

# 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, November 5, 5:00 p.m.**

Via Webex

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

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

#### 2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Wilma Morrissey, France Karras, John Vig, Jennifer DiLorenzo, David Kostka

Members Absent: Scott Thompson, Paul Johnson

Staff Present: Amber Mallm, Linda Brennen, David Schmetterer, AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador- Samantha LaRocca

- #### 3. REVIEW OF MINUTES:
- The Council reviewed the October minutes. Ms. Karras made a motion to approve the October minutes and Mr. Kostka seconded. With no objections, the October minutes were adopted.

#### 4. REGULAR REPORTS

A. **Chairman-** Ms. Morrissey asked Ms. Mallm to recall the November Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee. Ms. Mallm stated that the Committee passed a resolution to recommend that the Planning Board approves the Little Silver Stormwater Control Ordinance.

Morrissey summarized four articles that were shared with the Council in preparation for tonight's meeting. The first article discussed the need to reboot and rebuild public transit, see attached. There has been a lack of ridership during the pandemic, as most office workers are working from home, restaurants and activities are closed and there is a general fear of contracting the virus while in public places like public transit. Multiple Council members acknowledged that used car sales are up as less people are relying on public transportation.

The next article dealt with the State goal that by 2035 all new vehicles should be zero-emission, see attached. Mr. Vig explained that as electric vehicles' batteries improve, and the price becomes lower, eventually electric vehicles should be the same price as traditional vehicles and it will allow more people to choose electric vehicles. Mr. Kostka agreed that as the prices come down it should become a natural transition. The Council expressed concern that states will not offer enough electric vehicles for sale and buyers will need to go to other states to purchase.

Ms. Morrissey provided the next article that covered the future regulations for drones as more are used for package delivery, see attached. The Council discussed the topic of delivery drones and the prospect of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulating drones.

The last article addressed the difficulties in distributing a coronavirus vaccine as most vaccine candidates must be stored in very low temperature refrigerators, see attached.

Ms. Morrissey spoke about the State plastic bag ban and recalled an article that questioned who will bear the cost of the plastic bag alternatives, members mentioned that it will probably be the consumer.

**B. Planning Board-** Ms. DiLorenzo said the October Planning Board meeting was cancelled. She recommended that the Council should visit the Planning Board's website to access reports and publications.

**C. Staff-** Ms. Mallm described the November Dates to Remember. Ms. Mallm said that staff met with Dennis Blazak from NWS Earle to coordinate efforts with the JLUS III study. Ms. Mallm said Mr. Blazak suggested staff and the Council should meet Lt. Corey Cattano who has an engineering background and will be managing the Navy's upcoming dredging projects. Ms. Brennen said Lt. Cattano completed a thesis on quantifying residential storm resiliency. Ms. Mallm said she will see if Lt. Cattano can provide a presentation to the Council. Ms. Brennen reported she will be speaking about the County's partnership with NWS Earle on a panel during a National Association of Counties webinar.

**D. Legislation-** Ms. Mallm called attention to Bill S1016 which restricts the use of neonicotinoids, she thought this may be of interest to the Council as they previously held a webinar promoting the protection of pollinators. Ms. Karras noted that in our recent webinar neonicotinoids were recognized as an effective treatment for invasive pests.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Webinar Planning & Eco-Tips-** Ms. Morrissey said the webinar was a success. Mr. Vig said the topics were relevant as Colts Neck is updating its natural resources inventory. The Council mentioned some technical difficulties signing into the invent. Ms. DiLorenzo said that webinars are a good tool to help people participate without needing to drive to an event. Ms. Mallm said the recordings will be posted on the Environmental Council webpage soon.

**B. JLUS III-** Ms. Mallm provided an update on the JLUS III study. This study will include two separate projects, one to complete further design for resilience projects outlined in JLUS II and the other to advance zoning goals from JLUS I. Ms. Mallm reported that the RFP for project 1 is moving closer to being posted for bids, and the project 2 RFP has been posted and the bid opening is scheduled for next week.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. 2020 NJ State Forest Action Plan-** Ms. Mallm said this report summarized the current State of New Jersey's forests and the threats they face such as climate change, invasive

species, and wildfires. The report also discussed the topic of mass forest mortality which can occur when a large section of forest dies due to impacts like disease or wildfire and can result in large carbon emissions.

