

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time:

Monday, February 23, 2026 – 7:45 p.m.

Meeting Location: Zoom and Borough Hall

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81329123478?pwd=CXRaQezyeWJNPiBZWtuhdhpM2hjWm.1>

Open Public Meeting Statement:

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Bergen Record and/or The Ridgewood News, informing the public of the time and place according to the provision of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1976)

Roll Call:

Members: Lou Baldanza(P), Lisa De Pellegrini(P), Chairman Robert Hanrahan(P), Mairead Jensen(A), Randall Preston(P), Lisa Skoglund(P), Antonio Vozzolo(A), Michelle Zink-Jojic(P), Planning Board Liaison/Member Joseph Puglisi(P) & Council Liaison Christopher Roche(P)

Approval of Minutes – January 12, 2026 - A motion to approve was made by R. Preston and seconded by L. De Pellegrini. .

Meeting Opened to Public Agenda & Non – Agenda - A motion to open was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by R. Preston. .

Present from the Public:

Maria Nicolini – No public comments were made.

Ruby Villalona – No public comments were made.

Meeting Closed to Public - A motion to close was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by R.Preston/L.Skoglund. .

Communication/Correspondence:

- Eagle Scout Plaques
 - Plaques honoring Kiera Luff and Hridank Shukla are being made to honor their accomplishment and contribution to the borough.
 - Hridank's plaque will be presented at his Court of Honor. Kiera already had her Court of Honor and we will find another appropriate venue to present it to her.

New Business:

- Review of Planning Board Submissions
 - **86 Akers Avenue**
 - Tree removal forms have been submitted by applicant.
 - If tree removal takes place outside of protected zone (per borough ordinance), no permit will be needed. If removal is within the protected zone the applicant must fill out a tree removal permit.

- If applicant is doing any construction within 1 year, they will need to mitigate damage from the removal of trees by new tree establishment according to borough ordinance requirements.
- Forty-eight trees are being removed from the property, there will be building demolition and then new construction taking place.
- Some trees are noted as sick and/or dead. Dead or damaged trees are excluded from the ordinance. Most of the trees listed do not have this notation.
- We require a marked map identifying specific trees scheduled for removal to see exactly what is being taken down and what is scheduled for replacement. The applicant can draw the locations of tree removal on a map.
- L. De Pellegrini states that if too many trees are removed it could cause flooding on this and neighboring properties. Some of the trees coming down are large heritage trees.
- We will send a request to the planning board asking for a drawing indicating specific tree removal.
- R. Hanrahan states that there has been discussion that the borough ordinance could be updated or further modified. If you would like to run a subcommittee to update the tree ordinance please contact R. Hanrahan or E. Riccardi.

- **46 Upper Saddle River Road**

- Homeowner is removing part of the existing home and building a second story addition and an attached garage.
- The current garage/shed will be removed and a deck, patio and a front porch will be built.
- There are no wetlands and no category one setbacks.
- There are two variances coming before the planning board which include one front porch setback, and a 20 foot setback from either side of the home.
- J. Puglisi states that this applicant has not come before the board yet.
- R. Hanrahan states that they added two feet on the porch encroachment. It is possible that this dimension is below the twenty foot side property requirement.
- R. Hanrahan states that a landscape architecture page is required unless no trees are being removed.

Old Business:

- Community Project Update (Lisa De Pellegrini)
 - No news to report.
 - Joe D'Angeli (bat guy) reached out to schedule a presentation. L. De Pellegrini will see if he can schedule earlier in the year. We need to coordinate with school schedules, etc.
- Pascack Trail/Huff Pond Update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - No news to report.
 - The trail along Pascack Brook has been well traveled. It is already tamped down from use.
 - DPW cleared several branches that were blocking some of the trail.
- Montvale Clean Up Day/Arbor Day Celebration – April 25, 2026
 - R. Hanrahan requested gloves, bags, t-shirts and pick up sticks from the County of Bergen.
 - We will acquire another 100 sapling trees as we did last year.
 - R. Hanrahan requests members to come to set up by the red shed around 8:30 a.m.
 - E. Riccardi will submit a work order for DPW to assist with set up, breakdown and removal of collected trash.
 - Please contact E. Riccardi to let her know if you are able to attend.

- J. Puglisi sent the flyer to the Valley View Facebook page to promote the community event.
- Mayor Ghassali included the flyer in his email communication. We have over 100 residents volunteer every year.
- Bicycle and Walking Plan (Antonio Vozzolo) - Absent
- Community Garden Update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - We already have thirteen residents who want to be involved in building and managing the garden.
 - Next steps will include staking out the perimeter of the garden with wooden stakes when the ground defrosts.
 - It is unclear when we will be operational. It could be this summer or next spring.
 - Each parcel will be a 4 ft. x 8 ft. raised bed constructed from environmentally safe material.
 - We currently have forty raised beds for our initial installation. We have space for up to one hundred raised beds. Eight residents have stated that they will reserve a plot in the garden space.
 - The seasonal charge to residents will be \$50.00 (approximately) which will include the cost of water, setup and non-recurring costs along the way.
- Repair of Environmental Learning Center, trail discussion (Robert Hanrahan/Michelle Zink-Jojic/Lou Baldanza)
 - There are more floorboards that should be replaced. R. Hanrahan, R. Preston and L. Baldanza will schedule the work to be done in the coming weeks.
 - L. Baldanza states that we need two garbage pails on both sides of the trailhead.
 - The map for the trailhead kiosk is being made by a volunteer. We will update status when more information is available.
- Update on the Interconnect Trail Between the Environmental Learning Center and Wegmans
 - No trees need to be removed and no significant soil will be moved.
 - It will be a natural trail with either mulch outlined with small boulders going around the side and rear of the cell tower.
- Tree City Application
 - R. Hanrahan and E. Riccardi completed the application and submission.
 - Application is on hold for updates to the Arbor Day Proclamation.

Council Liaison Report – Chris Roche

- Requests that the process for feedback on planning board submission is standardized for consistency in timing of responses.
- R. Hanrahan agrees and states that tonight we reviewed two different properties and correspondence including feedback will be submitted to the planning board within 24 to 48 hours. J. Puglisi will be included on all correspondence to the planning board.

Planning Board Report – Joe Puglisi

- The shopping Trader Joe's shopping center is in the final approval stages..
- Dunkin Donuts submission is still in review. There is concern with request to the number of variances requested.

Adjournment - A motion to adjourn was made by J. Puglisi and seconded by L. De Pellegrini all in favor stating aye.

Next EC Meeting will be on Monday, March 16, 2026