

WARREN TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

August 3, 2022
ZOOM Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER AND STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The Environmental Commission (EC) of Warren Township, in the County of Somerset and State of New Jersey convened in a Regular Meeting at the Warren Township Municipal Building, 46 Mountain Blvd., Warren, New Jersey on Wednesday, August 3, 2022

Wayne DeFeo called the meeting to start at 7:00pm via Zoom meeting Conference.

Pursuant to the requirement of Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting was given by posting a copy on the Township Bulletin Board and sending a copy to the Township Clerk, Echoes Sentinel and Courier News as required by the Open Public Meetings Act. All Commissioners are duly appointed volunteers working for the Township of Warren.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Wayne DeFeo, Laura Mandell, Susan Zeitels, Karen Task, Jerry Toth
Absent: Valerie Meyers, Karen Task

III. Discussion

Minutes

The June 2022 minutes were approved. Susan Zeitels made a motion to approve and Jerry Toth seconded it. All members were in agreement.

Wayne introduced Zachary Drozd, the Recreation Advisory Committee Chairperson to the group. Zach joined the call to discuss and strategize with WEC the condition and improvement of the township trails. It was discussed that neighboring towns i.e. Bernard's Township trails are well maintained on an annual basis. Wayne DeFeo sited Pleasant Valley Park as an example. The WEC and Recreation Department and Committee are aware that Warren Township DPW is responsible for maintaining the trails. The DPW is currently down staff so the trails are not a priority at this time.

In regard to funding, Wayne DeFeo said he discussed with Mark Krane the condition of the trails and funding could be provided from Open Space Funds. A comprehensive plan would need to be provided and approved by the township committee. The group discussed Open Space and Laura Mandell stated there should be more transparency for what this budget is used for.

It was agreed that all the trails in Warren need improvement and due to limited internal manpower, we may need to seek help from outside sources. It was suggested a Landscape Architecture Plan would be needed. Susan Zeitels and Wayne DeFeo discussed utilizing Somerset County. They have many resources within the Somerset County Park Commission and may be willing to help with our issues. The county has designated personnel that deal only with trails and parks and Susan Zeitels has been in contact with the commissioner earlier this year and feels they will be willing to help Warren Township.

The group agreed to work on one project, the Hofheimer Trail and Grotto which is on Warren Township and Watchung Eks property near Town Hall. Zach Drozd, said he would be meeting with the Recreation Advisory Committee the following week and would discuss adding this to their agenda. A motion was made by Karen Task and seconded by Laura Mandell to have WEC partner with the Recreation Advisory Committee on cleaning up and restoring the Hofheimer Grotto and Trail. All were in agreement on this motion. Laura Mandell made a suggestion of working with Rory Britt of the Historic Sites committee. He would know the history of the Grotto and be able to offer insight into the project.

IV: NEW BUSINESS

1. CASE: BA 22-07
BLOCK/LOT Block 70.03 Lot 23 – 145 Washington Valley Road
DATE: June 3, 2022
APPLICANT: **St. Monica and St. Augustine Coptic Orthodox Church**
Proposal: Preliminary and Final Site Plan with Variances
Engineer: Catherine Mueller
Attorney: Frederick Zellely

1. WEC recommends the BOA reject the plan as presented as this variance as presented violates sound land use and stormwater protection. As proposed, this plan violates the wetlands delineation and boundaries. There is no offer of offsets or plan to avoid such destruction.
2. The loss of wetlands if approved will contribute to more flooding on Washington Valley Road. Stormwater infrastructure (like Westfield Hall across the street) would have to be utilized.

2. CASE: BA 22-06
BLOCK/LOT Block 78 Lot 19.02– 5 POWDER HORN DRIVE
DATE: July 22,2022
APPLICANT: **Powder Horn Realty Corp., Inc**
Proposal: Minor Subdivision with Variances
Engineer: Catherine Mueller
Attorney: Richard Sasso

1. WEC concerned the proposed subdivision exacerbates the pre-existing non-conforming use. The site has extensive impervious surface that contributes to stormwater run-off.
2. IF BOA elects to approve this plan, WEC suggests that the following be made conditions of such approval:
 - a. As parking areas are scheduled to be replaced, the owner (present or future) agrees to replace the existing parking surfaces with permeable pavement.
 - b. Existing landscaping should be replaced with native plants, bioswales and raingardens designed to capture storm water runoff from the parking areas and from rooftops.
 - c. As a condition of granting this subdivision there should be a deed restriction established that no further development would be permitted on this property.

V: DISCUSSION

Wayne DeFeo reviewed intern Michael Minieri's projects that he has been working on this summer including updating the tree ordinance and a future leaf blower ordinance for the town. This will be presented at a later meeting.

Wayne discussed with the group an Electric Vehicle readiness plan and conveyed to the group he had spoken to Mark Krane about converting the township fleet of cars to EV's. WEC would like to see at least one car converted by 2023. The EV charging station that is not working at Town Hall should be repaired this year.

VI: Adjournment – 8:43PM Lara Mandell made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Karen Task seconded it.

The next meeting will be held on September 14 , 2022 at 7pm via ZOOM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Krisann Bintley, Secretary
Environmental Commission