**6. MEMBER REPORTS:**

- Ms. Morrissey recalled that Wall Township Environmental Advisory Committee won an ANJEC achievement award for its series of articles in Wall Township Living. Ms. Morrissey asked Mr. Kostka if Colts Neck also issued articles. He said they issued articles covering C1 streams and plastics in the Colts Neck Journal. Ms. Morrissey noted she recently completed an article dealing with health and wellness. Ms. Morrissey asked if the Monmouth County Environmental Newsletter would be eligible for an ANJEC achievement award. Staff said they were unsure but could look at the requirements.
- Mr. Kostka reported that Colts Neck passed a resolution to join Sustainable Jersey. Now they are in the process of creating a green team, which is set to be announced at the January reorganization meeting.
- Mr. Vig said the last Colts Neck environmental resources inventory was prepared in the 1970s and revised in 1983. Now they are embarking on revising it. Mr. Vig said he will be contacting Ms. Brennen and Ms. Mallm for assistance with the report, specifically if the County has a description of climate and invasive species.
- Ms. DiLorenzo reported that Monmouth Beach completed a new community rain garden with help from the Rutgers Water Resources Program. Monmouth Beach is subject to flooding from rain and from stormwater drain backup from the river. Ms. DiLorenzo also noted the Army Corps of Engineers recently completed beach replenishment.
- Ms. Karras said Atlantic Highlands implemented its single use plastics bans but lifted it in response to the pandemic. However as of November 1 the town is reinstating the ban. Ms. Karras expressed she is interested in participating in the Save Coastal Wildlife's seal monitoring this winter.
- Ms. Morrissey asked Ms. Schemetterer to introduce himself to the Council. Mr. Schemetterer, is a Transportation Planner and is the new Assistant Director of Planning. Mr. Schemetterer provided his thoughts on the article focused on public transportation ridership. He said he saw a report that said ridership is improving. He said the Division of Planning is hopefully receiving a grant to start a program to install electric vehicle charging stations on County property. Mr. Schemetterer also said he is a member of the Red Bank Green Team and the town also implemented a plastic bag ban. Mr. Vig asked if Mr. Schemetterer thinks increased ridership is a good thing for public health, Mr. Schemetterer said he recently met with NJ TRANSIT and learned about their safety protocols. Mr. Schemetterer said the County is involved with the NJ TRANSIT 836 bus route service which is supplemented by a grant program called the Job Access Reverse Commute Program. The route is geared towards transporting riders to local workplaces, these riders rely on buses and may not be in the market for a personal vehicle. The Council wondered if there have been any retrofits to make the buses cleaner such as opened windows or air filter upgrades, Mr. Schemetterer said he can investigate this.
- Ms. Morrissey asked if Ms. LaRocca had anything to report, she said that she is willing to provide a presentation focused on one of her stream assessments for the Council.

- 7. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Morrissey opened for public comment; upon no members of the public the public comment was closed.

8. **ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Kostka made the motion to adjourn and Ms. DiLorenzo seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

## The Need to Reboot and Rebuild Public Transit

Even before the pandemic wiped out ridership, the systems were struggling to attract riders. Cities should be open to questioning the fundamentals of how they operate and fund their systems.

AARON M. RENN, URBAN ANALYST | OCTOBER 15, 2020 | OPINION

It's no secret that the coronavirus pandemic has walloped public transit. Transit networks and ridership are heavily oriented around central business districts, which are presently ghost towns in most cities. White-collar office workers are overwhelmingly working from home. And with business travel, conventions and other events mostly cancelled, entertainment venues shuttered and restaurants closed or barely scraping by, the hospitality sector that employs so many service workers is moribund. Add to that public concern that transit itself may be a vector for spreading the virus, and ridership has been even further depressed.

The net result has been to cut the legs out from under transit demand in many places. Commuter-rail systems have been particularly hard-hit: Chicago's Metra [carried just 7,000 passengers](#) on March 31, a 97.6 percent decrease from the same day in 2019. But even at better-performing bus systems in smaller cities that predominantly serve riders who don't own cars and are disproportionately among the essential workers who must show up at job sites, ridership has declined significantly. In Indianapolis in August, for example, it was [down 43 percent](#) year over year.

This loss of riders is producing a financial crisis for many systems, one that calls for long-term rethinking of how transit is paid for and operated. Funding from the CARES Act, the federal coronavirus relief legislation passed in March, has helped cover budget gaps to date. But this is proving insufficient for larger transit systems like New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Most of the largest systems earn at least 30 percent of their revenue from fares, a figure that rises to nearly half for some systems. This is not the case for most smaller systems, where the farebox share of revenue can be less than 25 percent; those systems are simply not as exposed to loss of fare revenue. But as the government tax dollars that make up the bulk of their funding take a hit, financial challenges will come for them as well.

