

**MUNICIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
BOROUGH OF EMERSON
February 19, 2020**

This meeting of the Emerson Environmental Commission was held in the Municipal Building. Vice-Chairperson Kate Stutzel opened the meeting at 7:30 PM. In Compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act, the Clerk notified The Record and The Ridgewood News of this meeting and notice as posted in the Municipal Building.

Roll Call was taken:

Chairperson Stephanie Clark	Leave of Absence
Vice Chairperson Kate Stutzel	Present
Michael Casey	Present
Michael Guarriello	Present
Matt Helm	Absent
Elizabeth Garis	Present
Walter Romanski	Present
Eric Shuda	Present
Kathryn Haight, Student Liaison	Present
Grace Whalen, Student Liaison	Absent
Council Brian Gordon	Present

MINUTES & VOUCHERS:

Vice-Chairperson Stutzel advised the members that we had received an invoice from North Jersey Media for the charges to advertise the 2020 Calendar of Meetings, she asked for a motion to approve the Voucher in the amount of \$27.52. Mr. Guarriello made the motion, second was offered by Ms. Garis, all were in favor.

Vice-Chairperson Stutzel asked if there were any comments or corrections in regard to the minutes of the meeting of January 22, hearing none, Mr. Romanski made a motion to accept the minutes for publication, second was offered by Ms. Haight, all were in favor. Ms. Garis and Mr. Shuda abstained as they had not been present at that meeting.

COMMISSION BUSINESS:

Single use plastic

Ms. Stutzel brought up the single use plastic project. She asked if any of the members had thought of more ideas to reach out and make the public and the businesses more aware of the damage single use plastic is doing to the environment. Mr. Romanski reminded the members of the importance of educating the public on the correct disposal of plastics. Ms. Garis told the commission that she had watched the recycle coach video on line and found it very informative and useful. She encouraged all the members to view it and to publicize it.

Ms. Stutzel encouraged the members to do so. She also mentioned the upcoming Kick Off picnic and reminded them how embarrassing it had been at last year's event to see there were no recycling containers available. The Commission is working with the Recreation Dept to be sure it does not occur again this year.

Ms. Garis told the members that she is totally on board with reducing and possibly eliminating plastic bags. She said it is automatic for checkout clerks to reach for the plastic bags, rather than ask the customer their preference. She also mentioned the lack of recycling containers at the shopping centers. Ms. Shust asked if anyone was aware if there are stronger Ordinances in Hillsdale. She told the members that Kings has recycling bins out front and the Shop Rite in Hillsdale always asked what kind of bag is preferred before bagging orders.

Vice-Chairperson Stutzel said she would do some research.

Mr. Shuda told the members that perhaps instituting a charge for plastic bags would reduce such usage. He said that Connecticut is charging 15 cents per bag. He agreed forcing a ban would create resentment, but a charge might encourage shoppers to bring reusable bags.

Ms. Garis asked if anyone knew which is cheaper to make the plastic or paper. Mr. Casey told the members that paper bags were more costly.

Ms. Shust asked if there was a possibility of EEC providing reusable bags. Ms. Stutzel said she would research and see if the commission could resell them.

Ms. Stutzel told the members they had received a list of businesses in town from the Building Dept. and wanted to know if there were any volunteers to reach out and discuss reduction/elimination of single use plastics. Ms. Garis suggested waiting until the next meeting to ask for those volunteers.

Mr. Guarriello after reviewing the list was surprised at the amount of businesses in Emerson and the various types. He stated some of them may already be recycling, in particular the automobile business where oil is most likely being recycled.

Earth Week:

Chairman Stutzel addressed the Earth Week activities for the week of April 20 to April 26. She stated that there are activities scheduled for different age groups, including the Mayor reading at the library on Tuesday the 21, planting in the Community Gardens on the 20th, Walk to school for the Junior and Senior High School on April 24th.

Ms. Haight was asked about the participation in the Walk to School event. She advised the members that better promotion ideas were needed. Ms. Garis asked about signs throughout the school, Mr. Guarriello thought more social media might increase participation.

The Arbor Day tree planting is scheduled for April 25th. Vice Chair Stutzel said was looking forward to launching the town wide Garage Sale on April 26th. She said details had not been finalized. Mr. Guarriello wanted to know if there were danger areas we should be considering. Ms. Stutzel said Paramus has been doing it for several years. It

was suggested she reach out to the church sponsoring the event in Paramus to see what guidelines they may have and what pitfalls they may have experienced. Vice Chair Stutzel also wondered about the best way to reach out to residents in regard to signing up and whether there would be a cost. She hoped to have it finalized by next meeting.

Community Garden:

Vice Chair Stutzel told the members that the Community Garden applications would be accepted starting March 1. She said the EEC already received inquiries from people who had registered last year. The ½ plot program seems to be very popular. There were no vacant plots last year. Ms. Garis asked about the gardens and what was planted there. Mr. Guarriello told her residents are planting flowers and vegetables, but perennials are not allowed. Ms. Stutzel said that many of the neighboring plot holders were sharing responsibilities when another holder was on vacation. Toward the end of the season, plot holders were actually sharing their excess vegetables.

Vice Chair Stutzel told Ms. Garis there are four compost containers in the garden, which have not been maintained. The committee is looking for someone who would want to get their hands dirty and take control. There were no volunteers, but Mr. Guarriello said he would do some research and get back to the Commission.

When asked about the gate to the garden, Ms. Stutzel said she would like to get a new lock, perhaps a combination lock that would automatically lock upon closing the door. It was suggested that she contact Atlas Lock in town to see if they could offer suggestions.

BOARD COMMENTARY:

Mr. Guarriello wanted to know the procedure as to how our recommendation would be reported to the Governing Body. Mr. Gordon told him he would make a report to them. Mr. Guarriello asked about an Ordinance to ban plastics if that was the commission's decision. He was told the EEC would make the recommendation, but cannot create an Ordinance. Basically, more research and outreach would need to be done before a ban could be recommended.

Ms. Stutzel said that Chairperson Clark had a letter which she had sent to the Mayor, but had not distributed to the members, although it had been discussed at the last meeting. She would try to find a copy to share.

Mr. Guarriello reminded the members that single use plastic not only involves plastic bags, but utensils, straws, containers and other throwaway items, including soda/water bottles.

Ms. Haight was asked if the schools were recycling. She replied there were bins for various materials, but she noticed that at pick up they are all put into the same truck. Mr. Guarriello advised the members that the recycling may continue at the collection station, which in many cases has the equipment to sort as the items move along a belt. Ms. Stutzel said she would reach out to Dr. Gatens to see what improvements can be made.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY:

Mr. Casey made a motion to open the floor to the public, second by Mr. Guarriello, all were in favor. Seeing no hands, Mr. Casey made a motion to close the floor, second was offered by Mr. Guarriello, all were in favor.

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no other business to discuss, Vice Chair Stutzel asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was made by Mr. Romanski, second by Ms. Garis, all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 pm

Respectfully submitted,
M. Marie Shust
Secretary