

# ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time:

Monday, October 20, 2025 – 7:45 p.m.

Meeting Location: Zoom and Borough Hall

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86596631928?pwd=z8IvAXVV4UYcyWKe2KrRFAv3zqzbJQ.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(P), Randall Preston(P), Lisa Skoglund, Antonio Vozzolo(P), Michelle Zink-Jojic(A), Planning Board Liaison/Member Sherwin Tsai(A) & Council Liaison Christopher Roche(P)

Approval of Minutes – September 15, 2025 - A motion to approve was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by L. DePellegrini.

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

Present from the Public:

- Joe Sorrentino of 168 Upper Saddle River Road
  - J. Sorrentino states he is interested in making a makerspace, a collaborative communal area where people can build and create and innovate using a shared collection of tools and equipment. He is hopeful that space could be available on the DePiero's farm property. He would like to seek tools as donations, and have 2 to 4 nights a week where a parent volunteer is present to oversee and supervise local youth in learning useful skills such as:
    - Woodworking; building bird houses and bat houses.
    - Auto maintenance such as oil changes and spark plug replacements.
    - Household repairs.
  - R. Hanrahan states that the EC can support this initiative by getting the word out to the community. There are areas in town that would be a more appropriate location for a makerspace than the farm property. We can help investigate possibilities. One possibility may be the Octagon house which has open space with power and fire extinguishers.
  - R. Hanrahan suggests reaching out to the boy scouts for support. It could be a good way to network the idea and involve other adults.
  - R. Hanrahan states that train station has running water and a kitchenette and could be a possible option. Any location would require approval by the Mayor and Council.

- R. Hanrahan will reach out to staff at the borough, including the Mayor and inquire about possible locations and presenting the idea at a Mayor and Council meeting.
- John Abbatangelo, Chairman of the Sparkill Creek
  - J. Abbatangelo in attendance to learn how New Jersey deals with flooding issues and trees.
  - J. Abbatangelo shares information about a NYS program, Trees for Tribs. It is a Department of Environmental Conservation supported program.
  - Student volunteers come out to plant. Mostly sapling's (pussy willow, swamp rose, Virginia maple, etc). Typically, the Sparkill Creek organizes one to two plantings a year. They just planted 200 trees at Saint Thomas Aquinas College. A second site for planting will be in Tappan.
  - R. Hanrahan states the Montvale is involved in Tree City, a nationwide organization. In order to maintain status each year a certain amount of man hours/replenishment of trees is required. Every year we hand out saplings to community members. We also have a tree ordinance in place which places regulations on removal of trees. Any trees that are removed at a certain size need to be replaced.
  - In Montvale we have eleven category one waterways which provide trout fishing and/or drinking water. We have three tributaries.
  - L. Baldanza inquires why so much trash is coming down from NYS via waterways.
  - J. Abbatangelo states that populations have increased. Most water bodies in this area start in NYS. A lot of the problem is the nature of the highways and storm infrastructure. Municipalities could remove anything from the catch basins. He suggests that a good starting point to problem solving is to document the situation.

Meeting Closed to Public - A motion to close was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by L. DePellegrini.

#### Communication/Correspondence:

- R. Hanrahan received a letter from a Park Ridge teacher requesting to use the trail. She brought members of her class to the trail. It is a great resource that can be used by the schools.
- The borough website will be redesigned by a new contractor. They requested at least one person to help create content for the EC webpage. It is a self-designed website. They will assist by transferring the current webpages to the new site. M. Zink-Jojic and E. Riccardi will help with webpage maintenance. R. Hanrahan will make sure our current information is transferred over to the new webpages.
- M. Jensen highlighted a downed tree on the trail. We placed a work order for removal of the tree which should be completed shortly. M. Jensen also noted that the trail is looking great.
- R. Preston reports on the status of the fence in need of repair along Bayberry. He states that they replaced the green slats with black slats in only one section. R. Hanrahan will check on that.
- R. Preston reports that at least 10 people were fishing at Huff Pond on Saturday. Healthy catfish were pulled out of the pond. R. Hanrahan states that we stocked the pond with sunnies, perch and bass as well as minnows for mosquito control. The bass are good for keeping the

pond clean. We removed all the carp and there are no algae problems due to the aquafers and the fish.

- R. Hanrahan reports that the swale that runs along Bayberry – a waterway, mostly manmade that feeds from the street and ends up in Pascack Brook, has five to six inches of soot deposited in it. There may have been a water main break approximately 3 weeks ago. R. Hanrahan requested that the DPW reach out to Viola to inquire how this happened.

#### New Business:

- Review of Planning Board Submissions (if applicable)
  - 55-61 Magnolia Drive
    - It is a short cul-de-sac that will include 6 house on oversized lots.
    - L. DePellegrini states that it is within 300 feet of the Pascack Brook.
    - The riparian zone is indicated on the plans by a dotted line that is 300 feet from the waterway.
    - Page C09 of the plans depicts trees to be cut and trees to be planted.
    - M. Jensen states that page CO3 depicts eight 36 inch caliper trees being remove; not a significant number.
    - E. Riccardi will mail page C09 to the EC members for review and further comments.

#### Old Business:

- Community Project Update (Lisa DePellegrini) – no news to report.
  - More events to follow in the spring.
- Pascack Trail/Huff Pond Update (Robert Hanrahan)
  - R. Hanrahan will contact Bergen County to include Montvale on the list for fish contributions for next spring.
  - C. Roche suggests the idea of reinforcing the banks with saplings instead of giving them out.
- Electric Vehicle Update (Antonio Vozzolo)
  - Federal incentives have been taken away which leaves funding to the states.
- Bicycle and Walking Plan (Antonio Vozzolo)
  - A. Vozzolo is compiling a repository of the various town plans and will approach the Mayor with some ideas.
- Community Garden Update (Robert Hanrahan)
  - The borough will have a 5 year agreement on the DiPiero property that they have out for bid. Someone will be selected by Mayor and council within the next week or so.
  - There is a 1 acre piece of the property set aside that will be dedicated to the community garden. It will not be managed by the contractor. The garden is excluded from the contract and will be supervised by the borough. The EC will be integrally involved.
- Repair of Environmental Learning Center, trail discussion (Robert Hanrahan/Michelle Zink-Jojic/Lou Baldanza)
  - R. Preston, L. Baldanza and R. Hanrahan will replace the damaged floor boards. There are approximately 20 boards in in need of replacement.

- L. Baldanza asks if we will get scouts and high school students to participate. R. Hanrahan states that we can ask them to support the work.
- M. Jensen inquire about placing chicken wire over the boards for traction.
- R. Hanrahan states that is a good idea but will be one more thing to maintain. There are some DEP friendly detergents we can use for maintenance. It does become a hazard every year.
- Update on the Interconnect Trail Between the ELC and Wegmans
  - We don't have the budget to support the last proposal. At this time we may decide to leave it as it is or do some signage.
  - C. Roche suggests planning for next year. We can submit it as a capital expense.
- **Council Liaison Report – Chris Roche**
  - Approximately 1500 people were in attendance at Day at the Farm at DiPieros.
- **Planning Board Report – Sherwin Tsai – absent**

Adjournment – A motion to adjourn was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by L. DePellegrini all in favor stating aye.

Next EC Meeting will be on Monday, November 17, 2025