



EWING GREEN TEAM

Promoting People, the Planet, and Prosperity in Ewing



SEPTEMBER 26, 2019 MINUTES

Location: Ewing Senior and Community Center

Present

Joanne Mullowney
Evan Crumiller
John Hoegl
Joe Mirabella
Lisa Feldman
Heidi Furman
Caroline Steward
Sarah Steward
Kylie King
Garry Keel
Mary Wetherbee

Absent

Malissa Arnold (not excused)

Guests

Donna Morgan

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by Joanne Mullowney. The minutes from 3 months, June, July, and August, were all approved.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ESCC POLLINATOR GARDEN PLANTING

The planting date for the pollinator garden in front of the Ewing Community and Senior Center on Lower Ferry Road is set for Saturday morning, September 28th. This is a project funded by a \$1500 grant from ANJEC (Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions). Ewing Public Works have dug up the L-shape area in front of the Community Center. They were also supposed to prepare a circular planting area but came across an underground wire that no one knew about. This is certainly something that needs to be researched so this area will not be dug up for now; but will be prepared in the Spring. They are having PSE&G coming out to investigate the wire.

Joanne has organized the native plants to be delivered in time for the planting on Saturday, September 28th. She has coordinated volunteers from local girl and Boy Scout troops, and several gardeners who are interested in the wildlife gardening program. If anyone is interested in helping from the Green Team; it will be starting at 8:00 am with a Power Point presentation explaining the native plants selected and their wildlife value.

MCIA HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL DAY



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MCIA is hosting their hazardous waste collection day on Saturday, September 28th from 8-2 at the Dempster Center. John wanted to know if they would take hi-pressure tanks? Not sure so suggested he call to confirm.

SHRED DAY

October 12th will be the last shred day of the year by Ewing's Public Works. Joanne will send out a Sign-Up genius asking for volunteers to help from 9-1:00.

NEED TO KNOW

Joanne gave a brief overview about two items that all members should be aware of: Recycle Coach and Ewing Township alerts.

RECYCLE COACH

Reminder about the helpful recycling program that we promoted at Community Fest—Recycle Coach. You enter on your phone by your address and it gives you reminders for recycling and garbage days, hazardous waste disposal days, shred days, etc. You can also ask questions about items you want to see how to recycle using the What Goes Where feature; it will suggest options and resources.

COMMUNITY NOTIFICATIONS

You can sign up to receive alerts with agendas for upcoming Council, Planning and Zoning Board meetings via the Community Notification system, Swift911, available from the Township home page. You can go to Ewingnj.org and register online, via Swift911. This includes Mayor's Messages.

HOME DEPOT UPDATE

This is an Update on Home Depot and the on-going litter problem with their parking lot and stream. After our very successful stream clean-up, where we removed over 3 tons of garbage; our subsequent contact with Home Depot and the status of maintaining a cleaner facility has been very disappointing. We are not the only group that has tried to help. A local Girl Scout troop contacted the Manager to offer to help, but the Manager said he has hired someone full-time to take care of the parking lot and litter problem.

However, that being said, the parking lot does not seem any better. Several people said they have stopped shopping there because of the dirty and littered parking lot. They have complained to the management, but they have not seen any improvement. Maybe if they realize they are losing business they would be more proactive. To be fair, this is not the only business in Town with this problem. If Ewing had enough Code Enforcement staffing to check various businesses, it would help. But the Township has staffing shortages in Code Enforcement. It was suggested that we might contact DEP to report a problem. However, most felt that it would be better to build alliances and good relationships with local businesses so they would care about public sentiment. We will continue to monitor and see if it gets any better with the full-time worker cleaning in the parking lot.



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It has also been noted that the stream where we did the clean-up along the parking lot at Home Depot now has the Algae Bloom that has affected many lakes and waterways in NJ and people should not go in.

TREE ORDINANCE UPDATE

The update about the tree ordinance is that there is no update. The proposed ordinance passed the Planning Board review and has disappeared. The attempt to have a tree ordinance passed in Ewing has been an ongoing struggle spearheaded by the Environmental Commission for years. An article in Science Journal details how critical trees are and how much they can contribute to reducing global warming. We NEED to move forward to protect our tree canopy in Ewing. This is a critical issue everywhere. Look at birds; since the 1970's the world has lost 40% of our bird populations. The time to get something done is now. This is no longer a luxury.

