

**Lebanon Township Environmental and Open Space Commission (EOSC)
November 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting called to order by Ms. Petzinger at 7:00pm. No 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	Present
Marty Collett	Member	Present
Nancy Roberts-Lawler	Member	Present
Kathy Koch	Member	Present
Sharon Hardy	Member	Present
Linda Ryan	Member, EOSC Planning Board Member	Present
Constance Grill	Alternate I	Absent
Nina Weiland	Alternate II	Present

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

Proposed amendments to the August 7, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes were presented by Ms. Petzinger. The statement about the Hendra property being farmland preserved is proposed to be changed to a conservation easement.

Ms. Koch made the motion to approve the amended minutes, seconded by Ms. Hardy, and unanimously approved with three abstentions.

The October 2023 Regular Meeting minutes were presented by Ms. Petzinger. Ms. Ryan made suggested edits.

Mr. Collett made a motion to accept the October meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. Newman, and unanimously approved with 2 abstentions.

UPDATES

Ms. Petzinger welcomed Ms. Weiland as a new member.

Mr. Collett spoke about the notification to obtain new email addresses specific to Lebanon Township. Ms. Petzinger stated that the email addresses are to be used for official EOSC business and means that volunteers will not have to sort through personal emails if/when emails are requested under the Open Public Records Act. Members discussed concerns related

to the Open Public Records Act and personal emails. Some members mentioned having difficulty accessing the email account.

Ms. Petzinger mentioned the terms for four members will expire the end of 2023. Standard protocol is for the chair to inform the clerk whether members with expiring terms wish to be re-appointed. Members with expiring terms should consider whether they wish to be re-appointed and prepare to discuss it at the December EOSC meeting.

Ms. Petzinger and Ms. Roberts-Lawler mentioned attending the Musconetcong Watershed Association's Flow Together Workshop held at the museum on Nov. 2, 2023. The workshop was part of a series of stakeholder meetings for the Musconetcong Watershed.

Ms. Weiland provided an update about the National FFA and Environmental Sustainability and Engineering Academy. Future Farmers of America is now called National FFA. Ms. Weiland returned from a National competition and of the three teams, two placed silver and one placed bronze. A college and career fair will be hosted at Voorhees High School on Jan 19, 2024 from 5:30-7:30pm. They also plan to host a wilderness safety event and other events in the future. Information about invasive plants are ready to be posted on social media. Ms. Weiland will share the information with Ms. Roberts-Lawler to be posted on the Green Team Facebook account and send to Ms. Petzinger to post on EOSC website.

BUSINESS

Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) Liaison

Ms. Petzinger stated that Mr. Henriksen was the EOSC liaison for MWA, and now that he resigned EOSC needs a new liaison. Ms. Roberts-Lawler volunteered to be MWA liaison.

Mr. Collett made a motion to appoint Ms. Roberts-Lawler as the MWA liaison for EOSC, seconded by Ms. Koch, and unanimously approved.

ANJEC 2024 Membership and Road Show

Ms. Petzinger mentioned the EOSC has had multiple discussions about joining ANJEC and booking a road show for educating residents about septic tank care. ANJEC has provided the EOSC an invoice to join in 2024 at the 2023 rate and one for a road show. The cost to join ANJEC would be \$400 for seven people or \$470 for nine people. The cost for the road show would be another \$300, totaling \$770 for both. The EOSC budget has \$1,000 remaining in 2023.

Ms. Petzinger discussed the benefits of joining ANJEC, which includes free attendance for ANJEC workshops and webinars for all members, discounted registration for the Environmental Congress, portable games and displays loaned out for free, option to have a road show for \$300, and possible advocacy on the EOSC's behalf.

Ms. Roberts-Lawler made a motion for all nine EOSC members to join ANJEC in 2024 for \$470 and use the EOSC 2023 budget to fund it, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.

Ms. Petzinger discussed possible topics for an ANJEC road show, which are provided to ANJEC members for \$300, and could include septic tank care or rain gardens. Ms. Roberts-Lawler stated if they don't have one ready to suit our needs, they can make one. The EOSC can book a road show now and determine the topic at a later date.

Ms. Hardy made a motion to book an ANJEC road show at the cost of \$300 for 2024 and use the EOSC 2023 budget to fund it, seconded by Ms. Ryan and unanimously approved.

Resolution to endorse acquisition of Block 49 Lot 72 (Piazza) for open space preservation

Ms. Petzinger provided an overview of the draft resolution to endorse the acquisition of Block 49 Lot 72 (Piazza) for open space preservation. The Township has already secured a Green Acres grant to fund half the acquisition and is seeking help from the Hunterdon Land Trust to apply for a County Open Space Grant to fund the remaining half. In order to do so, the Hunterdon Land Trust needs an official endorsement from EOSC to apply for the grant.

Ms. Roberts-Lawler discussed the desire to acquire open space acquisition and reasons for doing so. Ms. Petzinger then provided an overview of the process to acquire open space for the township, where the property is located, and why it should be preserved.

Mr. Newman made a motion to accept the resolution to endorse acquisition of Block 49 Lot 72 (Piazza) for open space preservation without edits, seconded by Mr. Collet, and unanimously approved.

