

CHATHAM BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
September 9, 20218:00 p.m.

Chairman Torri Van Wie called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Environmental Commission to order at 8:00 p.m. Commissioners were present at this virtual meeting by way of Zoom. Chrnm. Van Wie read aloud the Statement of Adequate Notice. All legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Name	Present	Absent
Torri Van Wie, Chrmn.	X	
Patricia Soteropoulos, Vice Chrmn.	X	
Benjamin Lampert		X
Joseph Treloar	X	
Yana Doyle		X
Susie Robertson	X	
Rozella Clyde	X	
Ernest Dorflinger	X	
Council Member Jocelyn Mathiasen	X	
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary	X	

Public Comment

There was none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Dr. Clyde made a motion to approve the July 14, 2021 EC meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Dorflinger seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The July 14, 2021 minutes were approved as amended.

Reports/Pending Business

Introduction: Code Red

Chrmn. Van Wie shared her thoughts on Hurricane Ida and how it impacted this part of New Jersey. She pointed out that heavy precipitation has occurred this summer. Hurricanes and tropical storms have been hitting us on a more regular basis.

Chrmn. Van Wie noted that she has been reading the NY Times section on Climate Action. She felt that this latest extreme weather will be “the new normal”. Chrmn. Van Wie believed that this event was the beginning of some serious global shifts. A focus should be put on how this action will affect New Jersey, and specifically Chatham. Chrmn. Van Wie described the devastation she saw of the serious flooding in downtown Millburn from the Sept. 1st storm. It appeared that a massive amount of flood had washed through the town. Chrmn. Van Wie guessed that the stormwater from the South Mountain (Watchung Mtns.) had no where else to go but down into Millburn. The existing river in downtown Millburn simply could not handle all the stormwater.

Chrmn. Van Wie pointed out that if we take no Climate Action, it will cost our country trillions of dollars to deal with the damages and hardships. She noted a number of Chatham residents have been cleaning their basements, throwing out water-damaged items and dealing with mold.

Chrmn. Van Wie believed Climate Action should be in the forefront of the Commission’s conversations. The Commission should have more of a presence at Council meetings. The Commission could provide much needed information on Climate Action to the Council Members.

Chrmn. Van Wie believed residents will soon be exiting the coastal sections of New Jersey. She discussed a study that Princeton has done about possible future flooding for shore communities south of Spring Lake.

Chrmn. Van Wie stressed that she wasn't trying to create a dooms day scenario, she just wanted Commissioners to be aware of what the future may hold and start prioritizing Climate Action.

Dr. Clyde described what happened in the Manor Section during the September 1st storm. She thanked Council Member Mathiasen for keeping residents posted on the Community Forum the night of the storm. Dr. Clyde knew of some residents with 3 feet of water in their backyard.

Related to this topic, Dr. Clyde announced she and her husband, Jim, will be moving to Long Island before the end of this year.

Council Member Mathiasen pointed out the major storms that had struck in the past several years. She noted that new homes being built after floods and hurricanes must follow strict FEMA standards. Construction now has to become more and more resilient. That's a condition established by the National Flood Insurance Program. If a person buys property in a flood zone, they cannot get a mortgage unless they participate in this insurance program. Council Member Mathiasen suggested an expert on this new Flood Insurance come and speak to the Commission someday.

Council Member Mathiasen felt that the landscape on the New Jersey coastline will be changing a great deal. Even more homes will be built on stilts.

Council Member Mathiasen pointed out that Climate Change doesn't mean just coastal issues, it means more extreme weather everywhere. We need to be better prepared for this weather. An assessment has to be done on our infrastructure. Council Member Mathiasen recommended that the Environmental Commission focus more on emissions, and maybe less on recycling. Emissions and resilience are very critical. She suggested the Commissioners present three priorities to the Mayor and Council.

Chrmn. Van Wie agreed, stating that the Commission could give such a presentation every year to the Mayor and Council to keep certain issues on their radar.

Mr. Treloar brought up the recent flooding conditions, as a result of the Sept. 1st storm, impacting the grounds of Milton Ave. School. Kelley's Pond became an actual lake.

Speaking as a member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, Mr. Treloar noted that the number of applications that come before the Board are seeking variances for lot coverage. He suggested the Borough's lot coverage ordinance be looked at again, especially in the wake of recent storms and flooding. Mr. Treloar felt that the Environmental Commission could have a bigger say on some of the applications being submitted to the Zoning Board. Commissioners could submit comments on applications.