This is an issue the Green Team should focus on and coordinate our efforts such as making sure a member is at every Town Council Meeting to bring up the Tree Ordinance. It was suggested that we contact each Council member individually and updated on the importance of the Tree Ordinance.

OPEN SPACE PLAN

The issue of open space is also one of our big issues and will be discussed at the next Planning Board Meeting, the first Thursday in October at 7 pm.

SUSTAINABLE JERSEY UPDATE

Joanne has received two responses on our recent re-submissions- 'Greening Your Green Fair' - we did not get credit because they were recommending changes for upcoming Green Fairs such as holding them outside. We did receive credit for the Prescription Drug (Project Medicine Drop) Recycling. This was our 3rd priority action. Joanne projected that we should end up with around 500 points and with the 3rd priority action accepted; we should be re-certified Silver.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ARTS

Lisa Feldman reported the Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt was just about ready to start with 36 Scarecrows hosted throughout Ewing. We were really pleased that our 1st year seems to be off to a great beginning for this new annual event for Ewing. We're gotten a lot of positive feedback from people excited about the idea and think (hope) this will be successful. Joanne and Lisa will be going around on Friday, the 27th, to make sure each one is in place with the name of the Scarecrow and secret word attached for 'hunters' to find. There will be a drawing for a \$200 cash prize and people can qualify for multiple entries in the drawing for the prize depending on how many of the Scarecrows they find. And the 'hunters' will vote for their favorite and the business/organization will receive a \$100 towards their favorite charity.



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Ballots with the clues to find each scarecrow will be at both Hollowbrook and the ESCC, as well as the Clerk's Office, the library, and online at the Ewing Green Team website to download for hunters. We had a small but hard-working committee who put in a lot of work throughout the summer to put this into place.

Plus, we also have our traditional Scarecrow contest; this is the 6th year and it will be held here at the Community Center. These are the scarecrows that must be made of at least 80% recycled materials in order to qualify for cash prizes. And this year people will vote for their favorites. 1st prize is \$200 and 2nd prize is \$100. Sims Metal Management is donating \$385 which will go towards prizes.

The Scarecrow Contest is part of the annual Trunk-or-Treat festivities and this year we have expanded the event an additional hour. So, in addition to the Trunk-or-Treat, Scarecrow Contest, we have pumpkin painting and an additional craft for kids (birdhouses out of recycled materials), refreshments and we're excited to add music and storytelling by local Ewing entertainers Tim and Jennifer Hoh.

We'll put out a Sign-up genius closer to the event asking for volunteers to help with all the activities.

BIKE RIDE

September 21, Gary Keel, the organizer said it was a big success with about 45-50 riders this year. The weather was perfect; people all seemed to have a great time. They liked the 3 stops and just enjoyed the conversation and getting to know new Ewing people. It seemed that the 12 miles is a good length and works well for most of the riders. Only one person went about half-way but was still happy. Police did an excellent job and stayed with the riders. This was Officer Jacobs' 2nd year and he was experienced knowing what to do. Hart's cyclery did a great job – all volunteer but very much appreciated.

This was a nice community-oriented committee and they did a fantastic job getting the word out. In fact, one of the riders, a student from TCNJ, wants to join the committee. 37 people had signed up in advance and then 12 signed on that day. Many said the signs around town were how they learned about the ride. Ted is going to send out a survey. Gary is sending out thank yous. Since there were about 50 registrations at \$20 each; the charity, the Bike Ride was donating to this year is HomeFront and should get about a \$1000.00 donation.

The riders loved that it was part of Community Fest and could just go on over to enjoy the day's festivities after the ride. The only negative was the restroom situation before the ride began. It seemed that a lot of people were going over to Panera Bread and since they were only there to use the restrooms; it might not have been appreciated. Next year will need to think about that.

DEER SITUATION

Joe Mirabella reported on a program that he and John attended to learn about available programs and what can be done. This was run by Mercer County. There is a new program controlling populations in parks by hunters – a healthy population is 15-25 deer/square mile vs. unhealthy 70-140/square mile which is what we have. With the new hunting program, they hope to bring down the numbers to about 50/square mile.



