



TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Approved Minutes

For the regular meeting of
Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Note: this meeting was conducted and recorded using a Zoom videoconferencing application.

* The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by Nora Sirbaugh.

Statement of Compliance & Roll Call

Members present: Nora Sirbaugh, Rex Parker, Andrew Plunkett, Jim Gambino, Mark Bean,
Paul Kinney and Mike Aucott

Members absent: George Kerr, Vanessa Sandom

Also present: Mark Kataryniak - Twp Administrative Officer

Courtney Peters-Manning – Twp Liaison

Members of the Public present: none

Minutes for Approval

The March 16, 2021 draft minutes were approved – Motion, Paul; 2nd Mike; all in favor.

Action: Jim will forward these minutes to Jaimie Laird for posting on the Township website.

Zoning Board Application Reviews

Case No. 21-05: Hobson Garage Expansion

Block 75.06, Lot 5; 12 Blackfoot Road;

R-100 Zoning District

Bulk Variance; Garage addition & Drive expansion

We reviewed and discussed the application together with Mark K. The proposed project will exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage area of 15 % for properties located in the R-100 zone. We understand the applicant needs to remove approximately 44 sq. ft. of impervious cover to not exceed the limit.

Lots exceeding the maximum impervious coverage area have an adverse affect on our community and environment by increasing storm-water run-off and flooding, sedimentation of our streams, and other impacts to water bodies including loss of biodiversity and degradation of water quality. The cumulative effects of multiple approvals are of serious concern.

For the above reasons we do not recommend approving this application unless the excess lot coverage can be effectively mitigated on site into the future.

Case No. 21-06: Bozarth Deck & Patio Expansion

Block 78.15, Lot 29; 3 Welwyn Court;

R-5 Zoning District

Bulk Variance; Deck & Patio Expansion

We reviewed and discussed the application together with Mark K. and have no environmental concerns for the proposed project.

Case No. 21-07: **Kleber Deck**

Block 48, Lot 25; 21 Timberlane Drive;
R-100 Zoning District
Bulk Variance/Appeal of Zoning Officer Decision;
Deck addition & Two AC Units

We reviewed and discussed the application together with Mark K. This project falls within the 150 foot stream corridor buffer of Baldwin’s Creek. We understand that if the Board approves this application, the applicant will then need to apply for a stream corridor permit from the township.

Action: Jim will prepare and send our review comments via memo to Jaimie Laird to post with these applications on the Township website.

Planning Board Application Review

1. The Collection at Hopewell

Block 85, Lots 3 & 9; 12 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, 1646 Reed Road
Block 86, Lots 32, 33, 34 & 130; 24 & 26 Diverty Road
IMF-X Zoning District
Preliminary & Final Major Subdivision & Site Plan

We reviewed and discussed the application together with Mark K. and have the following concerns.

Climate Change

We believe we should employ every reasonable means possible to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable energy sources. This applies to any new construction. While we would like to see the use of extra building insulation, rooftop solar panels and/or community solar throughout the development, we understand this is not a requirement and would create an added expense for the project. However, the contract does require all buildings to be “solar ready” by including conduit for future solar systems. We also believe the applicant can incorporate light-colored (white) roofing on all buildings to diminish heat gain without additional cost. We suggest the applicant consider adding electric car charging stations where appropriate, since electric vehicles will become more dominant in the near future.

Ecosystem

We understand there are no streams on the property. The plans show adequate buffers for all wetland areas, although there are some improvements shown in wetland transition areas.

Although the project contains green infrastructure such as bioswales, rain gardens and porous pavement areas, there is minimal green infrastructure shown in the southern portion of the project between the gas pipeline and Diverty Road residences. We understand there are five stormwater basins proposed for this project, although the plans contain no details as to how the basins will be constructed or vegetated.

We recommend the applicant establish an Integrated Pest Management plan and incorporate biological controls to mitigate any mosquito issues and diminish the need to use pesticides.

The following list of native plants is appropriate for use in and around the basins since they will attract beneficial “mosquito eating” insects and birds:

- Terrestrial plants - *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Asclepias incarnate*, *Eupatorium fitulosum*, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Liatris spicata*, and *Helenium autumnale*
- Aquatic plants - *Sagittaria latifolia*, *Vallisneria americana*, *Nymphaea odorata*, *Equisetum fluviatile*, and *Pontederia cordata*

Flat rocks placed around the basins would provide Dragonflies a place to sun, and strategically placed birdhouses designed for Purple Martins and Tree Swallows would provide nearby homes for these mosquito eating predators. The planting of drought tolerant grasses throughout the development, such as Meyer Zoysia Grass, would reduce water usage and diminish the need for fertilizers and their associated pollution problems.

We believe the above measures will benefit this development by providing more enjoyable time outdoors for residents, more picturesque scenery for resident yards, common spaces, and anthropogenic and natural aquatic ecosystems, and lead to healthier residents and a healthier ecosystem.

Lighting

The Township’s lighting ordinance states that “Minimal required levels of illumination are to be used in all applications. All lighting shall be designed, selected and installed both to prevent negative impacts caused by misdirected or excessive light and to conserve energy.”

The application fails to meet these requirements. We believe that 141 lighting installations are excessive for the proposed development and recommend significantly reducing this amount to the minimum required. There are only 10 existing street lights on the surrounding roads outside this development.

