

CHATHAM BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

June 12, 2019

8:00 p.m.

Chairman Len Resto called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Environmental Commission to order at 8:00 p.m. in Room 212, middle level, Chatham Borough Hall. Chrnm. Resto announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

| Name | Present | Absent |
|----------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Len Resto, Chrnm. | X | |
| Kate Murphy, Vice Chrnm. | X | |
| Patricia Soteropoulos | X | |
| Kevin Murphy | X | |
| Torri Van Wie | X | |
| Joseph Treloar | | X |
| Philip Kagan | X | |
| Ben Lampert | | X |
| Council Member Jocelyn Mathiasen | X | |

Also present:

Dr. Rozella Clyde, Green Team member

Maddie Kaplan, 7th grade student

Owen Lee, owner of "OurCompost"

Public Comments

There were none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Mr. Murphy made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the EC meeting of May 8, 2019 with the edits submitted by Chrnm. Resto and Mrs. Van Wie. Mrs. Van Wie seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The minutes of May 8, 2019 were approved.

Reports/Pending Business

Presentation by Owen Lee of "Our Compost"

Mr. Lee introduced himself. He noted that he is the Chief Operating Officer - CCO of BoxCar, which is a very popular service in Chatham. Mr. Lee reported that he has recently formed a compost pilot project called OurCompost. So far OurCompost has a dozen customers in the Borough. Currently, OurCompost takes compost to Pennsylvania. A future goal is to dump compost within New Jersey.

Chrnm. Resto asked Mr. Lee how he had obtained customers for OurCompost.

Mr. Lee explained how he had originally reached out to the customer base of BoxCar. He noted that OurCompost only does a pick-up service. Mr. Lee felt that there were many residents who want to compost, but their schedule is too busy. OurCompost will try and make the process as easy as possible. OurCompost will give residents the empty bins. There are two sizes of bins.

Once a week OurCompost will pick up the filled bins and replace them with empty bins. Mr. Lee said when the composting process is done, the homeowners can then collect the compost that is due them.

Mr. Lee noted that currently the OurCompost business is only for residential customers; however, there is one Chatham restaurant that has expressed an interest in composting.

Chrmn. Resto asked Mr. Lee if his customers leave their composting bins outside for pick-up.

Mr. Lee answered that the residents would leave their filled bins in their driveways or front doors by 8 a.m. on Wednesday mornings. He reviewed what items are acceptable for composting. No meat or bones are accepted. New bins will replace the removed filled bins.

Chrmn. Resto asked about the pricing for this service.

Mr. Lee answered that OurCompost charges \$10.99 a week for services. He explained the time span of the pick-up service in relationship to the number of households. Mr. Lee did not think the service fee will increase. OurCompost will try to reduce this fee in the future.

Mrs. Murphy asked Mr. Lee if he had problems with his customers putting unacceptable items in their compost bins.

Mr. Lee answered yes. He keeps an open dialogue with his customers on matters like this.

Mrs. Murphy asked what if a customer didn't want any compost in return.

Mr. Lee said the customer could donate it back for other customers to use.

Mrs. Murphy asked if OurCompost had ever considered having a large communal compost drum. Mrs. Clyde liked the idea of the driveway pick-up of the drums.

Commissioners discussed a rat problem some years ago in the neighborhoods around Washington Ave. School, when construction was going on. Many residents felt that residential composting had activated the rats; however, town leaders at the time believed it was the construction work.

Mrs. Clyde recommended that the residents be educated better on composting.

Chrmn. Resto thanked Mr. Lee for his informative presentation.

Reports/Pending Business

Planning Board

Mrs. Van Wie had nothing new to report from the Planning Board.

Fishawack Day

Mrs. Murphy reported that Fishawack went well this year. The Commission had some interested people visiting the E.C. table. The electric car display attracted a number of visitors. Five electric cars were on display, next to the classic car show in the westbound train station parking lot. Mr. Murphy reported that he had asked two Fishawack vendors to please not give out inflated balloons. He had explained to them the harm balloons do to the environment.

Mrs. Van Wie noted that the balloons for CHS graduates will not continue after this year for environmental reasons. An alternative to the balloons will be considered. Mrs. Clyde suggested blowing soap bubbles.

Borough Council

Council Member Mathiasen reported that the Borough Council has not yet approved the developer for the River Road Redevelopment Plan; however, the Plan itself was approved.

