

WESTWOOD ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Westwood EAC Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 2018

Meeting Date: May 21, 2018

Meeting Location: Westwood Borough Hall

Meeting Opening and Roll Call

Monthly Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) Meeting was called to order at 7:30 EST by Chair Guderian of the EAC . . . “This meeting, which conforms to the OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW, CHAPTER 231, PUBLIC LAWS OF 1975, is a regular Environmental Committee meeting. Notices have been filed with our local official newspapers and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board.”

Roll Call		<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Jeanne Guderian, Chair	(JG)	X	
Robert Bicocchi, Acting Council Liaison	(RB)	X	
Christine Blaney	(CB)	X	
Norel Blundo, Secretary; Minutes	(NB)	X	
Boniface Kiamue	(BK)		X
Angel Nass	(AN)	X	
Wilhelm Wang	(WW)		X
Philip Bicocchi, Student member	(PB)	X	
Shaina Woodward, Student member	(SW)		X

Point of Order

Councilperson Robert Bicocchi attended the meeting, standing in for Councilperson Alyssa Dawson, who is the Borough’s new EAC Liaison. She replaces Peter Grefrath following his resignation from the Borough Council on May 1.

Public Forum

Opened. Former Councilperson Peter Grefrath attended. No issues were raised during the public comment period, which was subsequently closed. Later, Councilperson Beth Dell joined Mr. Grefrath in observing the meeting. Some questions were directed to and answered by Mr. Grefrath at other points in the meeting on issues he had been involved in prior to his resignation from the Council. Mrs. Dell also provided some insights into Borough-related activities during the latter part of the meeting.

Passing of the Minutes

The minutes of the April 2018 meeting were passed unanimously.

Council Liaison's Report

RB had no report.

Old Business

Community Garden (JG/CB)

- No report.

Trex Bench/Recycled Bags Program (JG)

- JG reported that 251 pounds of plastic bags have been collected toward the goal of 500 pounds needed to secure the next bench. She noted that placing the collection boxes in several different facilities around town has helped increase contributions, as the different drop-box locations capture distinct constituencies among town residents.
- JG also reported that the latest bench has been installed in the Community Garden. Green and featuring arms and a back, it is a departure from the color and style of the first two benches.

Sustainable Westwood (JG/NB)

- NB reported on the May 3rd meeting of Sustainable Westwood (SW). Among the issues raised at that meeting was whether "Pride Day" should be rebranded with another name to distinguish it from the now common use of "Pride Day" as a celebration of the LGBTQ community. Also questioned was whether Westwood's Pride Day could be separated from the annual craft/antique fair in Veteran's Park and enlarged to become a more encompassing "Westwood Day" celebration. Members agreed that these decisions are outside SW's purview and should be directed to the Council and the Westwood Heritage Society for their consideration.
- One member questioned the rationale behind having Sustainable Westwood and the Environmental Committee share a table at Pride Day, suggesting that both entities would be better served by maintaining separate "brand" identities. No consensus was reached on that idea.
- Committee members agreed on a list of five "Pledge" goals to be printed on a reusable bag that would be given away at the event. They also agreed on a slogan to be used on the banner for the joint EAC and Sustainable Westwood Pride Day table, which would read, "Supporting Westwood today. Growing Westwood's tomorrow." JG said she would reach out to Borough Administrator Karen Hughes to arrange for the completion of the banner in time for Pride Day.

Pride Day (NB)

- NB reported that she followed up with the director of the Tenafly Nature Center regarding the issue of cancellation fees associated with booking a live-animal program for Pride Day, a concern that had been raised by EAC members at the April meeting due to the frequent rain-outs of past Pride Days. NB noted that a no-refund policy would apply and, therefore, she did not proceed with making arrangements to book an animal program.

- NB noted that Sustainable Westwood had sent out a request for participants from both SW and EAC to choose a timeslot for table coverage at Pride Day but had not received any feedback from members of EAC except for NB, who would be there for several hours. Peter Grefrath noted that he would be helping with set-up at 9:30 and would be at Pride Day until 11 a.m. in support of various town groups. No other EAC members committed to a specific timeslot.
- NB reiterated plans to proceed with an effort to increase public awareness of the benefits of pollinator-friendly plants and to promote an effort by Bergen County Audubon to encourage people to maintain and certify their gardens as wildlife habitats. Toward that end, she asked for a budget to buy plants as give-away inducements for people interested in pursuing the program. A budget in the amount of \$75 was agreed upon and passed by voice vote.