Lebanon Township Plant Swap

Ms. Petzinger stated that the EOSC was forwarded a request by the Rec Committee to help start a plant swap in Lebanon Township. If the plant swap was only for vegetable gardens or indoor plants it would not be in the purview of the EOSC, but if it involved plants for outdoor landscaping it could be. Ms. Petzinger followed up with the resident requesting the plant swap for more information, and plant swaps usually include plants for outdoor landscaping, as well as indoor plants and vegetable gardens.

Ms. Roberts-Lawler stated the High Bridge Environmental Commission may also be interested in doing a native plant swap. The EOSC could also collaborate with ESEA/FFA and use it as an opportunity for education about native plants, invasive plants, and backyard habitat.

Ms. Petzinger asked if EOSC members would volunteer to form a subcommittee to investigate how EOSC could help with a plant swap.

A motion was made by Mr. Collett to form a subcommittee about EOSC's involvement in a plant swap, seconded by Ms. Roberts-Lawler, and unanimously approved. Ms. Roberts-Lawler, Ms. Ryan, and Ms. Weiland volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

Hunterdon County Draft Growth Management Plan

Ms. Petzinger asked members if there were any concerns about the Hunterdon County Draft Growth Management Plan, or any reason whether EOSC should provide comments to the

Township Committee. The draft was sent to the EOSC as an FYI by Mayor Koehler with no deadline specified.

Ms. Roberts-Lawler stated the EOSC may consider commenting on septic care. Hunterdon County has the responsibility to oversee septic via the Board of Health but there is no teeth when it comes to enforcement. Ms. Petzinger mentioned this draft plan is for planning purposes and will not likely add teeth, but it could be written as a recommendation. Other members stated that they had not been able to review the entire document.

Further discussion was tabled until the EOSC can obtain more information from the planning Board, Township Committee, or elsewhere.

Highlands Draft Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Ms. Petzinger stated that the EOSC and Township have a good working relationship with Highlands staff and currently have a plan conformance grant to fund the creation of the Municipal Forest Stewardship Master Plan. However, based on information provided by NJ Forestry Association (NJFA), the proposed restrictions in the Highlands Best Management Practices (BMPs) are concerning, especially since they appear to restrict forestry activities that are exempt with approved forest plans and add more requirements at the expense of the landowner. In Lebanon Township, this could potentially impact over 11,600 acres, or over 2,600 households, in the Township, 2,100 of which own over 8,000 acres of forests. This equates to 57% of all the lands (86% of landowners) in Lebanon Township in the Highlands Region and 71% of the forested lands (88% of forest landowners). According to the NJFA news, the Highlands Council solicited information from selected stakeholders and then relied on recommendations on who else to include. The NJ Chapter of The Wildlife Society requested to obtain the draft BMPs from Highlands staff and was denied. NJFA and others felt their information and comments were ignored when the BMPs were created. NJFA is trying to inform local governments and landowners about the BMPs and potential impacts. NJ Farm Bureau and NJ Outdoor Alliance/Sportsmen Federation are also concerned with the impacts of the BMPs. The next Highlands Council meeting is December 14 where the Council may review and approve the draft for “official” public comment.

Ms. Petzinger asked members if the EOSC should draft comments about their concerns. If yes, because of the potential impacts to public and private lands, the EOSC should work with the Township Committee on it. Ms. Petzinger stated she needs to abstain from any decisions or votes about sending comments to a state agency. Ms. Roberts-Lawler suggested the EOSC draft comments on it. She stated that going to public comment in December is premature given the BMPs were prepared without comment from essential stakeholders, including local governments and wildlife professionals. Ms. Ryan recommended the EOSC draft a memo with potential impacts for the Township Committee and Planning Board.

Ms. Roberts-Lawler made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hardy, to form a subcommittee to prepare a memo with information about the potential impacts resulting from the proposed draft

Highlands BMPs, if enacted as currently written, and authorize the EOSC Chair to email that memo, on behalf of the EOSC, to the Township Committee, copying the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, by Thursday 11/9/23. The motion was unanimously approved with one abstention. Ms. Roberts-Lawler and Ms. Ryan volunteered to be on the subcommittee, and as the Chair, Ms. Petzinger will be involved on behalf of the EOSC.

LIAISON UPDATES

- MWA – no liaison
- RHA – Ms. Koch mentioned that Mara Tippet will be the new executive director of RHA starting January 2024.
- MRMC - Ms. Roberts-Lawler mentioned Lebanon Township may need to appoint an alternate MRMC liaison to replace Erik. This may be a mayoral appointment and she will follow-up on it.
- Highlands Council – Committee Member Schmidt was absent.
- Planning Board – Ms. Ryan mentioned the Planning Board meeting was scheduled for tomorrow. The draft forest goals are not on the agenda, but the re-examination report on the master plan and stormwater management ordinance will be on agenda. The re-examination report should be open for public review after tomorrow’s meeting.

OTHER TOPICS/HIGHLIGHTS

- Ms. Koch mentioned she investigated a previous EOSC correspondence for a freshwater wetlands permit on Penwell Rd and was told by the Planning Board clerk that the Board of Adjustment already approved it. There may be issues with receiving mail from the Board of Adjustment. Ms. Koch looked at the property, which is sloped, and the current home is close to the stream. There may be concerns about septic, etc.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were in attendance.

Ms. Koch made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.