HADDON TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Minutes

Regular Meeting

**WEDNESDAY, March 22nd, 2017, 7:30 pm**

Haddon Township Environmental and Historical Education Center

143 E. Ormond Avenue

Haddon Township, NJ 08107

Today’s meeting is a rescheduling of the regular meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 15, 2017, due to snow.

Quorum was declared at 7:23 pm.

**FLAG SALUTE**

* Commission Chair Maggi Liebe requested that all who choose to stand for the flag salute.

**CONFIRMATION OF SUNSHINE LAW**

* M. Liebe announced that Chapter 231, Public Law 1975 requires adequate notice of this meeting be provided specifying time, place and agenda. This was done by placing the meeting date and time on the Township calendar with notice of the meeting mailed to the Courier-Post and Retrospect newspapers, and by posting the agenda on two bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and on the Haddon Township website (http://www.haddontwp.com).

**ROLL CALL**

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| Nick Boonin | Absent (excused) |
| Maggi Downham | Present |
| Marlene Finizio | Present |
| Maggi Liebe | Present |
| Erin MacMinn | Present |
| Christopher Martin | Present |
| Christopher Squazzo | Present |

Also Present:

Jessica Patterson – Camden County Steward, NJDEP Green Acres Program

**CALL TO ORDER – 7:25 pm**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: FEBRUARY 2017**

* Motion to approve – M. Liebe
	+ Seconded – E. Knoll, with unanimous consent

**RE-ORGANIZATION**

* M. Liebe announced that mayoral resolution had been drafted to appoint Patrick Mulroy to Environmental Commission.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS - OLD/NEW BUSINESS – ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA**