The luminaires are not described in detail in the plans. The township desires to minimize light pollution and the lighting ordinance requires zero uplight using full cut-off fixtures. Even full cutoff fixtures cause skyglow from reflected and scattered light in direct proportion to the number of fixtures in a given area. The Township’s lighting ordinance also specifies that LED color temperature for residential applications should be 2700K.

Trees - Landscaping

We recommend this project strive to minimize tree loss, land disturbances, and adverse environmental impacts for its duration. While the applicant conducted sample tree surveys at two locations, we question whether there are any significant trees located in non-surveyed areas of the property. Therefore, we request that the applicant identify any Specimen Tree as defined in the Township’s Woodlands Ordinance. We therefore recommend a full accounting of all proposed tree removal, and a tree preservation and replacement mitigation plan for this project as per the township’s ordinance.

We note that many landscape planting choices are not native species as required by the Township’s Landscape Ordinance. All plantings should be chosen from the Township’s approved plant list. Of special concern is the *Ulmus parvifolia*, the Chinese elm. This plant is on the US Invasive species list and has contributed to a significant decline of native species. For a similar habit to the *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Dawn Redwood, we recommend the US

native Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*. Native sugar maples, *Acer saccharum*, are extremely sensitive to road pollutants and salts. This should be considered in placement.

While our landscape ordinance is specific to woody plants, we also note several non-native herbaceous plants. *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (native to Asia) is listed in the Invasive Plant Atlas of the United States and should not be planted. Also, for a similar profile to the *Liriope muscari*, consider some of the American *carex* spp or, for wetter sites, *Acorus americanus*.

A monoculture may occur with the proposed street/shade tree selections. We recommend diversifying these plantings so similar species do not occur one after another. The project should alternate species 1,2,3,4 wherever possible. We would be happy to work with the contractor on this as work progresses.

There is concern with the use of street trees being planted on top of the bio-retention swale piping. Lastly, we recommend additional plantings along the projects' Southern boundary to create a perpetual visual screen since some evergreens tend to lose their lower branches with age.

We also note the Van Cleef Engineering Review Report contains a more thorough plant review, and we agree with their findings and suggestions.

Parking

The Environmental Impact Statement shows the project has more parking spaces (943) than that which is required (828) for the number of bedrooms in the proposed community. This will result in additional and unnecessary impervious cover. We recommend reducing the number of parking spaces to the minimum required and thereby reduce the total amount of asphalt.

Recreation/Open Space

The Community Impact Statement predicts the project will have 800 (+/-) residents living here, and none will have their own yards. The project does not appear to contain adequate open space for these residents. A dog park and community garden is shown, but the plans contain no playgrounds or other recreation areas or opportunities.

Action: Jim will prepare and send our review comments via memo to Linda Barbieri to post on the Township website.

Subcommittee Reports / Discussions / Updates for on-going projects

1. **Twp Committee Liaison Report** - [Courtney reported that the Township](#) applied for a \$20,000 Sustainable NJ grant to construct a connector section of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail at Mt Rose, and also applied for recertification to Tree City USA. The Committee heard a presentation about the St Michaels' Carbon Sequestration Project, and passed the new stormwater ordinance.
2. **Planning Board Liaison Report** – Rex reported his discussion with NJ Resources and their desire to work with the developers of the Twp's affordable housing projects to create solar demonstration projects.
3. **Zoning Board Report** – none
4. **EC Members Outreach Articles**

Members agreed to write environmental outreach articles for 2021. Topics will be posted on the Twp web site's EC issue page. Topics may include: leaf mulching, septic system maintenance (Mike); dark sky, pesticide reduction & chemical fertilizers (Rex); trees (Jim); recycling, plastics (Paul); native plants, native gardens, turf lawns (Andrew); healthy food (Vanessa), responsible gardening (Nora). Lead in drinking water (Ray - already submitted), perhaps arsenic in drinking water (Mike & Twp Health Dept).

We decided the submittal protocol would be to send your article to members for review. Replies shall only go back to the author (i.e. do not reply all). We will discuss the article at our next meeting. Upon approval, the article will be sent to Reba Holley, the Township's Communications and Outreach Manager, for posting on the Twp website and social media.

Andrew's article is ready for posting.

Mark B said he would draft an article about stormwater basin naturalization.

Actions: members should draft their article.

New Business

1. Grant Award for Native Display Garden Project

This project recently received a grant award from the Hardy Plant Society's Mid-Atlantic Group.

Actions: Mark K. and Andrew will meet to decide on site location(s) and signage to be used.

2. Carbon Fee & Dividend

Mike informed us that a related bill was reintroduced in Congress. Members agreed to send a resolution to the twp Committee urging them to support the carbon fee/dividend initiative and have them urge Representative Bonnie Watson-Coleman to do the same.

Actions: Mike will prepare a draft resolution for review at our next meeting.

Announcements & Correspondence

1. Going forward, Nora asked all members to send agenda items to her.
2. Nora planted the Salem Oak tree the Twp received at her home.
3. We discussed the current tree removal being conducted for PSEG's new high voltage line. This utility work is exempt from requirements of our Woodlands Protection Ordinance.

* The meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm: Motion – Mike, 2nd Mark B.; all in favor.

Our next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Gambino
Secretary