

Chatham Township Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 8, 2026
58 Meyersville Rd. Chatham NJ 07928

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT: The meeting schedule for 2026 and January 2027 is posted on the main bulletin board at the Township municipal building, in two newspapers and on the Chatham Township Environmental Commission website at <https://www.chathamtownship-nj.gov/environmental>. The public is cordially invited to attend all meetings, join the discussions and participate in projects.

CTEC'S PURPOSE: To undertake projects and make recommendations concerning the protection or use of natural resources, including water resources and air quality, located within or directly affecting Chatham Township.

The Chatham Township Environmental Commission's goal is to provide a responsible environmental viewpoint to Township committees and boards and to undertake projects with a strong educational component in order to inform officials and residents about constructive actions that can be taken to preserve the environment.

DATES FOR CTEC AND GREEN TEAM FOR 2026 AND JANUARY 2027

The first or second Wednesday, depending on the month: January 14, February 4, March 4, April 8, May 6, June 3, July 1, August NO MEETING, September 2, October 7, November 18, December 2, and January 13, 2027.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1.Roll Call of CTEC Members at 7:15pm: Present: Jessica Romeo (Chair), Lisa McHugh (Vice-Chair), Craig Alperowitz (Township Committee liaison), JoAnne Lockwood White, Amy Mason, Pat Wells, Celeste Fondaco, (alt. 1), Steve Gesell, (alt.2)
Absent: Phil Ankel (Planning Board liaison), Polly Brophy
Guests: Aanya Aditya, Annabelle Palmer and Matt Palmer

2. Public Meeting Statement (see above)

3. Approve Meeting Minutes of March 4, 2026

Motion to approve Meeting Minutes of March 4th, 2026

JoAnne motioned to approve the meeting minutes; Pat seconded.

All in favor.

4. Discussion of date change for November meeting

There was a brief discussion regarding the November 11th date which conflicts with the SDOC's calendar. The committee agreed to move the meeting date to November 18th at 7:15pm. The change of date is reflected above.

5. Discussion of upcoming training sessions, special meetings or workshops

- In an email prior to the meeting, Polly sent Jessica information regarding NJ approving an amendment to the food reduction bill to take effect in January 2026. The amendment aims to cut the state's food waste production by 50% over the next 9 years. To hit this goal, the bill requires that all "county waste management districts" create and put into action a food reduction plan, using methods like composting, anaerobic digestion, and food donation. ANJEC is reviewing the new amendment in a webinar at the same time as this meeting.
- The above conversation led to a discussion of changes taking place at the Township Recycling Center, also in 2027, as a result of new DEP rules. Changes by DEP will affect the dumping of grass clippings which can cause unhealthy runoff when piled on the ground. Jessica will contact Rich Young at CTDPW to get additional information.
- Both discussions raise the larger question of how does the Township plan to address the handling of organic waste in the future.

6. Green Team updates

Activities that CTEC manages are all part of the Green Team, including Sustainable Jersey. Chatham Township was awarded Bronze in 2024. Jessica suggested the committee visit the Sustainable Jersey website at <https://www.sustainablejersey.com>

- We should be notified about the PSE&G grant for the NRI updates in late April.
- Jessica asked members to write up a summary synopsis of events that they are responsible for to make it easier to submit for Sustainable Jersey and end of year reporting.

Community/Youth Activities:

- Aanya reported that her recycling App Smartsort_AI is live. She will be presenting it at the Senior Center with additional Recycling awareness activities. CTEC suggested she contact the Library of the Chathams about ideas to raise awareness and to contact Chatham Borough to see if she can have a set up at Fishawack
- Guest Annabelle Palmer presented her Girl Scout Silver Award plan to CTEC called 'Planting for NJ' which will take place on May 16th. She will be educating and planting native perennials with two different age groups of Scouts in the area around and near the Shunpike understory which CTEC has begun to rehabilitate. CTEC will help to fund her planting selections. CTEC recommended she have a PDF of possible plantings.
- There will be a milkweed garden added to the Community Garden this season. Five Mosquito bucket will also be added.

7. Earth Month Events

- Screening of "Your Extraordinary Caterpillar" in partnership with the Library of the Chathams; April 22nd, 6:30pm. CTEC will host the screening and distribute seeds (e.g. milkweed) and have two speakers for a Q&A after the film.
- Invasive Species Walk and Learns w/ Joanne on April 11th at 10:30am at the Green Village Trail and April 12th at 10:30am at the Shunpike Trail.
- Plant sale w Great Swamp Watershed Association. Sale dates; April 1-21
- Community Challenge: What Can You Do / Simple Steps – promote on social media
- CHS Environmental Club plans to host a campaign regarding idling at schools in April.

8. Tree Ordinance Review

The CTEC revised Tree Ordinance is now being discussed among Township officials. Further discussions are needed to clarify enforcement of the existing and revised Ordinance.

9. Passaic River Clean up

In coordination with the Great Swamp Watershed, the Passaic River Waterkeeper and Roots & Shoots CTEC will participate in a river cleanup on Saturday May 9th, 10am-12pm. CTEC has adopted a hub in Chatham which is still to be assigned.

