

**Lebanon Township Environmental and Open Space Commission (EOSC)  
April 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting called to order by Ms. Petzinger at 7:20 pm. No members of the public were in the audience. Committee Member McKee was also present.

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**

<b>EOSC Member</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Roll Call</b>
Sharon Petzinger	Member, Chair	Present
Warren Newman	Member	Absent
Marty Collett	Member	Present
Nancy Roberts-Lawler	Member, MRMC Councilor	Absent
Constance Grill	Member	Present
Sharon Hardy	Member	Present
Linda Ryan	Member, EOSC Planning Board Member	Absent
Vacant	Alternate I	-
Nina Weiland	Alternate II	Absent

**PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The March 2024 Regular Meeting minutes were presented by Ms. Petzinger.

*Ms. Ryan emailed suggested edits to the minutes and Ms. Hardy suggested additional amendments. Mr. Collett made a motion to accept the March meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Ms. Grill, and unanimously approved.*

**UPDATES**

Mr. McKee stated the Township Attorney will handle the Piazza property acquisition and he is still waiting to hear back from appraiser for the Huston property.

Ms. Hardy provided flyers for well testing created by Raritan Headwaters. The information will be emailed and posted on Facebook, etc. in mid-April. Ms. Petzinger and Ms. Roberts-Lawler will post the flyers on Facebook. Mr. Collett will post it on the school virtual backpack. Handouts will be put out beginning of May.

Ms. Petzinger went over the plant swap information provided by Ms. Ryan. The Plant Swap will be held on June 1 from 10am – noon. Snacks may be provided, and Mr. McKee mentioned the misc. portion of the EOSC budget can cover snacks. Registration is required. Mr. Collett mentioned that people may want to show up to learn from speakers without swapping plants so requiring registration to attend may limit that.

## **BUSINESS**

Forest Goals: Ms. Petzinger provided an overview of the survey results for the draft forest goals for the Municipal Forest Stewardship Master Plan. Township residents and three stakeholder groups were notified about the survey in early March and the survey deadline was March 22. In total, 310 responses were submitted: All three stakeholder groups (Raritan Headwaters Association, Musconetcong Watershed Association, Hunterdon County Open Space), 305 township residents, and two other. Overall, the majority of respondents agreed with all of the draft goals.

EOSC Members discussed the survey results and summary of comments submitted by survey respondents.

- 1) Protect and improve water quality, which includes managing our public forests to reduce erosion, runoff, and pollution into streams and wetlands

*Ms. Grill made a motion to endorse this goal, without amendment, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Hardy, and unanimously approved.*

- 2) Reduce impacts of forest pests and diseases like emerald ash borer, beech leaf disease, etc. in our public forests

To address concerns in the comments about chemical use, the EOOSC recommended adding the following qualifying statement to the goal, "Any chemical treatment recommended by the forester will be investigated thoroughly and, if applied, will be applied minimally on a case-by-case basis as directed by the forester and/or licensed pesticide applicator."

*Mr. Collett made a motion to endorse this goal, as amended, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Grill, and unanimously approved.*

- 3) Reduce non-native invasive plants like barberry, stiltgrass, mile-a-minute, bamboo, etc. in our public forests

To address concerns in the comments about chemical use, the EOOSC recommended adding the following qualifying statement to the goal, "Any chemical treatment recommended by the forester will be investigated thoroughly and, if applied, will be applied minimally on a case-by-case basis as directed by the forester and/or licensed pesticide applicator."

*Ms. Hardy made a motion to endorse this goal, as amended, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Grill, and unanimously approved.*

- 4) Increase the ability of water to enter the ground in our public forests and replenish the groundwater supply for drinking water

*Ms. Grill made a motion to endorse this goal, without amendment, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.*

- 5) Increase habitat for a diversity of native wildlife in our public forests

To address concerns in the comments about increasing habitat for potential livestock predators, the EOSC recommended amending the goal as follows, "Increase habitat for a diversity of birds and other native wildlife in our public forests".

*Ms. Hardy made a motion to endorse this goal, as amended, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Mr. Collett, and unanimously approved.*

- 6) Increase passive outdoor public recreation such as hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc. in our public forests

To address concerns in the comments about potential increase need for maintenance, parking, and enforcement if trails are promoted more, the EOSC recommended amending the goal as follows, "Develop a trail system for passive outdoor recreation such hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc."

*Mr. Collett made a motion to endorse this goal, as amended, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Grill, and unanimously approved.*

- 7) Increase vegetation diversity to help our public forests survive droughts and warmer temperatures

To address concerns in the comments about invasive species, forest health, and forest resiliency, the EOSC recommended amending the goal as follows, "Increase native vegetation diversity to promote local forest resiliency".

*Ms. Grill made a motion to endorse this goal, as amended, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Hardy, and unanimously approved.*

- 8) Reduce grazing of overabundant deer in our public forests, which heavily impacts forest vegetation

This goal had the most disagreement due to the possibility of increasing hunting or other lethal control of deer. However, the majority of respondents agreed that there are too many deer and a lot of negative impacts from them (car collisions, property damage, etc.).

*Mr. Collett made a motion to endorse this goal, without amendment, for the Lebanon Township Municipal Forest Stewardship Plan, seconded by Ms. Hardy, and unanimously approved.*

Stormwater Ordinances: Ms. Petzinger stated the EOSC provided comments to the Township Committee on most of these ordinances, and all but the tree replacement ordinance have been introduced with a public hearing of April 17. All ordinances must be adopted by May 1.

After discussion about the introduced ordinances, the EOSC had no other comments to provide the Township Committee during the public hearing. The tree replacement ordinance was the most concerning and the EOSC should try to learn more about it and help out if possible.

Newsletter: Ms. Petzinger stated that Squiers Point Historians will be creating their own quarterly digital newsletter (not mailed to residents). Community groups, including EOSC, and local non-profits are invited to submit articles or flyers to be published in the newsletter free of charge. The deadline is May 1 for June 1 publication.

EOSC members discussed ideas for the newsletter, and given that the publication will be too late to advertise for the well testing and plant swap, providing an update on the forest goal survey results would be the only article to submit.

Mr. McKee mentioned that the Township Committee needs to review the forest goals before the results can be made public. The May 1 meeting is the earliest date to have the forest goals on the agenda. Since the newsletter deadline is also May 1, the EOSC likely won't be able to submit an article in time.

### **LIAISON UPDATES**

- MWA – Ms. Roberts-Lawler was absent
- RHA – Ms. Hardy stated that RHA is working with the Highlands Watershed Protection Plan. Ms. Petzinger stated that Ms. Roberts-Lawler attended the kickoff meeting
- MRMC – nothing to report
- Highlands Council – Mr. McKee stated the Highlands Annual Report has been released, and staff offered to help Lebanon Township with Tier A stormwater grant. Affordable housing is next topic they will be addressing.
- Planning Board – Ms. Ryan was absent

*Mr. Collett made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Hardy, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 pm.*