

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

## ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

JOSEPH BARRIS, PP, AICP, CFM  
*Director of Planning*



WILMA MORRISSEY  
*Council Chairman*

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### Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the MONMOUTH COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

**Thursday, May 6, 2021, 5:00 p.m.**  
Via Webex

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Morrissey called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

#### 2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Wilma Morrissey, Paul Johnson, David Kostka, Scott Thompson, John Vig, France Karras, Jennifer DiLorenzo (joined at 5:26), Scott Thompson (joined at 5:45)

Members Absent: Ashley Reese

Staff Present: Amber Mallm, Sean Pizzio, David Schmetterer, Bridget Neary

#### 3. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The Council reviewed the April 2021 minutes. Mr. Vig made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Kostka seconded the motion. With no objections the minutes were approved.

#### 4. REGULAR REPORTS

A. **Chairman-** Ms. Morrissey asked Mr. Vig share Google Earth's "tours." Mr. Vig said Google Earth has a website that shows forest change, urban growth, and warming temperatures using historical aerial imagery. Mr. Vig added that he heard an NPR news segment regarding melting glaciers contributing to sea level rise. Ms. Morrissey asked Mr. Vig to provide his insight on flying taxis, Mr. Vig said that while the technology exists, it is unlikely that it will be widely used anytime soon. Ms. Morrissey then shared a press release from the Monmouth County Clerks Office inviting fourth graders to showcase what they like best about Monmouth County in a poster contest. Ms. Morrissey suggested that should the Council ever pursue a poster contest that they may refer to the rules described by the Clerk's Office. Ms. Morrissey then shared a NJDEP news release titled "8 Tips for Preventing Wildfires."

B. **Planning Board-** As Ms. DiLorenzo was not present at this time, Ms. Mallm offered an update on the latest Planning Board meeting. Ms. Mallm stated there was an appeal on an application from the Development Review Committee, and 8 stormwater control ordinances were approved.

C. **Staff-** Ms. Mallm shared the May Dates to Remember. Ms. Mallm provided further information on a recent webinar focused on a project that will install small tunnels under a

road for amphibians to use to safely cross the road to during their spring breeding migration. The project is part of the Connecting Habitats Across New Jersey (CHANJ) program, the Council recalled that Transportation Council had a presentation from CHANJ program representatives.

D. **Legislation-** Ms. Mallm provided an update on recent legislation. Ms. Mallm shared S3688 which would require municipalities to evaluate the regional impacts of warehouse developments. A5568 directs DEP to evaluate whether the monarch butterfly should be listed as a state endangered species. A5556 would provide gross income tax credits to taxpayers who purchase certain low speed electric bicycles.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

A. **JLUS III-** Ms. Mallm provided an update on the JLUS III study. Ms. Mallm said that the Next Steps for Compatibility Study project team is beginning to schedule meetings with the municipalities at the focus of the study. Ms. Mallm said the Division of Planning is in the process of reviewing what was submitted for the Coastal Resilience Design study.

B. **2021 Goals-** Ms. Mallm recalled the April presentation focused on the Certified Wildlife Program. She recalled that there may have been interest to pursue further outreach on the program and opened the conversation up for suggestions. Ms. Morrissey said that Wall Township may certify their Allenwood Garden. Mr. Vig said Kristin Hock presented at the Colts Neck Environmental Commission meeting. Mr. Johnson said he is interested in learning more about what activities the Council is permitted to pursue or if there is any way to expand the Council's efforts. Mr. Schmetterer said the Council is created and enabled by a then Board of Chosen Freeholders resolution and that should be reviewed, any changes in the Council's role would have to be consistent with the resolution, currently the Council's mission is to report to the Planning Board. Mr. Schmetterer said we must abide by the bylaws and enabling resolution and staff will give the documents some review.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Closed Keyport Landfill Polluting Raritan Bay-** Ms. Morrissey explained that a Keyport landfill has been closed for 42 years and has leaked solid waste and heavy metals into Raritan bay, Ms. Morrissey explained that Keyport is using DEP for failing to enforce environmental rules, and is suing the property owner to pay for further clean up and capping of the landfill.

