

Lebanon Township Environmental & Open Space Commission (EOSC) Meeting Minutes

March 6, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting called to order by Ms. Petzinger at 7:06pm. In addition to the members listed below, Committee Member Schmidt was in attendance and eight (8) members of the public were in the audience.

In compliance with the "Open Public Meetings Act", notice has been given that the Lebanon Township Environmental and Open Space Commission hosts its regular meetings on the first Monday of every month at the Lebanon Township Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL

EOSC Member	Role	Roll Call
Sharon Petzinger	Member, Chair	Present
Warren Newman	Member	Absent
Erik Jan Henriksen	Member	Absent
Nancy Lawler	Member	Present
Kathy Koch	Member	Present
Sharon Hardy	Member	Present
Linda Ryan	Member, EOSC Planning Board Member	Present
Marty Collett	Alternate I	Present
<i>Vacant</i>	Alternate II	-

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Ms. Petzinger welcomed Linda Ryan as new EOSC member. Ms. Ryan gave a brief introduction, then EOSC members introduced themselves.

EOSC AUTHORITY, RESPONSIBILITIES, and CONDUCT

Ms. Petzinger gave a summary of EOSC authority, responsibilities, and conduct.

- We are not activists. We are appointed officials representing the township. When acting in our official capacity, whether during regular meetings, running events, visiting a property, or speaking with the public, we are to do so in a professional and courteous manner.
- When investigating properties to purchase or reviewing permit applications from the DEP, planning board, or board of adjustment, we are to treat each property consistently and fairly, without bias.
- If we have a direct or indirect personal or financial interest in any matter, we are to recuse ourselves from that matter.
- We have statutory authority and responsibilities as an environmental commission that we must adhere to. We also have existing documents, such as the LT Master Plan, OSRP, NRI, as well as county, Highlands, and state plans to guide our decisions and help us prioritize our actions within our statutory authority.

NJSA 40:56A-1: Environmental commission is established for the protection, development or use of natural resources, including water resources, located within its territorial limits.

NJSA 40:56A-2-A-6:

- 1) Conduct research into the use and possible use of the open land areas of the municipality and may coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes
- 2) Advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which in its judgment it deems necessary for its purposes
- 3) Keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, in order to obtain information on the proper use of such areas
- 4) From time to time recommend to the planning board or, if none, to the mayor and governing body of the municipality plans and programs for inclusion in a municipal master plan and the development and use of such areas
- 5) Acquire, maintain, improve, protect, limit the future use of, or otherwise conserve and properly utilize open spaces and other land and water areas in the municipality
- 6) Keep records of its meetings and activities and shall make an annual report to the governing body of the municipality
- 7) Study and make recommendations concerning open space preservation, water resources management, air pollution control, solid waste management, noise control, soil and landscape protection, environmental appearance, marine resources and protection of flora and fauna

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The February 2023 Regular Meeting minutes were presented by Ms. Petzinger. Ms. Koch made the motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.

BUSINESS

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Petzinger mentioned that the pledge of allegiance was brought up by the public at the previous EOSC meeting and asked EOSC members if we should start meetings with the pledge of allegiance. Discussion was held. The EOSC is not a formal committee with decision-making authority like the Planning Board, so members don't need to be sworn in, adhere to Roberts Rules, etc. The pledge has never been part of EOSC's structure, nor that of other committees like recreation, historians, and library. As such, the EOSC would prefer to remain consistent with the other "informal" committees.

Grant Opportunities

Ms. Lawler spoke about ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Projects. Proposal are due 4/17/23. Competitive grants for up to \$1500 are available for local stewardship projects (trail building, signs, maps/guides, habitat enhancement, pollinator habitats, invasive species management, riparian restoration, stormwater management pilot projects, projects on or near hazardous waste sites). The applications are straight forward and easy to fill out. The grants are open to all environmental commissions, not just ANJEC members but require 80 hours of volunteer match. This grant can be used to create and install signs, print pamphlets, etc., and in collaboration

with the Eagle Scouts. The EOSC needs to submit the application to the Township Committee by 3/31 for them to vote on a resolution to endorse the application.

Ms. Lawler made a motion to establish a subcommittee to research grant opportunities, develop a proposal, and send it to the Township Committee. Ms. Koch seconded. Ms. Lawler, Ms. Koch, and Mr. Collett volunteered to be on the subcommittee, with the caveat that Mr. Collett will be away the end of March. Unanimously approved.