* **Recreational and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) –** The Environmental Commission meeting was moved to the main meeting room of the Environmental and Historical Education Center at 7:45 pm for a review of the Township’s most recently-compiled ROSI with Jessica Patterson, Camden County Steward for the NJDEP Green Acres Program. Ms. Patterson initiated the review by providing a history of Green Acres funding acquired by the Township, and provided the initial list of lands encumbered for recreational and conservation purposes. Ms. Patterson stated that any constructed facilities on encumbered lands such as basketball and tennis courts, baseball diamonds, etc. were assigned a 25-year lifespan by the NJDEP, and were expected to be removed or replaced thereafter. However, the associated lands would remain encumbered to development indefinitely. M. Liebe and C. Squazzo inquired what specific types of holdings should be included on the ROSI. Ms. Patterson responded that any municipally-owned parcels for the sole purposes of recreation and conservation are to be included, and all such fee-owned properties within the jurisdiction are automatically encumbered at the time a Green Acres grant is awarded but should still be listed for proper NJDEP review. M. Downham and M. Liebe inquired regarding whether recreation areas of schools should be included on the ROSI. Ms. Patterson stated that Board of Education (BoE)-owned properties should not be included on the ROSI, but that recreational lands of schools that are held by the BoE on lease from the Township may be included. Ms. Patterson then presented the group with the Township’s most recently-compiled ROSI on file with the Green Acres Program, which was dated for the most recent disbursement of Green Acres funding to HT on 03/31/2003 and signed off in 2006. Ms. Patterson stated that 03/31/2003 is the close of the Township’s most recent “encumbrance window,” after which any properties acquired by the Township for recreation or conservation purposes are unencumbered by Green Acres restrictions to development. M. Downham inquired regarding the reason that open spaces within West Collingswood Heights (in the vicinity of Blenheim Avenue) were unencumbered by Green Acres. M. Liebe stated that the WCH lands in question were purportedly held for future development of low-income housing at the time of the ROSI compilation. Ms. Patterson stated that, should the community proactively desire that lands be added to the ROSI (and therefore encumbered by Green Acres) in the absence of Green Acres grant disbursement, the inquiring party should email her for parcel evaluation. M. Downham and M. Liebe eagerly inquired whether the anticipated obtainment of Green Acres funding for rehabilitation of Bluebird Park (New Jersey Avenue playground / Tot Lot) would trigger a new ROSI and associated Green Acres encumbrances. Ms. Patterson stated that Green Acres funding indirectly disbursed through Camden County would not necessitate a new ROSI, and that only grants disbursed directly to municipalities by the Green Acres Program would generate a new encumbrance window. However, Ms. Patterson stated that the Green Acres Program does have a ROSI amendment process independently of new grant disbursements that is typically employed to remove encumbrances for development of lands, but this process can also be employed to add parcels to a ROSI with good reason. Ms. Patterson stated that the Green Acres Program is not concerned with the removal of trees, vegetation, or structures (and associated conversions to open fields), and that the program’s objectives are recreation and conservation. Ms. Patterson stated that, in the clearing of lands, the Green Acres Program recommends that municipalities employ a change-in-use process involving public hearings and feedback, but that the program does not consider this process as mandatory. M. Liebe stated that the Environmental Commission should focus on several open spaces by developing trails, performing clean-ups, and then moving to incorporate such areas in a new ROSI. Ms. Patterson then presented the group with the NJDEP’s current templates and instructions for ROSI submission to the Green Acres Program. Ms. Patterson stated that the current ROSI instructions allow for only portions of lots to be included for encumbrance, e.g. a pump station is present on an otherwise unoccupied lot that is intended for recreation or conservation purposes. Four spreadsheets are included in the ROSI template: 1. municipal fee-owned properties, 2. conservation-restricted properties, 3. lands held on lease e.g. BoE lands, and 4. side-by-side comparison of prior and current ROSI lands. Ms. Patterson stated that all prospective ROSI encumbrances are investigated across several different governing municipal entities to ensure that the municipality exhibits a unified intent to maintain lands for recreation or conservation purposes, so a the rhetorical scenario of a single government entity requesting ROSI addition with recreation/conservation intent wouldn’t conflict with that of another (e.g. town’s Environmental Commission wants to conserve a land that Planning Commission wants to develop). M. Downham stated that HT Environmental Commissioners alone don’t have the authority to designate such lands on the ROSI, and that only recommendations for such designations can be recommended to the Green Acres Program or HT Commissioners as justified by the HT Master Plan. Ms. Patterson recommended that the Township consider a real-time maintenance of open space inventory to simplify the official ROSI update process within the encumbrance window, and minimize the required time for inventory (and maintain sanity) during the relatively rare occurrence of a direct NJDEP Green Acres Program grant award. Ms. Patterson recommended collaborating with the Haddon Township Athletic Association (HTAA) in the inventory process. Ms. Patterson stated that NJDEP predominately relies on locals to report instances of violations of encumbrances, which are sometimes provided anonymously – e.g. utility lines traversing a lot – and that her recent review of the Haddon Township file provided no evidence of major issues or complaints. Ms. Patterson stated that she was uncertain whether the perceived lack of issues and complaints could be attributed to a legitimate absence of Green Acres-related violations, or to the municipality’s unfamiliarity with the process for reporting such violations. Ms. Patterson said to contact any of her (compliance – the “dark” side – jessica.patterson@dep.nj.gov), Terry Caruso (acquisitions – the “good” side – terry.caruso@dep.nj.gov), or Cecile Murphy (development funding – cecile.murphy@dep.nj.gov) with suspected violations or inquiries.

