

Mountain Lakes Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2021 7:30pm Zoom Video Meeting

Commission Members Present:

Mimi Kaplan
Jackie Bay
Marnie Vyff

Chris Capodanno
Peter Smith
Nicholas Coppola

Neeke Swart (minutes)

Dan Happer

Borough Council Liaison

1. Administration

October Meeting Minutes were approved

2. Route 46 planting/Beautification Project

Jackie presented a rough plan to realize the planting and maintenance of 70 trees in the median on route 46 between the train trestle and the Zeris Inn development project. Based on a conservative and non-negotiated estimate, the total cost of purchasing trees, planting (including police assistance and permit), and maintenance would be \$67,325 in 2022, and \$6,125 in 2023.

Discussion and obstacles:

- There is a lack of clear guidelines from the NJDOT regarding tree planting in the highway median. Marc Smolinski, a Morris County NJDOT employee tasked with approving permits has shared that there are no standards for what can be planted but encouraged ML to fill out application. Roxbury and Randolph planted trees in medians without apparent consequences.
- Funding. Shade Tree can't pay for the whole plan. The additional funds could come from a fundraiser and/or developers in the route 46 area.
- Road salt. There are 3 tree species that are salt resistant.

Next steps:

- MLPD and ML Borough Manager need to be informed and on board.
- Funding sources need to be finalized.

3. Development Updates: 367 Bloomfield Avenue Application

There is strong support for the northern portion of the property, which is primarily wetlands, to be "deed restricted by a conservation easement" held by the Borough. This ensures that nothing in the future can be built on it. Also, the use of permeable pavers for the parking spaces and the realization of a detention basin located at the northeast side of the lot has been positively received.

Remaining concerns:

1. How is the existing condition of the wetlands?

2. About the impact of the project:

- To connect electric and water, a trench must be dug through the above-mentioned northern part of the property. We will request this to be done with the least amount of disturbance.
- A recycling receptacle is not mentioned with the trash dumpster location.
- The expected water use per year is not calculated.
- The effects of light and noise pollution on neighboring residential properties and surrounding nature is unclear.
- The eastern sidewalk encroaches on the side yard set-back. Also, the dumpster is planned against the western side yard set-back.
- The amount of parking spaces (12) is high, only 8 are mandatory. If there were only 10 parking spaces, the sidewalk could be moved westerly so that it wouldn't exceed the side yard set-back.
- To prepare the project for the future, the construction of an EV charging station would be commendable.

- The plan is missing a schematic of the current trees on the property, and a tree removal plan. The number of trees replaced should not be less than the number removed.
- Is there a stormwater system maintenance plan and who will be responsible for it.

With these points being unanswered, we will advise the Planning Board to deny the requested waiver of the EIS and of the waiver of A18, Location of trees and tree masses.

4. Liaison Updates

Student Liaison

- Pictures of the completed MLHS botanical garden were sent to all members of the MLEC. Need to design a sign to thank Bednar Landscaping for donating the plantings and all of their support.

Planning Board/EDAC (Nick)

- EDAC:
 - The re-zoning of route 46 West was discussed. There will be meetings with residents before objectives will be published.
 - EDAC is looking to put together a conceptual design for the ML Marketplace.
 - There is still a vacant position in EDAC.
- PB: Final approval was given to the Sunrise project to make changes to their sign.

Green Team (Marnie)

- The Sustainable NJ application got rewarded with a Silver Status, congratulations! This opens us up to larger grants. Maybe to develop environmentally friendly stormwater mitigation/remediation?

5. Any Other Business

- Mimi and Jackie were given access to be a part of a beta test version of improved online resources for the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI). This resource will be very useful to work with for updating the ML ERI and when the Masterplan gets updated in 2023.
- Dan reported on various subjects:
 - The budget request is out.
 - Follow up by the Borough on the Annual Stormwater Maintenance Requirements for Legacy, Sunrise and Enclave projects. The director of DPW, in consultation with the Borough Engineer, will follow up on missing information.
 - Stormwater management information on the website contains dead links. This will be looked at.
 - NJ transit station near Speedway is still in conversational phase.
 - Stormwater Island beach. The current inlet & stormbox system is too small to sift properly.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm, next meeting scheduled for **Tuesday December 14th 2021 7:30pm**