

The Board of County Commissioners of the County of Monmouth

DIVISION OF PLANNING



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Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the
MONMOUTH COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
Thursday, April 4, 2024, 5:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:14pm.

2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

Members present: France Karras, David Kostka, Scott Thompson, Ellen Smith, John Vig

Members absent: Daniel Beckelman, Paul Johnson, Peter Volpe

Staff present: Melissa Bezahler, Victor Furmanec, Harriet Honigfeld, David Schmetterer

3. REORGANIZATION

A. Election of Chairperson – Ms. Honigfeld asked for nominations for Chairperson. Mr. Vig made a motion to nominate Ms. France Karras as Chairperson. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. With a voice vote, Ms. Karras was appointed Chairperson.

B. Election of Vice Chairperson – Ms. Karras asked the Council for nominations for Vice Chairperson. Mr. Kostka nominated Mr. John Vig for Vice Chairperson and Ms. Smith seconded the motion. With a voice vote, Mr. Vig was appointed Vice Chairperson.

C. Approval of 2024 Meeting Schedule – Staff reviewed the proposed bi-monthly meeting schedule. Council members expressed disappointment of a bi-monthly schedule. A discussion was held. It is hoped a bi-monthly calendar would resolve council attendance issues - which are constrained by not having a fully appointed council. It would also reduce staff workload constraints, and help staff focus on developing the Environmental Council into an advisory group for the Planning Board and Planning Department. Mr. Vig shared an idea that the County webpage for Environmental Council be used to host information for municipal Environmental Commissions. It was discussed that the Environmental Council assemble a full set of materials to share with the public, and staff would facilitate having it posted to the County webpage. Ms. Karras suggested that putting a library together for the County MCEC website be listed as an agenda item. Ms. Karras also noted that this effort could help connect the MCEC to different areas of the County and draw in interest for attending upcoming MCEC meetings or becoming Council members. Ms. Karras asked for a motion to approve the 2024 meeting schedule. Mr. Vig made a motion to approve the 2024 meeting schedule and Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. With a voice vote the schedule was approved.

- 4. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES:** Ms. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes for the September 7, 2023 meeting. Mr. Vig seconded the motion. With a voice vote, the meeting minutes were approved with Mr. Thompson abstaining.

5. REGULAR REPORTS

- A. **Chairperson** – Ms. Karras stated that she would like to increase awareness of and encourage more municipal representatives to attend the MCEC meetings. Ms. Karras stated that if the municipal Environmental Commission information is hosted on the County website it will help them feel more involved, and it would be a resource. Ms. Karras also stated that she has noted several birds in the area including bald eagles which shows signs that the local environment is recovering.
- B. **Staff** – No report. Ms. Honigfeld commented that we are happy to explore the library idea, and the idea of rotating meetings to highlight different regions in the county by inviting individual environmental commissions to attend the MCEC meetings.

6. OLD BUSINESS

7. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Floodplain Species Assessment** – Ms. Bezahler reminded Council members that comments are due to Bridget Neary by April 22 and that the link to the documents will be re-sent through WeTransfer.
- B. **NJ Statewide Water Supply Plan** – Ms. Bezahler asked the Council if they had any comments that they would like to share which would be brought forward to the Planning Board. The Council did not have any at this time. Staff advised that we hope to present the MCEC members with opportunities to act as an advisory council to the Planning Board. It would allow comments to be heard by the Planning Board, who may consider issuing an official comment based upon what the Council reviewed.
- C. **EV Charger Project (David Schmetterer, Assistant Director, Monmouth County Division of Planning)** – Mr. Schmetterer stated that the County is receiving a Congregation, Mitigation and Air Quality grant from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority which will fund the installation of electric vehicle chargers at two of the County's largest libraries which receive significant visitation located close to housing and retail - the Headquarters library in Manalapan and the Eastern branch library in Shrewsbury. Mr. Schmetterer will be giving presentations to on this grant and will share a survey which will ask for feedback on specific questions related to the installation of the chargers, including questions about travel to the library and opinions on where the chargers should be located. The MCEC will be advised when the survey is live and asked to respond with their input. Mr. Vig stated that Tesla offers free destination chargers and suggested this be added to Mr. Schmetterer's presentation. Mr. Schmetterer will investigate this. Mr. Schmetterer noted that the proposed specific location of where the chargers will be installed will go through an environmental review process. The cost to use the chargers will be comparable to market rate. Mr. Thompson commented that he would visit the Shrewsbury Branch to look at the best location for installation and Ms. Karras commented that installing a charge close to residential neighborhood might work out great for residents to have a charging port close to their property. Members discussed the charging costs and maintenance costs of electric cars compared to gas-powered cars.
- D. **ANJEC Municipal Membership Dues** – The group discussed ANJEC membership dues for the environmental council and identified individuals who may need their dues covered by the County.

8. MEMBER REPORTS

- Mr. Vig reports swans were seen in front of town hall. Colts Neck is revising its ERI. The Colts Neck Manor continues to be a big deal.
- Mr. Thompson reported that it's exciting to see Eagles by the Oceanic Bridge by Claypit Creek (Hartshorne Woods Park).

9. PUBLIC COMMENT - Victor Furmanec introduced himself as a County employee and staff advisor to the Transportation Council. He expressed interest that the Environmental Council and Transportation Council are planning a joint council meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT There being no further business, Ms. Karras asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vig made a motion to move and the meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm.