

CHATHAM BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

June 10, 2020 8:00 P.M.

(Note: Meeting held via Zoom conference due to the Governor's Health Emergency order related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. All news outlets informed of the change and a notice was posted on the main and police entrances to Borough Hall)

Chairperson Kate Murphy called the Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Environmental Commission to order at 8:00 P.M. via Zoom Conference. Chair Murphy read aloud the Statement of Adequate Notice, including the change of the meeting format. All legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Name	Present	Absent
Kate Murphy, Chair	X	
Patricia Soteropoulos, Vice Chair	X	
Rozella Clyde	X	
Torri Van Wie	X	
Joseph Treloar	X	
Philip Kagan		X
Ben Lampert	X	
Susie Robertson		X
Yana Doyle		X
Jocelyn Mathiasen, Council Co-Liaison		X
Len Resto, Council Co-Liaison	X	
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary		X

MEMBERS OF PUBLIC PRESENT

Maddie Kaplan of Chatham Middle School's Environmental Club
Ernie Dorflinger of the Green Team

PUBLIC COMMENT

With no members of the public participating, Chairperson Murphy closed the public comment section of the meeting.

MOTION TO ADOPT MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Soteropoulos made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 2020 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Clyde. By a voice vote, the minutes were unanimously approved. (Note: The minutes of the March 2020 had been delayed by Borough Hall's shutdown the day following our last "in-person" meeting. Commissioner Clyde made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2020 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Van Wie. By a voice vote, the minutes to the May meeting were unanimously approved.

REPORTS/PENDING BUSINESS

Planning Board

Commissioner Van Wie reported the Planning Board had not met.

Borough Council

Council Co-Liaison Resto reported on what has been keeping the Mayor and Council busy with the pandemic. He reported that the Economic Development Advisory Committee has formed two sub-committees. One is for outreach to local businesses and merchants to assist them in getting back on their feet as business slowly comes back to life in Chatham. He mentioned the creation of the website www.keepchathamthriving.com and that such creation could be the impetus to restore the defunct Chamber of Commerce that disbanded over a decade ago. Discussion ensued on promoting our businesses and Council Co-Liaison Resto will share the website with Commissioners Van Wie, Lampert and Doyle so we could get the website up on all our social media outlets. Furthermore, Mr. Resto will share with Commissioner Van Wie the name of Michelle Lease who developed the “Keep Chatham Thriving” website. The other sub-committee is the Startup-Moveup Chatham effort headed by Commissioner Clyde. That effort is to attract e-commerce to Chatham and be a boost to the local economy and create ratables.

Council Co-Liaison Resto reported the 2020 budget had been largely finalized and would result in a municipal tax increase of 2.99%; however, with the County tax rate decreasing, the overall property tax increase would be 1.45%. He cited that neighboring municipalities are experiencing 5% to 12.5% increases. We were fortunate to have had a CAP Bank to draw upon and a surplus that helped.

Council Co-Liaison Resto indicated he was proud of Mayor Kobylarz and Police Chief Gibbons for addressing the George Floyd murder in Minneapolis head on. He indicated he made remarks which can be found on the video replay of the meeting and in TAPintoChatham. Finally, Council Co-Liaison Resto reported that the weekly food drive each Wednesday at the Chatham United Methodist Church continues to go well. This past Wednesday, there were 42 boxes of produce donated with all 42 boxes given away. He mentioned the school lunch program ends for the summer which means 70 students will be left in need during the summer. Joann Carroll, founder of The Helping Hands of Chatham is working with the school district to see how we can assist.

Climate Action Plan/Carbon Footprint

Green Team member Dorflinger reported he had been reaching out to Sustainable Jersey on the tracking of carbon. He is doing research on energy usage and needs access to utility records and needs to dig through Sustainable Jersey’s definitions of what needs to be done. He also needs to document the effect weather has had on our carbon footprint. He further reported that the municipal building’s carbon footprint was headed slowly in the right direction over time. Commissioner Clyde suggested he speak with Janice Piccollo, Director, Community Services who keeps utility records for the Borough.

Commissioner Clyde reported that energy audits partly funded by the New Jersey Clean Energy Program has 2 or 3 “go to” vendors that conduct energy audits. The auditor does the audit and there is language in the agreement that the company that does the audit might not be the actual company that will do the work recommendations contained in the audit report. Commissioner Van Wie observed that given the pandemic, it might be difficult to convince people to allow “strangers” into the house given all the social distancing and face masks requirements in effect. Commissioner Clyde indicated that the Environmental

Commission could at least make the information available to our residents and they can decide if they'd like to move forward.

