

Madison Environmental Commission
Meeting February 25, 2021

Minutes

In attendance: Claire Whitcomb, Bridget Daley, Kirsten Wallenstein, Trina Mallik, Ann Huber, Stephan Stocker, Joan Maccari, Ellen Kranefuss

Absent: John Hoover, council liaison

Guests: Brett Cheadle, Brian Pinke, Professor Alex Bajcz, Peter Fried

- Claire Whitcomb: Welcome and OPRA announcement
- EV Expo: Peter Fried
 - 4/22, Earth Day, afternoon (possibly 2-5 PM)
 - EV dealers coming to Sunday Motor Co.
 - Hosted by Environmental Commissions of Chatham & Madison
 - Tesla, Porsche, BMW, Honda, Volvo will have cars there; hopefully Chevy also
- Green Vision Forum: Kirsten Wallenstein
 - 3/24, 6:30 PM
 - Green teams of Madison public schools & universities (College of Saint Elizabeth; Drew? FDU?) share their green vision for their campus & school
 - First time virtually
- Alex Bacjz, Assistant Professor of Biology & Environmental Science at Drew
 - Hired to spearhead the new Environmental Science program. He specializes in applied plant biology
 - Tasked with teaching an advanced Environmental Science course, wants to focus this on applied science ("doing"), community-based learning (CBL)
 - He's a [Project Pericles](#) fellow / they have a Project Pericles chapter at Drew; program promotes civic engagement & social justice
 - Local business environmental consulting clients (1 per student team): Daddy Matty's, Harvest Bistro, Crowley Cupcakes, YMCA
 - 15 students, divided into 4 teams, providing each client with option of one of 4 services, each of which requires a climate change throughline:
 - Cost benefit analysis
 - Carbon footprint or emissions calculation
 - Environmental or climate risk assessment
 - Or action plan
 - Endeavoring to collect and provide information that's engaging and informative, that can open the businesses' horizons, help them be more ready for the next climate-related crisis. Preparing students for real-world climate consulting work.
 - Student Brett Cheadle, working with Harvest Bistro:

- Leaning toward climate adaptation / mitigation plan for each location, exiting or new
 - Dr. Bacjz is seeking a "food and climate" expert, guest speaker. Some suggestions presented:
 - Food and Climate presentation at Madison Public Library on March 8 at 7:30 PM
 - [PK's Four Brothers Farm](#) -- regenerative farmer in Mendham
 - Java's Compost -- does commercial & residential food waste pickup
 - Claire asked if we could attend final presentations. Yes, but TBD based on availability of the clients and not sure when. Claire suggested for possible second presentation to town officials, residents and businesses.
 - Sustainable Madison can be a resource to the students
 - Claire sees that this project could help the MEC start a broader conversation with the business community
 - Dr. Bacjz is a cruciverbalist (crossword puzzle specialist)
 - Crowley's Cupcakes is thinking about offsetting carbon footprint by adding an extra charge to certain cupcakes to collect funds toward tree planting
- Brian Pinke, Americorp NJ Watershed Ambassador - Area 6 (Upper Passaic, Whippany and Rockaway Watersheds; based out of GSWA office)
 - Program co-funded by NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)
 - In conjunction with NJDEP, do water quality assessments and water and stream cleanup projects
 - Collaborating with Stephan Stocker in planting 500 trees at Madison Recreational Center to improve health of area & act as a sound barrier and wind break -- area between DOT fence that separates Madison from Rt. 124 and the deer
 - With Girl Scouts, project to get 500 trees in the ground between April 11 (250 then) and next fall (another 250, date TBD)
 - Boro's Open Space Committee Fund provided \$3,000 funding for the tree planting project (1,000 trees in total). In-kind donations of labor from the NJ Watershed Ambassadors, Girl Scouts, troop leaders and parents match or exceed contribution from the Open Space Fund
 - 5 species of trees, discounted rate for bundled bare-root trees from Arbor Day Foundation
 - Stephen says there's a second spot for planting trees.
 - Brian is also doing a rain barrel workshop on May 15 -- importance of, how to use & maintain them, participants putting together and taking one home
 - Also potentially an invasive species presentation. Other presentation options he can do:
 - History of NJ Geology & Rivers (Brian's own talk)
 - Leave No Trace
 - Road Salt and Alternative Solutions, including citizen science
 - Watershed model demonstration

- Brian can help find an Ambassador to help with projects, such as the Summerhill Park knotweed removal (Parks) and invasives removal (numerous species) at MRC
- Claire Whitcomb -- discussion of site development behind Provident Bank building
 - Developer wants to increase pervious coverage; MEC against that waiver, proposes alternatives
 - A big issue is energy and utilities. All new construction should be designed with NJ Energy Master Plan goals in mind, including 90% building electrification by 2050
 - Other issues are detailed -- See attached written response letter from MEC.
 - Additional comment from Stephen Stocker: No parking shown in plan? Where are people going to park?
- May Day discussion
 - Bridget asked if May Day could be an opportunity for community volunteer help with removing invasives. Stephen pointed out that much of it is rough because it's thorny and tangled plants like Japanese barberry & rose.
 - Can we help educate people on how to properly mulch trees, not "volcano mulching" as Stephen mentioned, which is damaging to trees
 - Bridget will reach out to Gene Cracovia to see if STMB can produce a "best practices for mulching trees" handout -- 1/3 page handout for May Day volunteer registrants, also share digitally on social media & via email
- Claire attended recent Zoning Board meeting. Chair Joseph Santoro invited MEC to present at an upcoming meeting.
- Trina Mallik, Madison Climate Action Meeting update
 - Peter has done Madison carbon footprint analysis
 - 66% of our GHG emissions are from built environment; next largest segment is energy usage
 - Claire and Kathi Caccavale met with Mayor Conley, Rachel Ehrlich, Jim Burnet, Ray Codey, and a number of department heads to begin conversations and give input about steps being taken and steps that need to be taken. "What are you doing for the climate?" Discussions of purchasing checklists, for example.
 - Engagement with elected officials and government officials such as head of departments. Presenting priorities, how can we insert climate action into all activities and segments of town.
 - Data > Actions of how to tackle > Consistent communications to help educate people on why and how to take action.
 - Chatham is moving toward a climate resolution
- Possibility of adding "associate members" of the Environmental Commission is being considered; Claire would like to recruit some individuals who know how to read site plans, in particular
- Native plants
 - Bridget and Joan are planning outreach to local garden centers encouraging them to carry more native plants

- Ellen suggested encouraging gardeners to ask garden centers for specific native species if they don't see them, communicating demand; there is existing material and new material that Joan's working on that could be used for this
 - Joan noted that cultivars of native species are not desirable, should be straight species
- Claire: Green Walkers social media, worldwide membership -- picking up trash & recyclables when you're on a walk. Perhaps we could find a volunteer to take the lead on a social media group for Madison.
 - Stephen says talk to Helen Kaar, she's a green walker in town
- Town-wide yard sale will be held April 17.
 - In conjunction, we should include communications about how to get rid of hard-to-get-rid-of stuff like old mattresses and box springs; Ellen will compile

Submitted by Bridget Daley