

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, August 1, 2024, 5:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:08pm.

2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

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

Members absent: Paul Johnson, Peter Volpe

Staff present: Melissa Bezahler, David Schmetterer

3. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES: Ms. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes for the April 4, 2024 meeting. Mr. Kostka seconded the motion. With a voice vote, the meeting minutes were approved.

4. REGULAR REPORTS

- A. **Chairperson** – Ms. Karras hopes everyone is having a good summer and apologized for missing the last meeting. Ms. Karras has been utilizing the County Park System and noted it is quite an asset. Ms. Karras noted the abundance of wildlife, bald eagles, and that fishing has been decent in the Atlantic Highlands harbor. The local environment is doing well this summer.
- B. **Staff** – Ms. Bezahler reported the joint-council meeting presenters are scheduled for October 8 at 7pm in the Planning Board Conference Room. Gretchen Fowls, Brian Zarate, and MacKenzie Hall of NJDEP Endangered and Nongame Species program will present on the CHANJ program, Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey. Ms. Bezahler also reported that the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience issued their final report on New Jersey's Extreme Heat Resilience Action Plan. There will be a webinar on August 13 at 11am on the topic NJ Heat Trends Explained.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Agenda Item Added – Climate Change Roundtable

Mr. Kostka asked for an update regarding the possibility of hosting a Climate Change Roundtable in November. This was suggested by a member of the public at the June meeting. Ms. Bezahler stated the focus had been on preparing for a joint-council meeting in October. Mr. Schmetterer stated he thought this is something valuable to discuss, to see what direction it should take and questioned what topics related to climate change would be part of the discussion.

The members discussed this topic. Mr. Vig suggested the roundtable focus on local mitigation efforts on the effects of temperature rise. Ms. Karras stated November was a bit too close in time to be able to decide upon exact topics, procure panel members and do the marketing necessary to have good attendance and suggested the new year would be more realistic. Ms. Bezahler agreed. Potential panelists were discussed with Mr. Kostka suggesting a panelist from the August 13 webinar on “NJ Heat Trends Explained” or someone from Monmouth University would be a good fit. Additional suggestions for presenters included a paleometeorologist, speakers from Rutgers, Monmouth University Urban Coastal Institute or Anthony Broccoli.

Mr. Thompson and Ms. Smith agreed with the suggestion to have a climate change roundtable. Mr. Schmetterer stated that staff could work on pulling the details together for arranging the location of where to host the roundtable and to make sure it is set up, but Council members would determine the focus of the roundtable. It was offered by Mr. Beckelman that more than one point of view on a roundtable can make for lively discussion. Mr. Schmetterer, Ms. Karras, and Mr. Vig agreed that it is interesting to have a differing point of view. Members discussed that the presenters be vetted, accredited scientists and the focus could be on the proposed mitigation efforts and what effort could or should be made. Ms. Karras stated the presentation should be upbeat and discuss personal actions that individuals can take.

It was discussed that the MCEC is not limited by the sunshine laws and can communicate via email, basecamp or a zoom meeting, outside of scheduled public meetings. The Council could meet to develop the format, discuss the panel of speakers or presenters, and to best determine how the roundtable would proceed. Mr. Thompson suggested the roundtable topics be modeled after a prior successful roundtable on recycling where there were three speakers, 20 minutes each, time for question and answer, so the topics need to be focused. Mr. Vig suggested the roundtable be recorded and available for public viewing.

Ms. Karras asked the Council if they would want to wait until the December meeting to discuss this again or if they would like to meet specifically for the purpose of narrowing down panelist for the agenda. Membership agreed waiting until the December agenda to discuss this in more detail is an unnecessary delay. Council members decided to communicate through email to plan this out.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Monmouth County Municipal ERI/NRI ‘database’**

To further the idea of the MCEC section of the County webpage being utilized to host the municipal Environmental Resource Inventory or Natural Resource Inventory, members took on the task of compiling weblinks or PDFs of the ERI/NRI of chosen municipal groups based upon the Cross Acceptance municipal groupings. The members discussed if a municipality did not have their ERI/NRI located on their websites, that they would request the municipality post it.

B. **Newsletter Ideas**

Ms. Bezahler noted that the Member Reports highlight interesting community activities and suggested to the MCEC members that if they are aware of or planning to attend any type of activity within their communities, that they consider taking a photo of the event and submitting a write-up for inclusion in the newsletter. Ms. Karras and Ms. Smith discussed potential ideas that they might be able to share.

7. MEMBER REPORTS

Mr. Kostka left the meeting at 6:13pm; Mr. Vig at 6:14pm

- Mr. Vig reported (prior to leaving) that he will be relocating out of the County.

- Mr. Thompson reported that he has enjoyed using the County parks this summer, especially Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park.
- Ms. Smith reported that she has also visited the County parks this summer including Shark River Park. Ms. Smith shared that Wall Twp. is hosting its first Green Fair at Allaire State Park on Friday, August 2, from noon to 3pm and will have several speakers. Ms. Smith will prepare a write-up for the Environmental Newsletter.
- Mr. Beckleman reported that he recently attended the presentation by Mr. Schmetterer on the electric car charging stations at the County libraries.

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT** - None.

9. **ADJOURNMENT** There being no further business, Ms. Karras adjourned the meeting at 6:28pm.