Dr. Clyde discussed a segment in Sustainable Jersey which asked that the storm water ordinance to go above and beyond what the minimum requirement was particularly in the matter of creating more pervious surfaces in parking areas and along streets.

At this point, a resident Lisa Allocco, a Zoom guest, expressed her interest in the Commission and its activities. She did not have a specific issue to bring up at tonight's meeting.

Chrmn. Van Wie welcomed Mrs. Allocco. She indicated that the Borough's Green Team could always need an extra member. Dr. Clyde invited Mrs. Allocco to the Green Team meeting next Wednesday. She will send Mrs. Allocco the Zoom invitation.

Borough Counsel Liaison Report

Council Member Mathiasen reported that Vince DeNave has now departed as Borough Engineer and Zoning Officer. The Borough

Council has been trying to separate the different responsibilities/jobs that Mr. DeNave had undertaken for the Borough. The Borough Council has decided that a part time Zoning/Planning person should be hired. At the next Council Meeting, a new Zoning person will be hired. He/she will also serve as the Borough's Code Enforcement Officer. This person will be in charge of reviewing plans which may need variances. Also, this person will have to handle complaints about maintenance issues on properties.

Council Member Mathiasen reported that an engineering firm will be hired to look at the Borough's storm sewer issues and will oversee the Borough's capital improvement projects. A Borough Planner will be hired to work on the Borough's Master Plan.

Council Member Mathiasen noted that Madison Borough has been doing Chatham Borough's zoning reviews so far. However, by the next Commission meeting, Chatham Borough should have a Planning and Zoning Official in place.

Council Member Mathiasen would like to have a Technical Review Committee review the more complicated commercial applications that are submitted to the Borough. Representatives from Emergency Services, the Historic Preservation Commission, and other entities will have a chance to review these plans. Any recommendations to these plans can be shepherded through by the Borough Planner.

Planning Board Liaison Report

Chrmn. Van Wie reported that the Planning Board had met recently to discuss a section of River Road in the Borough. The Board is evaluating each property in this section to see whether they meet the criteria of whether these properties are in need of re-development. Chrmn. Van Wie noted that there are a number of Chatham Borough owned properties that are sitting adjacent to the Passaic River. She wondered if there was any possibility of installing solar equipment that could provide

either a small micro-grid or, at minimum, start generating electricity for that area, and reduce electricity costs for those living in that section. Council Member Mathiasen recalled that the builder of the future building on River Road found that they could do a usable amount of solar on the building. It's better than no solar at all on the building. However, this topic can be re-visited in the future. Council Member Mathiasen pointed out that most of the river front areas on that street are in a flood zone area. In a FEMA flood zone, there are many restrictions on what can be done those areas. Chrmn. Van Wie asked Council Member Mathiasen if she could email her the name of the solar consultant that Borough Engineer Vince DeNave had used. Council Member Mathiasen agreed.

Climate Action Plan Resolution

Chrmn. Van Wie asked Council Member Mathiasen for an update.

Council Mathiasen stated that she will ask Mayor Kobylarz to do a thorough read-over of the resolution. If Mr. Kobylarz feels comfortable with it, this resolution can then go on the Borough Council Agenda.

Chrmn. Van Wie felt a Public Statement should be done at least done for this resolution that Mr. Dorflinger had worked on, especially because of the recent extreme weather we've experienced. The public needs to know that Climate Action is making progress.

EC Meeting with Borough Council

Chrmn. Van Wie asked Council Member Mathiasen if the Commission could meet with the Borough Council on an annual basis to discuss issues. Could such a meeting take place in November?

Council Member Mathiasen said she will speak with Borough Administrator Williams about this. She suggested waiting until February when the Borough Council decides what matters will need to be addressed in the coming months.

EV charging station ordinance

Chrmn. Van Wie noted that today Governor Murphy has put out a model ordinance for EV charging stations. She and Mr. Treloar will informally meet to review this model ordinance and see how it relates to Chatham.

NJSMA – Climate Action Template Update

Chrmn. Van Wie reported that the NJSMA has worked hard to come up with a template that all towns can leverage, and certainly Chatham can use it. Chrmn. Van Wie and Dr. Clyde have been working on a detailed template that all can use. The final product will probably be ready by the end of this year.

Stormwater

Dr. Clyde recommended that the Borough's stormwater ordinance be revisited. The stormwater ordinance that had been passed by the Borough Council contained the minimum requirements given by Sustainable Jersey for Chatham Borough to obtain valuable points. Dr. Clyde felt that the Borough's parking surfaces and road surfaces should be looked at, to help the Borough go beyond the State minimum.

Chrmn. Van Wie felt it was important to have someone on the Environmental Commission or Green Team on understands how water flows. Perhaps something could be posted on the Community Forum that this particular volunteer was needed.

Dr. Clyde pointed out that Commissioners should still make a site visit to the Madison-Chatham Joint Sewage Plant to help them better understand this stormwater issue. It would help Commissioners to understand what the Borough has in place.

Chrmn. Van Wie asked that any Commissioners interested in this topic, to please email her. If no one replies, then the Commission then needs to recruit someone.

Power grid and Undergrounding Committee (JCP &L)

Dr. Clyde reported that some communication has been held with JCP & L. They have agreed to do a study looking at three different blocks as a model – one a light use, one a medium use, and one a heavy use – in terms of what it would cost to do undergrounding in those particular areas in Chatham Borough. JCP & L has agreed to submit estimates for undergrounding in these three different areas. Mayor Kobylarz has been involved in the discussions regarding this project.

Chrmn. Van Wie asked where will the funds be coming from for the Borough to work with JCP & L on this project.

Dr. Clyde didn't know. She pointed out that JCP & L wanted their engineers paid for the time they are putting in for this study.

Council Member Mathiasen answered that the money would come out of the Borough's General Fund. The Borough Council would have to see how the study cost, then it would have to compete with other funds. Council Member Mathiasen stated she would like to see a comprehensive stormwater study be done for the Borough by a civil engineer. Commissioners discussed what money may be available in their own budget.

Chrmn. Van Wie suggested a list be made of flooding areas in the Borough to provide guidance to the engineer(s) in this stormwater study.

Vice Chrmn. Soteropoulos pointed out that many residents took video clips of the recent flooding areas in town. These could all be included in the stormwater study. Chrmn. Van Wie suggested that the Commission post a request on Facebook asking for residents' clips on the recent flooding in parts of the Borough. Council Member Mathiasen suggested the Commission obtain data from Public Works and the Police Department since they would know exactly where the serious flooding was occurring the night of that extreme storm (Sept. 1st). She noted that the flooding had almost entirely receded by 5 - 6 a.m. when Borough Administrator Steve Williams had arrived in town.

Council Member Mathiasen put the FEMA Flood Zone Map of Chatham Borough up on the Zoom screen. She explained the color coding used on this map to show the different levels of flooding, if any, that could occur. Council Member Mathiasen suggested that Commissioners could look up their own neighborhood on this flood map. She also explained “the rain tax” in New Jersey.

EV Charging Grant Money

Chrmn. Van Wie believed that it will arrive at some point.

Energy Aggregation Consultant

Chrmn. Van Wie said the Commission will continue trying to put this topic on a Borough Council meeting agenda with Mr. Williams’ help. As a first step, the Borough attorneys should review this matter.

Fishawack 2021

Dr. Clyde reported that Janice Piccolo has reserved the area across from the gazebo, by the Bank of America. Eleven parking spaces will be reserved for the Environmental Commission. Chatham High School students have put together panels for Earth Day. These panels will be installed on the grass or close to the gazebo. Ms. Robertson has created a banner that will be posted to advertise the EV Show on Fishawack Day. Dr. Clyde reported on the composting exhibits that will also be on display that day. The Green Team will be planning their work schedule for the festival. Boy Scout Troop 8 will help with set-up.

Dr. Clyde showed the PDF version of the Fishawack Flyer created by Janice Piccolo. She pointed out that Fishawack this year will be a three day event; however, the Environmental Commission and the Green Team will be participating only on Saturday.

Mrs. Robertson reported that she has between 10 or 12 car dealers lined up for Fishawack. She reviewed the names. The Chatham Township Police Dept. will be bringing in their hybrid police car between 10 a.m.

and 12 p.m. Mrs. Robertson reviewed the work done by two Chatham High School Green Team members to help with this event. She also explained the special signage she will have for each vehicle on display, giving credit to each car dealer. Mrs. Robertson will send information to post on Social Media about this event. She will talk further with Mr. Treloar about the electric vehicle display in the future.

Chrmn. Van Wie thanked Mrs. Robertson, Mr. Treloar, Dr. Clyde and others for all their hard work on the Commission's Fishawack displays.

At 9:40 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Environmental Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 13, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary

cc: Chatham Township Environmental Commission
Mayor Thaddeus Kobylarz