Leaf Blowers

Council Co-Liaison Resto reported on a Resolution passed by the Governing Bodies of both Montclair and Maplewood urging residents to use electric leaf blowers in lieu of gasoline powered leaf blowers. This would extend to residents asking their landscapers to do this if they, in fact, use landscaping companies. The gist of the Resolution is that gasoline powered leaf blowers emit wind speeds of between 70 to 80 mph thus raising dust, pesticides, fertilizer, as well as possible mold spores, and the Coronavirus. By contrast, the electric leaf blowers emit a windspeed of 20-25 mph and get the job done just as efficiently. Council Co-Liaison Resto asked for the Environmental Commission's input as to whether they would back such a resolution. Commissioner Clyde made a motion to allow Mr. Resto to make such a recommendation to the Mayor & Council, seconded by Chair Murphy. On a voice vote, the resolution passed unanimously.

Sustainable Jersey

Although not on the formal agenda, Commissioner Van Wie discussed interacting with Sustainable Jersey on the matter of obtaining points for SJ certification in a pandemic world. There are many activities that cannot be completed as in the past. Commissioner Van Wie to discuss with Ms. Piccolo at Borough Hall.

Sustainable Housing

Commissioner Clyde described the issues involved with Sustainable Housing and being as green as possible. The Commissioners were in agreement. More to be discussed at our next meeting.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

Council Co-Liaison Resto indicated he had received a phone call on June 9th from John Stuckey of Volta. Volta is the company that had approached us regarding installation of an Electric Vehicle Charging Station. Since the pandemic, Volta succeeded in placing some stations in Bergen County and much of the digital displays were COVID-19 information. He offered same for Chatham and advised we could make the digital display an "information kiosk" as to happenings in town. He also offered to allow local merchants to advertise for free for a time and then 50% off thereafter until they can get back on their feet. Mr. Resto reviewed a PowerPoint presentation provided by Mr. Stuckey. Mr. Resto also indicated the current Mayor and Council will take a much more liberal view of allowing the stations and observed that with many people continuing to work from home, parking should be less of an issue. Commissioner Clyde made a motion to have Councilman Resto make a recommendation to the Mayor & Council on behalf of the Environmental Commission to move forward with the process. Commissioner Treloar seconded and by a voice vote, the resolution was unanimously approved. Councilman Resto will do his best to get the information to the Council before their next meeting on June 22nd.

Terracycle Grant

Commissioner Doyle indicated the paperwork for the Keep America Beautiful grant intended to fund terracycle bins had been submitted. She expects to hear back by the end of May. She indicated it appeared the program was geared to larger municipalities; but we would take whatever Keep America Beautiful might give us. Ironically, with no passengers taking the train during the pandemic, the problem of cigarette butt litter had largely disappeared.

Composting

Commissioner Soteropoulos and Chair Kate Murphy indicated that Madison Environmental Chairperson, Claire Whitcomb, had provided information on an upcoming composting seminar. Since we are at home, Commissioner Soteropoulos observed that now would be a perfect time to start composting.

EC Website

It was widely agreed that the EC website needs much help. Commissioners Doyle and Robertson will provide some action pictures which would link to information. This would attract attention instead of the current long narratives. Commissioner Lampert keeps the Commission's Facebook page updated and Instagram could also be used. Commissioner Clyde suggested Green Team member Shazia help. All agreed. Ben will continue having new information posted on our Facebook interface.

NEW BUSINESS

Leaf Blowers

A discussion was had over the ubiquitous fossil-fueled leaf blowers. Aside from noise early in the morning until late in the evening, the fumes and dust raised by these blowers cause serious health issues such as COPD and asthma. Council Co-Liaison Resto observed he had read an article that the gasoline fueled blowers emit a wind stream of up to 100 MPH to clear dust and leaves. Either battery power or electric power would emit much less wind, less than 35 MPH thus emitting no fumes and picking up little dust. With it being allergy season and the Coronavirus being present anywhere, using an old-fashioned rake would do. Co-Liaison Resto indicated he had asked his landscaper not to use the gas blowers and instead use rakes and they complied. Commissioner Clyde reported similar. If a landscaper wants to retain business, they will do as their customer asks.

It was suggested that we speak with Nancy Adams in Maplewood about their leaf blower Ordinance and with Carsten Winthrop in Madison.

Council Co-Liaison Resto indicated that passing an Ordinance now when people are on edge over the pandemic might "push people over the edge". It was agreed we needed an educational campaign to point out that fumes, dust, and debris blown up is injurious to health. Those with allergies are breathing in pollen made airborne by the blowers and the other dust and debris can compromise those with asthma and COPD. We will discuss how to go about this at the June meeting.

Library Book Deliveries

It was suggested that the Library of the Chathams might do what some other libraries are doing by delivering books to those who cannot get out of their homes. Council Co-Liaison Resto agreed to speak with both Julie Reich at the Senior Center, which has 56 volunteers and Library Executive Director Karen Brodsky to determine if this was possible.

Being no other business to discuss, Commissioner Treloar made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Chair Murphy, all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

The next Chatham Borough Environmental Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 8:00 P.M. The meeting will be held via Zoom conference as the “Stay at Home” order has been extended to June 15th.

Respectfully submitted,

Len Resto
Acting Recording Secretary

Cc: Mayor Thaddeus J. Kobylarz
Recording Secretary Liz Holler
Chatham Township Environmental Commission