Ms. Lawler suggested we make a list of projects/needs so we can apply for some larger grants. Ms. Lawler volunteered to create a spreadsheet with information on grants. Ms. Petzinger volunteered to create a spreadsheet for project wish lists and share it with EOSC.

ANJEC Membership

The EOSC received a membership renewal notice from ANJEC. Ms. Petzinger gave an overview of the membership rates: \$400 a year for up to 7 members, additional individual members can join for \$35 per person. Member benefits include:

- Free attendance for ANJEC workshops and webinars for all members (\$35 for non-members)
- Subscription (mail or email delivery) to the quarterly ANJEC Report
- Free Subscription to the ANJEC News, our Bi-Weekly E-Newsletter
- Discounted registration for ANJEC's Annual Environmental Congress
- Discount on ANJEC Publication purchases
- Access to ANJEC's Resource Center for information and guidance, email info@anjec.org anytime for assistance
- Portable games and displays on a variety of environmental topics, loaned for free to members for use at green fairs, celebrations and other events.
- Member towns can arrange an ANJEC Road Show. ANJEC staff will present a workshop on environmental topics of your choice, and present remotely or at your facility (\$300 fee).

Ms. Koch suggested the EOSC have ANJEC do another septic workshop for the township. Committeeman Schmidt mentioned that would cost \$700 out of EOSC's \$1K budget. It is possible the EOSC can use open space and green community money as well. Ms. Lawler stated the EOSC used money for RHA and/or MWA in the past. Ms. Lawler suggested the ANJEC training is important for newcomers.

Mr. Collett made a motion to table the ANJEC Membership discussion until members discuss what the EOSC should prioritize spending its money on. Seconded by Ms. Hardy, unanimously approved.

ANJEC Trainings

ANJEC sent out email notifications about training sessions in March. The trainings are free for members, \$35 for nonmembers. Ms. Petzinger explained which trainings were being offered and also noted that videos from trainings held during previous years are available for free on ANJEC YouTube website.

Eagle Scout Project

An eagle scout reached out regarding a project on signage and possible fencing needed at the parking area for Red Mill Race Preserve. Ms. Petzinger explained Mr. Chen and Mr. Duckworth were both involved before they both resigned. Mr. Chen will continue to volunteer on the project.

Mr. Collett volunteered to work with Mr. Chen and the eagle scout on the project and has a meeting already set up to discuss possible fencing, picnic tables, etc. Mr. Collett stated Mr. Chen met with Mr. Gabriel of DPW about the parking area.

NJ Forest Task Force

Ms. Petzinger gave an overview of the final report released by the NJ Forest Task Force. Ms. Lawler was the EOSC liaison who participated in the NJ Forest Task Force. The EOSC submitted two proposals and endorsed several others that requested non-contiguous parcels be allowed to be included under one forest stewardship plan, made recommendations for cost savings, and emphasized the need to incentivize local governments to steward open space. Those requests were not included in the final report. Instead, the final report targeted actions the NJ DEP should take on state lands, with some mention of public land owned by local governments after the state lands are addressed.

At the briefing to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, Senator Smith requested additional comments before he starts drafting legislation, in about three weeks (Mar 15, 2023).

Ms. Petzinger suggested the EOSC combine and condense information in the proposals submitted to the Task Force to submit as comments to Senator Smith. Given the final report appeared to suggest the NJ DEP dictate the management goals for all public forests, Ms. Petzinger also suggested the need to emphasize the need for local governments and committees to create the goals of township-owned public lands, instead of being mandated by the state, provided those goals are consistent with the purpose of the land acquisition in addition to the township's master plan, OSRP, NRI, etc. as well as in the best interest of the local residents.

Ms. Lawler asked if the final report included any direction about public education on forest and forest management, or involvement from a higher level institution. She mentioned she witnessed a lot of disagreement about definitions, etc., so EOSC should recommend education & definitions, including afforestation, reforestation, preserve vs open space, etc., and include the need to incentivize education.

Ms. Lawler made a motion to form a subcommittee to submit comments to Senator Smith re: NJFTF recommendation by 3/15. Ms. Petzinger and Ms. Lawler volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Seconded by Ms. Hardy, unanimously approved.

