spent time talking about storm water possibilities in a creative way, especially around going towards a stormwater utility to drive green infrastructure in town. Walter was in the meeting and participated. He did a grant application previously on doing an impervious analysis in town to get started. We didn't get the grant, but a good starting point now is to fund that initial analysis and ideas about what to do for next steps and stormwater utility. Great support from staff and elected officials at the meeting. Walter will continue to work on it.
- BOT - a task that the BOT has before it is the storage project at Founders - they need to approve an access agreement. So they can set parameters for the project for Founders Park. It's a negotiation between Village staff and development staff. Bill will try to participate. They want a comprehensive approach from our arborist, too. Karen asked if leaves need to be discussed. She said that they are asking residents to bag their leaves and put them out. Also, encourage them to mulch in place. She thinks they have made good progress to figure out a good method to communicate and encourage people to do so. Bill added that we've been talking about this for years, but it's being driven by residents with clogged storm drains in their neighborhoods. Jess noted that Julie met some resistance at the board meeting, too. Bill said they got "a lot of feedback". Jess also noted that people are worried about directing their landscapers. Bill notes that Montclair and Summit have both been able to do this. Barbara asked if parks are doing mulch in place. Bill - yes - Founders, Farrell and Meadowland are participating. Linda suggested a press release for mulch in place. Bill said that they may do an event as well in one of the parks. Larry notes that SOMA Lounge is a good place to post outreach. Linda has a post-card that can be shared. She will send it to Larry to post on SOMA Lounge.

1. POLICY UPDATES

- Leaf Blower Ordinance - FAQ and public forum being finalized and scheduled. Linda said it is being finalized.

2. PROJECT UPDATES

- Farrell Field -
 - Trees are doing well - one white oak has given acorns
 - Paint Your Park did not get a big turnout - might have been related to the fact that Maplewood was having their Art Walk that day so all the artists on our side of town were at home
 - Donate a Bench campaign is getting ready to launch - we were going to launch it right before Covid hit - this year seems like it might do better
 - Cross Walk sign with flags was driven over and destroyed - kudos to DPW for replacing it quickly
 - Little Free Library still needs to be repaired
 - Still waiting for the final MP to be unveiled - they have assured us of our input
 - Bridge and Bike/Hike trails still in limbo - we are frustrated and ready to start a public campaign to pressure the state and local administrations to get off their butts - the money has been there since 2015 and nothing has been done.
 - Bill notes that David Battaglia - new village engineer says we need to retain a 3rd party engineer from the project - that's the last task - he explained that in his work in this he has discovered there is urgency from DOT to spend this money - some pushing in this direction. He agrees there is a certain point. Von Cleef is Battaglia's firm - they do that work all the time - but since he is our acting engineer they have to get someone else to do it.
- Trees - Starts on November 3rd for tree planting. Barb sent list of locations. Jess notes that it is 110 trees across all of the neighborhoods. Bill and Walter note that this has been a great project for the town. We never have done a fall tree planting in the past, so this is really really impressive to have 110 trees. The Village is very impressed with the work the EC has done on this project and have funded us because they know it will be done well. Barb notes that the project management has been 100% volunteer - they had seven core people. Walter put together a pamphlet for homeowners who get trees.
- Reusable Take Out Container Survey - there have only been 58 responses. Lorraine would like to do a presentation to restaurants.
- Founders Park Trees - (see above) Jess notes that cleanup day is November 13th. They have a posting board now. They will share media with Linda for cleanup.
- ZERO WASTE/MSW/Recycling - The entire SO BOT and Maplewood TC had a joint meeting on Oct. 5th - each body will address the strategic plan individually and pass a resolution to move forward. The procurement plan will be attached to resolution. It will be before BOT Monday night. David noted that they have been having a Zero Waste meeting - should they stop having it? Do it occasionally? Linda notes that we can turn it into something else as a brainstorming effort. Bill notes that the plans will give us work to do, so we should continue to the group. Walter suggested that communicating all of this stuff is going to be a big job and we need the group engaged and active. Dave notes he will have a meeting next Tuesday.
- CinemaLab - no meeting time yet.
- ANJEC Award - Georgia's Eco-Guide won the award! Congrats and well worth the acknowledgment. Georgia notes that they have a lot more available.
- SEA update - they are still working on the same energy aggregation and volunteers. Bill notes that the current project with Sustainable Essex to get a cleaner mix of energy - instead of 24% green energy we are at 44% now at the same price as PSEG. The current project is to create a small fund that is dedicated to energy conservation efforts - trying to manage the idea of having education with conservation. The five towns have retained a consultant to do a public outreach campaign to identify 60 or so households in all the towns to do energy audits for those homeowners and then do recommendations

to reduce energy use for environmental efficacy and homeowner savings. They have a postcard to send out as well. Walter notes this is a pilot for only a small number of people and then learn enough to offer it to everyone.

