

Readington Township Waterwatch Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2024

OPEN MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Orlandi at 7:00 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

Members in Attendance:

Mario Orlandi – Chair
Marlene Orlandi
Jonathan Heller
Rene Rao
Andrew Saad
David Owen
Steve Foster
Lauren Huelsebusch

Member Absent:

Richard Geissler

Approval of Minutes:

Motion made to approve the February minutes as amended by Rene, seconded by Marlene, and carried by all. Jonathan Heller and Andrew Saad abstained.

Committee Member Updates:

Mr. Foster - Reported there is no update from the EC Chair. The annual ANJEC training took place last week. RWW now has memberships to ANJEC, providing a multitude of valuable resources. For those unable to attend, all training courses were recorded. The chair will provide an email to members to register if they have not done so already. The Water Shed Institute brings together RHA and other similar organizations and has grants available. The Native Plant Society has many opportunities for installation of meadows and small gardens at parks, schools, medians, neighborhoods etc.

David Owen – Reported there is no update from the County Board of Commissioners. White Trail by Stanton Road had 45 volunteers working for 20 hours rerouting the trail prior to the walk that occurred. Pine Bank Trail has multiple trees down. Volunteers have been working to clear the trail to reopen. Springtown Trail had three trees that came down and were chain sawed to clear the trail. Mario and David revisited last year's Stream Clean Up sites. The March 2023 cleanup was very successful, and some sites are not necessary to include again for this year. Retired sites for 2024 include Darts Mill, Higginsville Bridge, and Three Bridges. Sites that will be included in this year's stream clean up include Pleasant Run East at 202, Ruckerfellow Mills at River Road, and Three Bridges near Railroad Ave. Areas of interest for next year include the East Side of 202, Route 31 under the bridge at the river, and Mountain Ave., Lamington River off Rockaway Creek. RHA agreed to add Greenway Trail, the first trail the township created, on the list. Ron Christy will be contacted to discuss the cleanup sites closer to the events for bags, signs, and cones.

Ms. Rao – The report on salt testing at Rockaway Creek off Route 22 was discussed. A base line was completed on February 12th and yielded a result of 2.0 quantab units. Another test was completed in the rain on February 28th yielding a result of 2.6 which is 73 parts per million and still in green range. There was no visible salt in the area. Mr. Becker is measuring higher salt in his testing results on Pleasant Run near Craig Road. It was clarified that brine can be used for a snow event but if it is a rain event, salt must be used because the brine will wash right away.

Ms. Orlandi – Mr. Daly's 8th grade event is on May 21st. Ron Christy and Will Daly have already spoken with the Rec Committee. The proposed idea of students passing out information in their neighborhoods will not be considered. Ms. Orlandi and David Livingston discussed the bio swale at Three Bridges, and rain gardens. Dr. Higgins reach out through will Daly. Final project decisions will be made by the end of the month. Mr. Daly had 11 locations already on the project list. Members discussed multiple additional ideas to suggest to Mr. Daly. Tatiana prepared a slide deck of resources for volunteers which will be sent out to members.

Lauren Huelsebusch – Ms. Huelsebusch reported that things are moving along with the 4th graders. They will designate sites to stop and discuss specific talking points on Pine Bank Road. The curriculum and bus transportation will be coordinated by the school, and they will be looking forward to having the event in the fall.

Mr. Heller – Stream monitoring training sessions will be in late April/May and one leader of each site must be trained on data collection methods that meet DEP standards. Steve suggested asking for a one-page summary of what is involved and to confirm the dates and send them out to the members prior to the next meeting and advertise volunteer opportunities on the website. RHA does advertise. Open Space will take the lead on the annual tree giveaway which will be held April 6th. An estimated 50-gallon diesel fuel spill occurred at DPW. Mr. Heller will obtain a volatile organic testing kit from RHA to test the water in the stream near the park. DPW is currently using absorbent barriers as a remediation method and have the DEP and Hunterdon Soil Conservation looking into it. They are working on securing funds for additional remediation.

Mr. Saad – Mario introduced Andrew Saad to the members and asked for him to tell everyone a little bit about himself and why he wanted to be on this committee vs. other committees. Mr. Saad lives in Three Bridges and walks the trails. He has noticed the flooding on Railroad Ave, has read about C1, has an interest in water testing, is currently on paternity leave, and interested in getting involved. Mario will share with him areas that are yet covered so he can choose his focus. Andrew said he is willing to take on a topic that has yet to be covered. Mario said Mr. Sheola should be asked if the DEP has contacted anyone about the testing Susan did on Rockaway Creek, or the post storms cleanup grant applied for. The chair will follow up on both.

Mr. Geisler – No Report

New Business/Other Business:

The chair discussed informally creating the notion of an adjunct member for Tatiana Halinka and Jerry Cook. Since Water Watch is an official board representing Readington Township the formality of meeting procedures must be considered. Adjunct members have an open invitation to attend meetings and participate in discussions but will not be included in ANJEC memberships.

Jonathan Heller nominated Jerry Cook to be an adjunct member. Rene Rao seconded the nomination. All in favor. No nays recorded.

Jonathan nominated Tatiana Halinka to be a student adjunct member. Rene Rao seconded the nomination. All in favor. No nays recorded.

The chair discussed the difference observed along our streams over the last few years and the concept of stream cleanup. Pleasant Run had dead trees and experienced flooding. Natural debris was taken and moved to a new location to prevent erosion. Watch Water looks towards getting more grants for erosion and flood control. The Chair is interested in the Holland Brook outcomes and results. The Buffalo Farm consisting of 87 acres installed retention basins and saw significant improvement. The idea of working with the Agricultural Land Committee and local farmers was discussed. Mario discussed compiling the salt testing data together to create a table. Mario passed around an email that was sent to him with dates of the Chambers Brook Riparian Zone Restoration Project. This project is funded by RHA's grant and Readington was identified as the collaborator. 950 trees will be planted on May 3, 4, and 5. Members discussed required equipment, drilling process and volunteers. Mario discussed the Water Watch calendar. He created a post for March which will focus on how to navigate the Township website. April is stream clean up, the annual tree giveaway, and Earth Day. Mario asked if anyone would like to take on the upcoming posts. Members discussed the posting process and what should be included in a post. Rene offered to create a post for April. Jonathan will create a post for May. Susan Masinda will create a post for June. The goal is to put out a calendar in the beginning of the year that addresses a topic each month. David Owen will create a post for December, related to National Horse Day.

The Township Committee liaison to Water Watch, Juergen Huelsebusch discussed current ongoing Open Space projects. He asked for members to identify any information or observations made during the workings of WaterWatch to pass information to the township. Juergen said as the liaison he will pass information to the township, TC, or website.

Members discussed invasive species of concern including Bamboo Japanese knotweed, lesser celandine. Members discussed creating a path at Chambers Brook from the blacktop to the greenery. NJ's new law requiring every lead pipe coming from the road be replaced will have a big impact on those with American Water.

Public Comment:

None.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Rene Rao, seconded by Lauren Huelsebusch, and carried by all. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Monaghan
Advisory Boards Secretary