While additional bridge funding to transit is warranted and should be rapidly approved by Congress, realistically transit ridership may take a long time to recover. Many companies are looking at permanently increasing the share of their employees working remotely. Although the jury is still out on how much of a permanent upshift in work-from-home there will be, it seems likely there will be some. After all, remote work had been trending up even prior to the pandemic; the share of people working at home had already grown to exceed the share commuting by public transit. And previous transit disruptions, such as those from lengthy strikes, have affected ridership for years. It took [over a decade](#) to recover ridership losses from the 1983 Philadelphia commuter-rail strike, for example.

Given the financial hits to transit agencies and the national scope of the problem, it's not surprising that many are looking to Washington for help. If the Democrats sweep in November, winning the presidency and control of both houses of Congress, there's a good possibility they will establish a new ongoing regime of increased federal operating subsidies for transit. Even

with some sort of party split in Washington, there will be pressure to continue giving money to these agencies. But this is unlikely to provide them full relief.

The risk to cities is that they will be forced into service cuts that will be difficult to restore. New York City has already ended overnight service on its subways, and it's unclear whether that will ever be resumed. Declines in service make transit a less attractive choice, which drives more ridership away.

Cities are going to have to find a way to reboot and rebuild their transit systems post-coronavirus. This was needed anyway as ridership, especially on bus systems, had already started declining pre-coronavirus, something *The New York Times* dubbed "[the mystery of the missing bus riders.](#)"

One thing transit systems should do is start learning from and implementing global best practices. As transit analyst Alon Levy [has repeatedly noted](#), U.S. transit agencies are largely unaware of how other countries plan, build and operate their transit systems. Many of those countries are far ahead of the U.S. in ridership, quality of service and cost control. It's time to leave the idea of American exceptionalism behind and start learning from what works not just here, but around the world. This is not a short-term answer but rather a longer-term plan to work toward.

Cities should also be open to questioning fundamental aspects of how they operate and fund their transit systems. One proposal that should be considered is [eliminating fares completely](#) in most cities. Fares are a legacy of the era when transit was run by private, for-profit operators. Few other public services are funded this way. Most transit systems just don't earn that much from fares to begin with, and collecting fares itself imposes financial and operational costs — slowing down buses as people put change in the slot, for example.

The answers aren't all obvious, but transit's future in America will depend on how well agencies are able to navigate through financial tough times, find better ways to finance their services long-term, and lure riders back onto their buses and trains. Public transit is just too important to city and regional economies to allow it to go into a death spiral.

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## **New Jersey Eyes All-Electric Vehicle Shift by 2035**

*In a report published last week by the state Department of Environmental Protection, Gov. Phil Murphy's administration has recommended that by 2035 all new cars, trucks and SUVs sold in the state be zero-emission.*

**BY MICHAEL SOL WARREN, NJ.COM / OCTOBER 20, 2020**

### **Tesla drivers recharge their vehicles at the Joyce Kilmer service area on the New Jersey Turnpike. A bill in the state senate could add more charging stations to meet a goal to add 330,000 electric vehicles by 2025.**

(TNS) — In an effort to mitigate the long-term impacts of climate change, Gov. Phil Murphy is pushing New Jersey towards a carbon-free future. For that to happen, gas and diesel cars have to go.

The transportation sector is New Jersey's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Currently, about 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in the Garden State are estimated to come from trucks, cars, planes, buses, trains and ships.

In a new report published last week by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the Murphy administration has recommended that by 2035, all new cars, SUVs and light trucks sold in the state be zero-emission vehicles.

The DEP's new recommendation is currently non-binding, but it would surpass two targets already set by state law: To have 330,000 electric cars registered in New Jersey by 2025, and 2 million registered by 2035. For comparison, more than 6.3 million cars and light trucks were registered in New Jersey at the end of last year.

On the West Coast, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order last month directing his state to develop regulations to ensure that 100% of new cars sold in the Golden State by 2035 are zero-emissions.

Murphy's office did not respond when asked if a similar executive order is expected for New Jersey.

New Jersey's car dealers are eager to serve as the conduit for change, said Jim Appleton, the president of the New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers. But he warned electric vehicles are still too expensive for many consumers, and the state's underdeveloped charging station network plagues potential customers.