- General discussion about electric cars and EV charging stations
- Turf Report - George Finlay sent an email earlier in the day asking that this report be included in the minutes:

"A brief report on developments in this project I am responsible for. I ask that Richard make them part of the minutes for tonight's Environmental Commission meeting, and I am copying Pete to be sure I am accurately reflecting his understanding as well. I don't need time on the agenda. Happy to take questions via email or text.

I met with Pete Traverse, Director of SO Recreation Department, in his office Sept 23.

Main topic was desire to see Floods Hill natural maintenance methods continue and if possible spread to other playing fields. Pete was amenable to this but reported he is getting complaints from soccer teams about unevenness due to weeds and asked what we would do about that. I reported that I had rejected vendors' offer to apply natural weed suppression in the past 2 seasons due to my experience with them on my home lawn. In the past I have found them not sufficiently reliable or affordable to be appropriate for playing fields, but committed to reopening my research on them and perhaps including them next year on Floods Hill.

In regard to spreading natural maintenance practices, Pete reported that Jose Garrido of Green Roots was considering a trade - maintenance of Meadowlands 3 - the baseball field with dugouts - in return for an advertising banner on the fence in that field. We discussed Jose's success reducing weeds in the lawns of his residential customers.

Regarding comparative costs, for the rest of the playing fields, Pete spends \$2600 per acre each year vs the \$3500 per acre we spent in 2020 on Floods Hill and the \$3200 in 2021. There is \$1900 left of the \$5000 Stonyfield Farms grant awarded to South Orange to encourage safer playing fields. Chip Osborne, whose consulting services came to us as additional in-kind value as part of Stonyfield's grant, requested an online status meeting. That has been scheduled for Pete and me at 1 pm on Nov 9. Others interested in this topic are invited to join."

3. COMMUNICATIONS

- FB: 831 (up from 813) followers, IG: 288 (up from 272) followers
- SO Many Leaves postcard - Number 4 in engagement after Repair Café, Permeable Surface, and River Day - these are the top three things shared
- **APPROVAL of Outgoing SOEC Releases and Letters**
 - Media Press Release - Trees - Walter read press release about the Fall Planting. PASSED
 - Village Blast - Reusable Take Out Container Survey. Link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOIFXLU4IgfLSUM867RUmnMIWx2QLHO0giJTTFnzZz2g-IOg/viewform?usp=sf_link PASSED
 - Rec Letter in support of continuing successful organic field treatment program to Cameron Field in Meadowland Park PASSED
 - Any additional letters or releases to approve? NONE

4. WORK DAYS

- Most weekends 10:00 am - 2:00 pm.

- This Sunday work crew collaboration - Ethical Culture Society at Meadowland Park. Cardboard invasive suppression, seeding with oat seeds and native seeds.
- SHU Crew/Amanda Cavanagh - Gator Bag Removal, etc.
 - 11/7 – 10:00am-12:00pm
 - 11/14 – 10:00am-12:00pm

5. NEW BUSINESS

- There is concern about the potential of future artificial turf efforts on any fields in South Orange. Barbara notes that contentious battle is happening in Maplewood. Rob notes that the most important thing is that doing an experiment on a real playing field ASAP is what should happen. Jessica notes that field rotation is important, too. Linda notes that “Play Free” hashtag from Stonyfields Organics needs to be pushed to promote grass fields. Walter notes that almost all of our playing fields are next to the river, so highly unlikely that we’ll have artificial turf there. Karen notes that it is extremely expensive and Barbara agrees. Walter agrees with Rob’s idea to prove what can be done with organic maintenance. Bill notes that the \$10 mil Baird Renovation will be amazing and will have a new gymnasium among many other things. Linda suggested that we put together people to get info out there. General discussion about signage.
- PSE&G lines - can they be moved underground anytime there is a repair or new development in order to allow for larger shade trees? Is this a realistic ask? Bill reached out to Adam Loehner about the issue and will work with the Village Engineer to look into the viability of this.
- Meadowland Park Conservancy 1st Anniversary event/SOEC/SO Arts & Rec Collaboration - speaker, music, food, drink, and native gardening around Skate House.
- ANJEC Conference.

6. NEXT MEETING DATE - 11/18/21 - 7:30 pm

7. ADJOURNMENT