10. Idling at schools

An awareness campaign has been initiated including information in PTO newsletters. Letters have also been sent to private schools and preschools. Signs are being installed at SBS and additional signs are being added near CHS and LAF. CTEC will continue communication with all local public and private schools via letter/email. CHS Environmental Club plans to host a campaign in April. Polly Brophy has done a nice job moving this initiative forward.

11. CTEC Tracker

Jessica has created a Google spreadsheet to track all of the CTEC activities. Jessica reminds all members to enter all of their community activities and individual meetings, seminars, workshops and site visits for ease of preparing the end-of-year report for the Township Committee.

12. 2026 priority project list and events

Projects where public health intersects with the environment will be the priority.

13. 2026 events (running list, not complete):

-Priority projects

1. Leaf Blower Ordinance
2. Tree Ordinance
3. NRI Update

-Educational seminars:

1. Light Pollution Awareness Seminar with GSWA 2/5/26
2. "Your extraordinary Caterpillar" in partnership with the Library of the Chathams 4/22/26

-Earth Month Celebration- Invasives Walk & Talks with JoAnne- April 11th & 12th

And Take Action "What can you do" campaign; list of "Simple Ideas for Earth Month."

-Understory project at Shunpike Field- funding provided to Annabelle Palmer for Girl Scout Silver Award 5/16/26 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm

-Spring yard sale with Madison, Chatham Borough, GSWA- 5/2/26 -(Jessica)

-Resubmission of ANJEC NRI Grant

-Plant sale (April 1st-18th) with the Great Swamp Watershed Association.

Sale dates April 1st -21st. Distribution date: May 2nd at Colony pool

*Webinar 1: Jan 27th, 7-8pm (Soft Landings- Add life Under Trees)

*Webinar 2: Feb 24th 7-8pm (Native Pollinator Interactions)

*Webinar 3: March 31st 7-8pm (Plant for Pollinators- Plant Overview and Preparation)

-Fall Sustainability Fair 9/19/26 (Celeste and Pat, in coordination with Chatham Borough)

-Township Fall Festival/Fall cleanup event/Trail workday

-EV Expo with Madison 7 Chatham Borough 10/3/26 (Bottle Hill Day)

-Fall yard sale with Madison, Chatham Borough, GSWA- 10/17/26 (Jessica)

14. Reports:

- a. Township Committee – Craig Alperowitz- Township official have walked and discussed next steps for the Fenske property on Southern Blvd. Action was also taken which resulted in the clean-up of the gas station on the corner of Shunpike and Southern. Craig discussed the limitations of cleanups on privately owned property.
- b. Zoning Board- Lisa McHugh- Topics most often include impervious surfaces, steep slopes and tree removals. Recently Buy Rite Liquors requested a variance for new signage.
- c. Planning Board – Phil Ankel- no update
- d. Open Space –Steve Gesell has stepped up to be the CTEC liaison to the Open Space Committee.
- e. Education and Outreach –JoAnne & Jessica. Milkweed garden and mosquito buckets being added to the community garden
- f. Invasive Species –Joanne– Programs planned for April 11th & 12th when the Spring peepers are emerging,
- g. Social Media – Jessica Romeo- Facebook page is active
- h. Website – No Report
- i. Pollinator / Native Gardens – Jessica Romeo- Tom Salvas would like to find a location for a garden to honor veterans. Shunpike Field was discussed. No further update
- j. Grants – Waiting to hear from ANJEC about the NRI grant in late April

15. Keep on the Radar

- Noe Pond and its future preservation
- Bioblitz- to consider for April 2027, possible site: the Fenske property
- Does Chatham Township have an updated energy plan?
- Handling of organic waste in the future

16. Next meeting: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 7:15pm

Location: Chatham Township Municipal Building

17. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn

Jessica motioned to adjourn at 8:37pm; Celeste seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Abigail Maddi

APPLICATION/ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT REVIEW – Lisa will continue attending site visits and preparing comments for Board of Adjustment and Planning Board applications.

ONLINE RESOURCES (update DS Feb 2026)

- NJDEP website for maps, parcels and environmental information at NJ-GeoWeb.
<https://dep.nj.gov/gis/nj-geoweb/>
- View parcel information for Morris County. Zoom in for parcels. Has owner information.
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7651b23561f54d4c8176d6df4b2207f0>
- Old map of Morris County parcels. Parcel information is out-of-date but map is still very useful.
<https://morrisgisapps.co.morris.nj.us/apps/parcelsearcher/>

- Details about each parcel in Morris County.
<https://mcweb1.co.morris.nj.us/MCTaxBoard/>
- View open space and Green Acres properties at
<https://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/ga50/docs/roslite.pdf>
and
<https://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/openspace.html>
- Legiscan to view and track NJ bills in the legislature
<https://legiscan.com/NJ/legislation>
- Chatham Township permits that have been filed. Free but have to create an account.
<https://www.sdlportal.com/>
- NJDEP status of environmental permits that have been filed
<https://dep.nj.gov/bulletin/>
- NJ State Plan Map. Zoom to see streets. Planning Area 5 is the most environmentally restrictive.
<https://dosopa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fbb0c0a8c7ce4a31b05d123426c4a79a>
- NJ State Plan. Updated 2025.
<https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/state-plan/development/>
- NJ State OPRA records request
<https://nj.gov/opra/>