Until those two problems are addressed, Appleton said the state's 2035 target is a laudable but unrealistic target. Last year, for example, he said less than 10,000 of the new cars sold in the state were electric -- about 2% of the total number of new cars sold.

"Getting consumers to buy is the ultimate endgame. That's the goal," Appleton said. "The air doesn't get cleaner if they don't trade their less environmentally-friendly vehicles for the most environmentally-friendly vehicles."

The DEP acknowledged those problems in its report, and included a recommendation for massive investment to build charging stations throughout the state. The agency also called for larger incentives to encourage more electric car sales, which would build on a new state law that offers \$5,000 incentives for New Jerseyans to buy electric cars.

"As laudable as the 2019 (electric vehicle) law is, it is not nearly enough," DEP Deputy Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said on Thursday. "We need deeper, deeper incentives that hasten that transition."

Jeff Tittel, the director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, welcomed the DEP's electric car recommendations last week as one of the most impactful parts of the larger report.

“Hopefully, they will set the standards so that we can meet that demand and get enough (electric vehicles) on the road,” Tittel said, referring to the Murphy administration.

But that praise isn't universal. Melissa Miles, the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, said she supports the state's 2035 target for passenger vehicles, but would like to see more progress on replacing heavier-duty diesel engines in the state. And she'd like to see the state take steps to boost ridership on public transportation, to reduce traffic in general.

Doing those things, Miles said, would do more to improve air quality in environmental justice communities -- areas where typically low-income residents of color deal with high levels of pollution.

“We're not against electrification of cars, but we feel like that's not going to get us to the goals we want to see for (environmental justice) communities quickly enough,” Miles said.

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## How Should States, Local Areas Prepare for Drone Deliveries?

*The Federal Aviation Administration has maintained a dominant say on the nation's entire airspace. When it comes to drone deliveries, this level of regulatory power may have negative ramifications for states and local areas.*

**BY JED PRESSGROVE / OCTOBER 16, 2020**

SHUTTERSTOCK/TATIANA SHEPELEVA

As tens of thousands of new COVID-19 cases appear every day in the U.S., the concept of local drone deliveries appear particularly attractive, and industry giants have responded in kind.

In August, Amazon [became](#) the third company to receive approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to perform drone deliveries beyond visual line of sight. And in September, Walmart [started](#) its second drone delivery pilot program.

While companies grapple with the technological challenges of drone delivery, a question must be considered: How should states and local areas prepare for this type of groundbreaking service?

### THE STATUS QUO

The question above becomes complicated once one considers the current regulatory framework at play. As of now, the FAA calls most of the shots when it comes to drones, even if a citizen might expect local authority.

"If a drone crashed into here where you're sitting right now, who would you call?" posed Wade Troxell, mayor of Fort Collins, Colo. "You'd call a first responder, fire or police. What you're supposed to contact is the FAA. You know, that doesn't seem to jive with normal local control and safety and privacy issues as it relates to community."

"Unfortunately, it appears that the federal government is poised to take the position that they're going to control all of this, that they believe they have it all under control and that there will not be any problems that the FAA won't be able to handle themselves," said Gregory McNeal, a law and public policy professor at Pepperdine University.

Given that no one in the country can identify [a drone at random](#), one can perhaps understand the FAA's caution about ceding power. But McNeal suspects the drone delivery industry will grind to a halt if regulations don't evolve. His prediction is that as the number of drone deliveries increases, the FAA will become overwhelmed by citizen outrage and complaints about noise, nuisances and trespassing.

Basil Yap, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) program manager for the North Carolina Department of Transportation, said there are two FAA staff who respond to phone calls about drones in North Carolina.

"That's for the entire state of North Carolina," Yap said. "Two individuals responding to all of those calls. You would think that you would delegate this down to the local level."

Early evidence suggests noise is an important issue. Drone delivery company Wing received criticisms about noise after it started making deliveries in Australia. And residents in Montgomery County, Va., seemed to be most concerned about potential noise before Wing started making deliveries there, said Jennifer Harris, public information director for Montgomery County.

Margaret Nagle, head of policy and government affairs for Wing, said the company modified the propellers on its aircraft after hearing the noise complaints from Australian citizens.

Both Nagle and Harris said they're not aware of any similar negative feedback in Montgomery County.

"People were surprised by the lack of noise in Virginia," Nagle said.

Whether noise can always be controlled by companies remains an open question. Brittney Kohler, transportation and infrastructure legislative director for the National League of Cities, believes local areas should update noise ordinances in order to curb possible conflict.