Council Member Mathiasen noted that Chrmn. Resto will be giving a presentation at the next Council meeting. He will be reporting on what is going on with plastics with regard to the environment. Council Member Mathiasen is putting together an outline about plastic bag usage. She noted, unfortunately, a recent NPR article claims that using cotton recycling bags may be more harmful to the environment than using plastic bags.

Council Member Mathiasen stated she will soon be reporting the results of the plastic bag survey taken by Borough residents. 539 responses were received. Council Member Mathiasen noted that 80% of the survey respondents will support a ban on plastic bags.

Council Member Mathiasen reported that the plastic bag survey for local businesses will start tomorrow. Paper surveys, as well as emailed surveys, will be distributed.

Council Member Mathiasen noted an outline is being worked on for an ordinance regarding plastic bag usage.

Chrmn. Resto reported on which neighboring communities are considering a ban on plastic bags. Not all of them are interested.

Council Member Mathiasen will be sending a draft of the presentation that will be given to the Borough Council at the June 24th meeting. A draft ordinance will not be presented at that meeting.

Also relating to recycling, Council Member Mathiasen distributed the new round recycling stickers which clearly state which items are accepted by our recycling company. Council Member Mathiasen read aloud a letter that will be sent out to all Chatham residents explaining the new recycling procedure. Council Member Mathiasen would like this letter hand-delivered to every Borough household. She will be getting a quote on the printing job for this letter. Commissioners discussed what volunteer power would be available to distribute the letter.

Council Member Mathiasen and Chrmn. Resto discussed the possible entities who may volunteer with the distribution.

Council Member Mathiasen offered to do a press release on the new recycling rules. Chrmn. Resto suggested a table be set up at the Farmers Market about the new recycling procedures. Mr. Kagan will approach the Chatham Library when the letters and stickers are ready. Possibly the grocery stores could be approached to help with the distribution.

Commissioners discussed asking the Scouts to help distribute this information. An outreach to local students may work. Also, faith communities could become involved.

Recycle Coach App

Council Member Mathiasen reported that work continues on this App. Currently it is in “good enough shape”. The Recycle Coach App should be made easy for a resident to access and type in any recycling questions.

Related to recycling, Council Member Mathiasen reported that a box will be set up on the main floor of Borough Hall to collect used tote bags. Residents are urged to select a tote bag(s) from this box for shopping, instead of using plastic bags. This project is Chatham Borough’s BringYourOwnBag initiative spearheaded by the Chatham Borough’s Department of Community Services. A similar box will be available at the Farmer’s Market.

Tour of the MCMUA

Chrmn. Resto noted that MCMUA informed him that the tour will probably be held sometime in August. MCMUA will notify Charm. Resto of possible tour dates.

Pesticides Update

Ms. Soteropoulos reported that the Chatham Township Committee is considering switching back to applying conventional pesticides on their playing fields in order to save money. Ms. Soteropoulos asked if any of the Borough Commissioners would be willing to attend the Township Committee meeting to speak on this pesticides issue.

Mr. Murphy was willing to attend and speak at this Township Committee meeting. However, he pointed out that he would not recommend organic treatments to the playing fields. He preferred nothing being applied to the fields.

Council Member Mathiasen offered to draft a letter to the Chatham Township Committee urging them to apply no pesticides to the playing fields. She will show the draft to the Borough Administrator before officially sending it.

Ms. Soteropoulos pointed out that the pesticide spraying near bees can be harmful. Chrmn. Resto will contact his neighbor, Al Tomaro, a bee-keeper, about this situation.

Mrs. Van Wie expressed interest in attending a future Underground Utilities Advisory Committee Meeting. Chrmn. Resto reported that the presentation given last night will be available very soon on the Borough website.

Dr. Clyde distributed and discussed an Environmental Resource Inventory done in 2011 by the Borough of Madison. She noted that Madison Borough had received a grant to organize this inventory. Dr. Clyde felt that an environmental resource inventory would be helpful in attracting new businesses to Chatham Borough. Chrmn. Resto noted that Chatham Borough had a resource inventory done some years ago. He felt an update should be done.

Related to this subject, Council Member Mathiasen reported that the Chatham Borough website will soon be cleaned up and made more user friendly. A template will be done for each Borough Board and Commission. She urged Commissioners to review their present website.

At 9:10 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Environmental Commission meeting will be held Wednesday, July 10, 2019, 8:00 p.m., Room 212, middle level, Chatham Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary

cc: Chatham Township Environmental Commission
Mayor Bruce Harris