NJ DEP Natural Working Lands Strategy Stakeholder Meetings

Ms. Petzinger provided a brief overview of the Natural and Working Lands Strategy, or NWLS and upcoming stakeholder meetings in March 2023. The NWLS will result in a plan for

maximizing the amount of carbon dioxide sequestered on public and private natural lands and working lands. It covers tidal and non-tidal wetlands, aquatic habitats, developed lands, agriculture, and forests. The NWLS is part of Governor Murphy's climate goals outlined in the 80x50 Report: 80% of NJ's carbon dioxide emissions (10.8 MMT of CO₂e) needs to be sequestered and stored by 2050. At the stakeholder meetings DEP will present draft targets for land management practices that sequester carbon (e.g. tree planting, wetland revegetation, etc.) along with proposed policy changes. The final strategy will be released in Sept 2023. Written comments can be also be submitted. There is no deadline reported so will assume it to be soon after the last stakeholder meeting (March 28) unless told otherwise.

https://nj.gov/dep/climatechange/mitigation/nwls.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Ms. Hardy volunteered to attend the meetings for agriculture and forest lands and report back. At the April EOSC meeting members will decide whether to submit written comments. Ms. Lawler recommended Ms. Hardy listen to presentations on carbon in preparation for the meetings. Ms. Petzinger will send out more information about NWLS.

Wild Musconetcong Museum Exhibit

Ms. Lawler mentioned the new Wild Musconetcong museum exhibit which will open just before opening day of trout season (4/8) and run through end of June. It will cover the history of fishing in the Musconetcong River, archaeological records, colonial agriculture, etc. The museum is still in need of antique fishing equipment for the exhibit.

Scribble Maps

Ms. Petzinger mentioned the mapping software EOSC uses to map potential open space lands costs \$9.99 a month. It is currently being charged to the personal credit card of the former chair. She asked whether the EOSC or township has the ability to pay for recurring monthly charges, or will someone from EOSC need to pay for the subscription and be reimbursed each month? Mr. Schmidt volunteered to look into it.

ROSI

Ms. Petzinger noted the state statute the mandates the EOSC to keep an index of open space areas, which is one of the functions of Scribble Maps. She asked about who keeps track of the ROSI and provides it to Green Acres. Committeeman Schmidt stated it's officially updated every 5-10 year by the township planner. EOSC doesn't need to do anything.

LIAISON UPDATES

MWA: Ms. Lawler stated the MWA is looking at effect of road salt on surface water and drinking water in relation to stormwater management and taking water samples from surface water each month. Preliminary results suggests salt is more of a problem than we thought. Knowlton had to close private wells because of salt contamination. Ms. Lawler suggested the EOSC consider expanding community well testing in select spots and consider having someone present about salt to members. Ms. Koch mentioned water softeners can also contribute to excess salt in the water. Ms. Lawler stated the majority of the problem includes road salt and salts used in

agriculture. Fortunately the township has taken measures to minimize use of excess salt when salting roadways. Committeeman Schmidt stated magnesium is used to keep salt sticking to the road so less salt needs to be used, but it needs to be a balance of public safety and the environment.

RHA: No report.

Highlands Council: Committeeman Schmidt stated there is some funding under stormwater management to reduce use of road salt, spillage, etc.

Planning Board: No report.

OTHER TOPICS

Ms. Petzinger received requests to update the information on the EOSC website, include the list of members, and asked members to provide other suggestions.

Ms. Koch mention portions of the Columbia Trail will be temporarily closed for repairs. She also mentioned that the well testing even May 6-8 can only accept 50 samples in a day. An option to drop off samples on Wednesday would be provided if necessary.

Ms. Koch mentioned the well testing will be held in the meeting room at the municipal building, not the vestibule. May 6, 2023 will be the pick-up date with May 8 as the drop off date.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Hardy made the motion to open public comment, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.

Paul Lewis asked if maps for open space properties are available for the public, inquired about meeting order with the Planning Board and EOSC, mentioned the importance of septic workshops and suggested the Township Committee approve money for that.

Ms. Petzinger mentioned GeoWeb as a source for where open space properties are located.

Ms. Lawler agreed that septic workshops are important and residents need to be more aware of how to care for septic systems.

Nina spoke about invasive species awareness and asked if the subcommittee can meet to discuss it so NJEAE can get started. A lot of people want to be involved in and with a focus on all invasive species, including spotted lanternfly.

Ms. Lawler suggested the subcommittee make a spreadsheet of invasive plants problematic in the township. Ms. Petzinger stated there is public interest in controlling stiltgrass, barberry, bamboo and mile-a-minute. Nina will meet with Ms. Koch to discuss it further.

Ms. Koch made a motion to close public comment, seconded by Mr. Collette and unanimously approved.

Ms. Lawler made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Ryan, and unanimously approved.