Member	Moved	Second	Ayes	Nays	Absent	Abstain
Blaney					(During vote)	
Bicocchi, Acting Council Liaison			X			
Chair Guderian	X		X			
Blundo			X			
Kiamue					X	
Nass		X	X			
Wang					X	
Bicocchi						
Woodward						

BiState Watershed Cleanup (CB)

- The annual cleanup took place on Saturday, April 28, spanning Westvale Park and the adjacent Pascack Brook County Park.
- CB said approximately 50 volunteers took part, the largest number of participants to date.
- A \$300 grant for Westwood’s successful completion of the program will be forthcoming from Clean Communities.

Rain Garden (CB)

- CB reported that the rain garden would need some new plants this year, but noted that this need had been anticipated and money had already been designated for their purchase. She hoped that volunteers could be recruited from the EAC and Sustainable Westwood to help with planting on an upcoming Saturday or Sunday, probably in early June. She will reach out to both groups when a date has been set.
- She inquired as to whether Borough Administrator Karen Hughes had gotten quotes for purchasing the interpretive sign that will be placed in the rain garden to educate the public about the garden’s design and purpose. Peter Grefrath said that one quote had been obtained, but the town was waiting to receive a second before purchasing the sign.
- CB pointed out that once it is installed, the sign will help meet a regulatory component of the town’s storm water permit that requires public education and outreach targeting a variety of local audiences, such as school kids, the general public, and watershed groups.

- CB also noted that she was concerned to see flags on the grounds of the Borough Hall noting that the grass had recently been sprayed with lawn chemicals. She pointed out that this defeats the purpose of the rain garden because the pesticides will flow into the rain garden and be absorbed by the plants following any rainstorm. She said she will follow up with Rick Woods about alternative approaches to lawn care in the area surrounding the rain garden, including the possible use of natural pest control.

Pascack Valley Earth Day Festival (AN/JG)

- AN and JG reported on their attendance at the Demarest High School Earth Day Festival in April. Both commented on the scale of the event and the large variety of presenters, performers, vendors, and local environmental groups in attendance.
- AN noted that efforts to mount a similar event among Pascack Valley towns will require a significant number of volunteers. She suggested that one way to begin developing a program would be to incorporate it with an existing Westwood event, such as Pride Day.
- Discussion followed as to the number of designated “days” already in existence in Westwood.
- Beth Dell noted that the annual Sidewalk Sale and Street Fair sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce had been cancelled for this year. She explained that members of the Chamber were rethinking the event, which many feel may benefit from a fresh approach. Mrs. Dell suggested that there might be a way to link an environmental component or a “green theme” with the reboot of this event next year.
- It was also noted that next year will be Westwood’s 125th anniversary and that there may be a way to coordinate a “green” event with any plans that may be in development surrounding the anniversary.

New Business

Sustainable School District (NB)

- NB reported that the Westwood Regional School District passed a resolution at the May Board of Education meeting outlining its intent to participate in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program. She distributed a copy of the resolution to members of the EAC.
- Among the clauses of the resolution is one highlighting the need to educate students about “ecological, economic and social sustainability” and to provide opportunities for engagement in activities that support this educational goal.
- NB proposed approaching school district and high school administrators about the possibility of partnering with EAC on specific projects to advance both the district’s and the committee’s environmental sustainability goals as well as to develop interest among students regarding local environmental issues.
- NB had two project ideas she suggested could be a way to begin a partnership with the schools: (1) Organizing a plastic bag collection competition among the district elementary schools, with the goal being to educate kids about the downside of single-use plastics and the prize being a Trex bench for the school collecting the most bags. (This idea had been discussed at last month’s EAC meeting.) (2) Seeking to sponsor a high school team to enter the Recycled Regatta sponsored by Hackensack Riverkeeper

as part of its annual EarthFest celebration. She noted that a relatively new and very enthusiastic physics teacher might be a better contact at the high school than the current Environmental Club advisor, who EAC members have said has not been receptive to partnering with the EAC in the past.

- JG also noted that the new term for a student representative on the EAC starts in September, and she suggested rolling that into the discussions with school administrators.
- NB will reach out to district and high school administrators and report on any developments at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned, motioned by AN and seconded by CB, at 8:30 p.m.

Next Meeting—Monday, June 18, 2018; Borough Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Upcoming 2018 Meetings as Scheduled

June 18; July 16; August, no meeting; September 17; October 15; November 19 (adopt Master Gardener Resolution); December 17 (vote on 2019 officers).