**AREA DISCUSSIONS**

* **Executive Committee** – No new business.
* **Grants** – M. Liebe informed the committee that a proposal was being submitted to Camden County that requests Green Acres funding for the rehabilitation / enhancement of Bluebird Park (New Jersey Avenue playground / Tot Lot).
* **Education/Community Outreach –** M. Finizio informed the committee that Comcast Cares Day was officially designated as 04/22/2017 (Earth Day), which coincides with HT’s 9th annual Green Event. E. MacMinn and C. Martin will staff Green Event exhibit as representatives of HTEC and Sustainable Haddon. M. Finizio and M. Liebe will administrate concurrent Comcast volunteer efforts. E. MacMinn announced that Jennings Elementary School PTA was awaiting Township approval of mini-grant application for the 05/20/2017 clean-up as submitted to Barbara Prince, and that the PTA was eager to generate and distribute flyers to students. M. Liebe stated that clean-up work on 05/20/2017 would be conducted in the Bettlewood section (along path to rear of Environmental Center) and along Lees Lane trails as a follow-up to Comcast Cares efforts, and reiterated that clean-up pursuits were strictly limited to trash pickup.
* **Planning Board Permits and Master Plan –** M. Downham stated that she’d be unable to attend the Planning/Zoning Board meeting on 04/06/2017. M. Downham and M. Liebe will inquire whether M. Liebe may attend as Environmental Commission liaison to the Planning/Zoning Board in M. Downham’s absence. M. Downham stated that she expects a large number of concerned residents to attend the meeting in regards to in regards to Application 17-003 for Block 22.06 Lot 28, Zone R-2 by JRB Property Group, LLC, for the Major Subdivision of 419 Maple Avenue to create three (3) conforming lots. M. Finizio may attend Planning/Zoning Board meeting as Environmental Commission expert witness due to her Civil Engineering background and associated interpretation of development plan for 419 Maple Avenue site.
* **Land Conservation and Open Space Projects –** No new business.
* **Stormwater –** No new business.
* **Newton Creek Watershed Association –** No new business.
* **Saddler’s Woods Management –** No new business.
* **Sustainability / Sustainable Haddon Township –** M. Liebe, E. MacMinn, M. Finizio, and C. Martin met with Barbara Prince immediately preceding Environmental Commission meeting to discuss Sustainable Haddon action plan and completed/proposed actions for attaining HT re-certification by Sustainable Jersey. Ms. Prince stated that, based on her experience with the process, obtainment of the highest “Silver”-level certification would be unlikely within 2017 due to expansive action requirements, but that at a minimum it was worth pursuing. M. Finizio stated that an HT brownfields inventory was conducted in recent years, and that this inventory may be applicable toward a Sustainable Jersey prerequisite brownfields action item. The attendees discussed the possibility of utilizing the Haddon Towne Center complex toward a variety of recertification action items. M. Liebe, E. MacMinn, and C. Martin informed Ms. Prince of the proposed concept for monthly seminars to be conducted at the Environmental and Historical Education Center by local subject matter experts, in regards to environmentally-focused (and related) topics. C. Martin stated that he initiated correspondence with Collingswood and Haddonfield contacts provided by Chris Waldron in regards to Park Avenue bike route proposal, but that only Haddonfield had responded with interest. Ms. Prince stated that she was in the process of revamping an action item that had been rejected in the prior Sustainable Jersey certification cycle due to insufficient documentation, in regards to HT trails and bikeability. Ms. Prince concluded the meeting by stating that she would inspect the 2014 SJ certification package for items that remained applicable toward the recertification process, and would review available action items for suitable candidate actions in 2017. Additionally, M. Liebe and C. Martin met with Caren Kaufman of Sustainable Cherry Hill and Ed Cohen of TriCounty Sustainability Alliance on 02/27/2017 to brainstorm and obtain best practices for community engagement. Ms. Kaufman suggested that HT employ the Meetup smartphone app to increase visibility, and Mr. Cohen suggested that the team employ every social media platform available to maximize exposure. Both of Ms. Kaufman and Mr. Cohen offered the respective websites and social media sites of their organizations for Sustainable Haddon postings. C. Martin stated his intent to attend the quarterly TriCounty Sustainability Alliance meeting on 03/23/2017, as well as monthly green team meetings for adjacent municipalities.

**PUBLIC AND MEMBER COMMENTS**

* M. Liebe stated C. Martin was enrolled in “Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions” training program to be held at ACUA Egg Harbor Twp facility on 04/01/2017. C. Martin stated that he’d be attending the free seminar “Right Tree – Right Place” conducted by the NJ Tree Foundation and PSE&G on 03/31/2017 in Titusville, NJ. C. Squazzo announced that the Christie Administration was seeking applications for projects to improve water quality, with the intent to distribute $10.4 million to nonprofits, local governments, and state colleges and universities.

**ADJOURNMENT**

* Motion to adjourn – E. MacMinn – 9:50 pm
	+ Seconded – M. Finizio, with unanimous consent

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday May 17th, 2017, 7:00 pm, 143 E. Ormond Avenue, Haddon Township, NJ 08107.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Martin

Secretary