

**MUNICIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
BOROUGH OF EMERSON
January 22, 2020**

This meeting of the Emerson Environmental Commission was held in the Municipal Building. Chairwoman Stephanie Clark opened the meeting at 7:32 PM. In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act, the Clerk notified The Record and The Ridgewood News of this meeting and notice was posted in the Municipal Building.

Roll call was taken:

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

Chairperson Clark asked if there were any comments or corrections on the minutes of November 20, 2019. Since there were none, Ms. Stutzel made a motion to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Romanski, all were in favor .

BOARD BUSINESS:

Chairperson Clark advised the members that since Ms. DiNallo had been appointed to the Council, she would no longer be Vice Chair of the EEC. Since a new Vice Chair is needed, Chairperson Clark nominated Ms. Stutzel as Vice Chair. Mr. Romanski offered the second. All members present voted to approve Ms. Stutzel. Ms. Stutzel accepted the position.

Chairperson Clark reviewed briefly the responsibilities of the Vice Chair, including leading the monthly EEC meetings in the instance that the Chairperson cannot attend. Chairperson Clark advised the members that the calendar of meeting dates is posted on the Borough website, and each member should refer to the calendar and aim to attend all meetings, when possible.

SINGLE USE PLASTICS:

The Chairperson then went on to address a short list of 2020 initiatives, beginning with the topic of “plastic bags.” As background, Chairperson Clark summarized that while there’s no official state ban on plastic bag use, local municipalities (i.e. Jersey City, Paramus) have explored issuing their own ordinances. Further, many retailers in Emerson such as Stop n’ Shop and Shop Rite, have already discontinued the use of single use plastics, as many are already made of recycled material or include text on bags encouraging consumers to return plastic bags for proper recycling.

While not the right fit for Emerson at this time, the Commission has committed to first and foremost, educating its residents – for the issue is not simply plastic bags, as covered by media, but instead the use of ‘single use plastics’ overall, which extends beyond bags. Therefore, simply banning plastic bags is not a solution to the main, larger issue.

To move forward on this issue, Chairperson Clark prepared and shared a draft memo summarizing the EEC’s three-point action plan regarding the issue of single use plastics. Members had no edits to share, so Chairperson Clark agreed to share with Mayor DiPaola and the Governing Body, as well as our EEC page on the Borough website, for reference.

As part of the three-point plan, is the EEC’s commitment to improve recycling education. Mr. Romanski wondered about the placement of new, three separate bins throughout Emerson to cover waste, paper/compost and plastic recycling. The team then discussed opportunities in school, asking student liaison, Ms. Haight, if the students were allowed to bring plastic beverage containers to class and whether a recycling structure was already in effect. She replied that there are recycling bins in classrooms, but often not monitored properly. And, although there was a policy of bottled water only, students tend to bring non-recyclable styrofoam/paper cups.

Mr. Romanski thought the Board of Education could be more proactive. Chairperson Clark advised the members that Supervisor Gatens is an advocate of the EEC and would likely be a great collaborator in improving recycling on and off campus at Emerson JS High School specifically.

Another important piece to this plan, is to engage local businesses in our interest to improve recycling and limit use of single use plastics. Mr. Guarriello was asked to spearhead local business outreach and agreed to lead. Mr. Guarriello said he would need a list of businesses, information on plastic bags manufacturers to get started.

On the topic of plastic bag use, Councilman Gordon asked whether residents should continue to use plastic bags to properly pick up dog waste. The EEC answered yes, because eliminating waste is the main goal in that scenario, and many residents use pre-recycled plastic bags to do so. Chairperson Clark reminded the members of the ‘pet waste flyer’ they had created at the start of the year, that been in use to help educate residents and has been distributed to pet owners seeking new 2020 pet licenses.

2020 EMERSON EARTH WEEK:

For this year, Emerson Earth Week will be held from April 20 – 27, 2020. A draft agenda of activities was shared with the team for discussion. Similar to last year, the opening of the Emerson Community Garden would kick off during that period; we’ll re-partner with the Emerson Library and Emerson Junior Senior High School.

Per tradition, our annual Arbor Day tree planting will be held during Emerson Earth Week. Unlike last year, this responsibility now falls under the newly reinstated Shade Tree Commission, so they will own, but the EEC will be on-hand to support and promote. And lastly, as a new execution, Ms. Stutzel would be organizing a Borough-wide garage sale as a way to promote up-cycling. The particulars are to be worked out, as far as registration, logistics, announcements/publicity, etc. She hoped to have more details at the next meeting.

EMERSON COMMUNITY GARDEN:

As a recap, like last year, the Emerson Community Garden would be assigned to plots on a first-come, first-served and lottery basis. The applications would be available in the middle of March and should be returned early April, so the plots can be assigned before Earth Week kick off. Since it was so successful last year, we will first assign ½ plots as a means to welcome more participants. Once all the requests are filled, people can apply for a second, “full plot”, if available.

Based on the team's 2019 debrief, Chairperson Clark said the EEC will emphasize the season-end cleanup, as specified in the Garden rules.

Ms. Stutzel asked if there was money in the budget to purchase a new lock for the gate, with a number combination and better construction. She said the current lock is very cumbersome to operate. Chairperson Clark said she'd look into and also shared that more signage would be helpful as well.

The matter of composting was brought up. Councilman Gordon said composting was available from other municipalities. The DPW could probably look into that for the EEC.

MEMBER DISCUSSION:

Councilman Gordon brought up the subject of bees and the reduction of bee population. Mr. Guarriello had some samples of plants from the Woods, which he shared with the members. One of the samples was holly, which he explained is either male or female. The female does require bee pollination, which would also benefit the ecology.

Chairperson Clark mentioned that she is still working on the EWP Guide as discussed at earlier meetings.

Councilman Gordon then brought up the subject of Solar Power. He told the Commission he recently had it installed on his home and now he is a strong advocate. He wondered where it could be applied in the Borough. The team collectively mentioned they hoped it could one day be considered on new buildings and when re-roofing the older ones.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Stutzel made a motion to open the floor to the public, second was offered by Mr. Romanski, all were in favor. Seeing no one in the Chambers, Ms. Stutzel made a motion to close the floor, second by Mr. Romanski, all were in favor. The floor was closed.

ADJOURNMENT:

Since there was no other business Ms. Stutzel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second was offered by Mr. Romanski, all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted
M. Marie Shust
Commission Secretary