B. **Menhaden Die-offs in Navesink and Shrewsbury Rivers-** NJDEP has confirmed that the die offs are caused by the bacteria *Vibrio anguillarum*. Sierra Club and Clean Ocean Action have made comments. The bacteria has also been found offshore of Connecticut Rhode Island. Mr. Kostka said he belongs to the Navesink River Municipal Commission which discussed the topic at a recent meeting. The Commission is concerned that as the weather gets warmer the smell will worsen. Mr. Kostka said a NJDEP representative attended the meeting. The Council discussed that they have heard there is not a quick solution has not yet been identified. The Council also discussed concerns with impacts to the food chain. Mr. Johnson said he heard that the increased

winter temperatures reduced how much bacteria is usually killed during the winter months.

**C. Offshore Wind Energy in New Jersey and New York-** Ms. Morrissey reported that Clean Ocean Action is concerned that an additional 800,000 acres of lease areas off of the NY and NJ coasts are proposed by BOEM while 400,000 acres are still unused. Mr. Johnson said he has heard that in order to convey the wind energy sent to the Oyster Creek power plant there will need to be miles of easements. Mr. Vig said even if there is opposition to wind energy we will still need an alternative energy source. He said that this petition says an environmental assessment is what is in question and asked why should an environmental assessment be paused. Mr. Kostka, Ms. Morrissey and Mr. Johnson agreed with Mr. Vig's point.

**D. Sandy Hook Fort Hancock Lease Proposal-** Ms. Karras said she listened to a public Fort Hancock Federal Advisory Committee meeting. The NPS is considering a proposal to rehabilitate buildings on officer's row, as it is a natural wildlife refuge is controversial as to whether it should be rehabilitated, however they are historic structures. Ms. Karras asked if the Council would be interested in making official comments. Ms. Karras said she is unsure if there is a set comment period deadline. Ms. Morrissey said she would like to learn more about the project. Ms. Karras also said they are considering forming a community advisory committee and with reps from local organizations. Ms. Karras asked if the MCEC could participate in the committee. Ms. Mallm said she is not sure if representation on a committee like this is permitted under the enabling resolution and they will look into it further. Ms. Karras recalled that the MCEC was represented on the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Schmetterer said that in that case the JLUS study was a product of the Division of Planning.

**E. NJ Draft Climate Change Resilience Strategy-** Ms. Mallm provided a brief overview of the NJ Draft Climate Change Resilience Strategy which outlines priorities to adapt to climate change. The draft report is open for public comment until May 21, 2021. Ms. Morrissey said she thinks the mayor's tool kit would be useful for municipalities.

## 6. MEMBER REPORTS:

- Ms. Morrissey said a recent article described two raccoon attacks in Highlands, both of these raccoons had rabies. In response Highlands is holding a rabies vaccination clinic on May 8.
- Mr. Kostka said the Environmental Commission and Green Team held a clean-up of the town hall complex. The Environmental Commission had Kristin Hock present at their meeting and are interested in holding a webinar for colts Neck residents. The Colts Neck Environmental Commission continues to work on its environmental resource inventory.
- Mr. Johnson said he built wren houses to share with the other Council members. Ms. Morrissey said that perhaps they could distribute them at a future in person meeting.
- Mr. Thompson said the COA beach sweep had a record turnout. Mr. Thompson also agreed the menhaden die offs are a problem and encouraged others to reach out to those who can make a difference like Congressmen and State Senators to help get more research on the issue. Ms. Morrissey asked if Mr. Thompson knew more about COA's position on wind energy, Mr. Thompson said that they're in support with

moving forward but there should be additional review and planning on the leases that are in place before investigating more lease areas.

- Ms. Morrissey asked if any staff members have anything to say. Ms. Neary introduced herself. Mr. Schmetterer thanked the Council for the meeting.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Morrissey opened for public comment. Jim Krauss introduced himself. He is a member of the Atlantic Highlands EC and member of the Fort Hancock federal Advisory Committee. Mr. Krauss said the historic buildings have fallen to disrepair and the idea to restore them has been discussed for many years. Two buildings are under rehabilitation for MAST. A developer has proposed rehabbing 25 buildings and primarily using them for year-round residence, around 70-90 units. He said the project would preserve the historic buildings. Mr. Vig asked how is the building of 70 residential units related to historic preservation? Mr. Strauss said new buildings would not be constructed, the buildings would be renovated through a leasing program, proposed use would have to pass review by the National Park Service and the exterior of the building would have to be restored to historic standards.
8. **ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Thompson made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Karras seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.