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Contrary to popular belief, there is no birth control that works for controlling deer population. Princeton uses the company White Buffalo with highly trained hunters. Their dramatic reduction of the deer population in Princeton has dramatically reduced accidents about 60%, but this takes years to set up to see results.

The gardening for wildlife helps teach about what you can plant that deer won't eat, but there is nothing reliable. If deer are hungry enough, they will eat anything. But with no natural predator the deer population has no deterrent so with their growing numbers many of them starve.

ENERGY

John Hoegl attended the September 19th Direct Install workshop hosted by Mercer County's Department of Economic Development. This is the program that will provide 70% cost savings to businesses upgrading the energy needs of their facilities. It was held at the Boathouse at the Mercer County Park. It was hoped that more businesses would attend and learn about the program. The last time Ewing held an advertised public open house to encourage businesses to take advantage of this program only 3 businesses attended. John thought there were more Green Team members from the various municipalities than businesses in attendance.

They had a speaker from HomeFront who had taken advantage of the 70% costs savings to upgrade their building's heating/ac and lighting. For some reason people do not seem to appreciate the big savings this offers. They did film the presentation so hopefully it can be used to reach more businesses. John said he and the other committee members hope to go door-to-door to various businesses to see if the direct approach has better results. So far, the message is just not getting to the right people.

Solar energy seems to be growing in Ewing. The Fire Department has a list of everyone who has solar panels on their home.

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Glen Steinberg and Joanne Mullowney presented this program to the West Trenton Garden Club on September 9th. They had almost 50 people attend; it's a very popular topic. People seem to want free advice on what they need to do. The reception to this has been very positive and each presentation does help Ewing earn more points to certification from the National Wildlife Federation. It just needs proof of the presentation such as photos and list of attendees. Joanne has offered to go out to the homes of 1-2 people to offer suggestions.

GREEN BUSINESS RECOGNITION

Evan Crumiller will be gearing up again. Summer was very slow.

RECYCLING

Kylie and a couple of her friends did the plastic bag survey and gave reusable bags to shoppers at Shoprite. The students helped present the surveys and they gave shoppers the reusable bags as incentives.



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OUTSIDE BOARD UPDATES

COUNCIL UPDATE

Sarah reported that there are multiple municipalities in New Jersey working on ordinances addressing single-use plastic bags. The bill that had been working itself through the NJ Legislation was vetoed by Governor Murphy as not strong enough. It would prevent towns from taking stronger measures.

A lot of municipalities have advanced their own single use ban. Our Council is considering such a ban. So far in Mercer County only Hopewell Borough has passed an ordinance. The single use item can be straws, cutlery and plastic bags. The problem is how would this be enforced?

The belief is that once a fee is imposed people do change their behavior. ANJEC has a sample resolution, wherein they recommend no retailer provide plastic for one-time only use. Code Enforcement staff can give written warnings. We are looking at what other towns have done. ANJEC can supply a list of NJ towns with plastic pollution ordinances.

It was suggested that the 'positive re-enforcement' approach might work whereby at checkout, the retailer would not automatically offer a plastic bag, but rather, ask if the shopper needs a bag.

What can the Green Team do to help? Realistically to have an ordinance pass; it will take some time. Research and education would need to be conducted as this would be creating a burden on retailers in town.

ETRA

Joe Mirabella - haven't met for a couple of months.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

They are concentrating on Tree Ordinance.

PLANNING BOARD

Their September meeting included the 'Freddie's' Restaurant and plans for apartments initiatives. There was a huge turn-out. The applicant was not asking for variances and many things about the plans are in the Master Plan and zoned for the Town Center Zone so the Board could not find fault.

EWING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Kylie gave us the school update. They did a clean-up of courtyard, 7' tall sunflowers need to be removed. Since no one takes care of the gardens over the summer there is a lot of clean-up to get everything ready.

A new exciting program for the High School Green Team is working with robotics to create a 'farmbot' – a robot that will help in the garden. It plants; it tells you when to plant and when to water. The garden



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will have 1 bed of herbs, 1 for fruits and vegetables and 1 for peas and tomatoes. Mrs. Ruffennach is still the teacher advisor involved with the group.

CONCLUSION

Joanne asked if there would be interest in having a beekeeper attend our next meeting and talk about his hobby – Jeff Burd from Ewing Township will hopefully attend the October meeting, on the 23rd. She will check out his availability.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted.

Lisa K. Feldman