The FAA has a role to play here, too, and it should learn from its mistakes with airplane regulations, Kohler said. In 2014, the FAA began changing the flight patterns of airplanes. The idea was to modernize and become more efficient, but the new flight patterns enraged citizens who were not used to or expecting noise. Court cases [exploded](#) across the country. "With drones, we can randomize patterns so that they don't go over the same communities all the time," Kohler suggested.

Yap agreed that "you want to make sure they're not always over disadvantaged communities or neighborhoods."

Reggie Govan, former chief counsel of the FAA, said the model used for manned aviation won't "work in its entirety" in relation to drone delivery regulations. Most importantly, Govan thinks the federal government and state and local governments need to engage in "cooperative federalism."

"What I do envision is that the FAA would set out some areas in which state and local governments have a lead regulatory responsibility, and they have to execute that within some parameters," Govan explained. "If you're outside the parameters, then you have to explain it to the FAA."

#### WHAT CAN STATES AND LOCAL AREAS DO NOW?

In 2017, the FAA's [UAS Integration Pilot Program](#) (IPP) selected a number of local areas to [test drone operations](#) in different contexts, with the intention to glean insight for the future. While Govan praised the overall purpose behind IPP, he believes states and the drone industry "got snookered" by the limited amount of testing that has occurred over the last three years, especially when one looks at the far greater progress made by the autonomous vehicles field over the same period.

"The IPP was stymied almost from the beginning both from political considerations and institutional constraints," Govan said.

Govan's remedy for the situation is simple: States should start working with their municipal and industry partners on proposals to the FAA, especially given that the federal agency has declared that it's "open for business." Govan also thinks states should invest more in things like New York's [50-mile drone corridor](#).

Yap said states and local areas should resist the inclination to only respond after things start happening outside of their control.

"Typically, state and local governments are reactive to technology ... I think it would be smart for state and local governments to be proactive now and to understand why it is important for them to be involved," Yap said.

McNeal advises states and local areas to immediately engage with Congress, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the FAA. Failure to do so could have unfortunate consequences.

"If they wait, it appears like the DOJ and DOT are going to issue guidance at the end of this year that's going to take away their rights," McNeal warned. "They need to act or they'll find themselves on the receiving end of a legal opinion that will constrain their rights."

Another thing states and local areas should be aware of is the perspective of the drone delivery industry on regulations. Yap said companies don't want a "patchwork of regulations" across the U.S., but he believes this concern could be easily solved if states can agree on certain types of rules.

Nagle confirmed that Wing doesn't want to face a patchwork situation. Nagle's advice to states and local areas is to avoid setting hard and fast rules before having an active dialog with industry.

"A lot of times those conversations can provide fruitful paths forward that frankly enable industry and the community to see successful outcomes," Nagle said.

"We do think it's really important that the federal government continue to maintain a single set of rules for how we operate, the safety of our operations and our access to the airspace," Nagle added.

Govan, however, stated that companies could be waiting a long time if they rely on the FAA for everything. "If you just want to deal with the FAA, it's going to be another 15 years for drone delivery at scale," he said.

States should aggressively look out for the interests of their citizens, Govan added.

"They ought to be declaring, as a matter of law and regulation, no-fly zones that are rational, that are premised upon a reasonable evaluation of security needs, and they ought to be thinking about their citizens' privacy issues," Govan said.

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Jed Pressgrove has been a writer and editor for about 15 years. He received a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in sociology from Mississippi State University.

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**What could prevent 3B people from getting a COVID vaccine?**

Answer: **A refrigerator shortage.**

**BY NEWS STAFF /** OCTOBER 20, 2020

SHUTTERSTOCK/MBLIFESTYLE

Many drug companies are reportedly only months away from having approved vaccines for the novel coronavirus. However, billions of people could find it very difficult to get a vaccine because **there aren't enough refrigerators to store them.**

Many of the vaccines currently nearing production are RNA vaccines, which require very cold storage temperatures. Moderna's vaccine must be stored at minus 15 degrees Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit), while Pfizer's needs it even colder — minus 70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit). Many countries don't have sufficient cold storage facilities to hold enough vaccines for their entire population, particularly those living in rural areas.

**According to the Associated Press,** parts of Central and Southeast Asia, India, Latin America and "all but a tiny corner of Africa" are most in need of more cold storage infrastructure. Issa Ouedraogo, the national vaccination director of Burkina Faso, a country in West Africa, told AP that only 40 percent of the country's health centers have reliable refrigerators that would be capable of storing a coronavirus vaccine.