

**Chatham Township Environmental Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday November 13, 2024, 7:15 pm**  
**58 Meyersville Rd., Chatham NJ 07928**

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:** The meeting schedule for 2024 and January 2025 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.

**APPROVED DATES FOR CTEC AND GREEN TEAM FOR 2024 AND JANUARY 2025**

The first Wednesday of every month except second Wednesday in January , April and July 2024; January 10, February 7, March 6, April 10, May 1, June 5, July, August NO MEETING, September 4, October 7, November 13, December 4 2024 and January 8, 2025.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

1. Roll Call: CTEC Members at 7:18pm-Present: Jessica Romeo-presiding, Amy Mason, Jim Connelly, Lisa McHugh, Marty McHugh (Township Committee liaison), John von Knorring (alternate 2), Pat Wells (alternate 1), Bill Craig (guest), Meegan Carey (guest)  
Absent: Cara Pacifico-Feeser, Dan Miller (Planning Board), Celeste Fondaco

2. Public Meeting Statement and CTEC's Purpose (see above)

3. Approve Meeting Minutes of October 7, 2024:

Lisa motioned to approve the Minutes; Amy seconded. All in favor.

4. Green Team updates

Activities that CTEC manages are all part of the Green Team: clean ups, gardens, plant sales and tree seedling giveaways, educational webinars/meetings, etc. Bronze Certification received for 2024. 2024 Sustainable Jersey (SJ)Team members/subcommittee: There was discussion to resubmit, off-cycle, in 2025 to regain Silver Certification.

5. Shunpike Restoration Project

This project workday was held on October 26th from 8:30-10am and was a huge success. We had a great showing from the community, including members from Chatham Girl Scouts, Chatham Field Hockey Club, the Chatham High School Key Club and the Town and Country

Garden Club of the Chathams, members from the Open Space Committee, as well as interested residents. 20 tree seedlings were planted and three fenced in areas were erected, and leaves were piled in to practice “leave the leaves” here. A watering schedule was created for maintaining the trees as they grow.

#### 6. Misc Updates

- The River Road firehouse is getting a new roof and solar panels will be installed.
- Stay tuned for details on a public session regarding the Nash trail connector.
- JVK has discussed solar panels on the municipal building with the administrator.
- CTEC discussed using mosquito traps on municipal property – to be revisited in the last Winter.
- Bill Craig will use the salt testing strips to monitor the impact of road salt on our waterways, this is a program with the Watershed Institute.

#### 7. Review 2024 Priorities

- The Native Plant Ordinance was adopted by the Township Committee Agenda on 6/25/2024.
- Adopt-a Drain was implemented in Q1 2024. Chatham Township and Berkeley Heights implemented a “Scariest Drain” contest for October/November.
- We are looking to improve our tree removal and replacement ordinance, Jessica highlighted an article from the Autumn 2024 ANJEC report, “Tree ordinances protect water, climate and more” as reading for the EC. [https://chathamtownship-nj.gov/vertical/sites/%7B440F80DF-7E94-40B8-B1AECE161FC4406A%7D/uploads/Tree\\_Removal\\_Permit.pdf](https://chathamtownship-nj.gov/vertical/sites/%7B440F80DF-7E94-40B8-B1AECE161FC4406A%7D/uploads/Tree_Removal_Permit.pdf). The EC again discussed the idea of a Tree Bank for Chatham Township, as is done in other neighboring towns. The EC has done extensive research into the issue and would like to revisit the Township tree removal ordinance, the permit application, the establishment of a tree bank, and incorporating to the ordinance language that would require the municipality to also replace trees when there is a removal of a tree or trees. Currently there is no mechanism for follow up to ensure proper tree replacement. Marty to investigate this further and report back to CTEC best path forward.
- Gas leaf blowers: the EC is keen to address gas leaf blowers on some level. The overuse of these machines pose health issues for the public as well as an environmental issue. We will continue to research what other towns have done and a 2025 goal is to have a recommendation for the Township Committee as to how we might proceed with addressing this issue. Marty will remind the committee of this topic again, as it was discussed one time in a public meeting.
- CTEC should keep an eye on land use moving forward: eg paving of municipal property such as parking lots, use of pavement for open space trails, development in sensitive areas, etc. CTEC submitted an email to the mayor regarding the proposal for the connector trail from Nash to Green Village Road and the use of pavement, we have asked that the Township “seriously reconsider the use of Porous Pavement (also known as permeable pavement) and instead opt to use Gravel/Stone Dust”. Both the Great Swamp Outdoor Ed Center and the trail at Giralda use gravel/stone dust so there is precedent set for trails and county lands.

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#### 8. Opt-in option for the free weekly advertising drop to all driveways.

Draft ordinance sent to CT Administrator, CTEC liaison and Mayor on August 18 and again on August 29, 2024 for an opt-in process to receive the advertising circulars. The draft language

was based on multiple other towns in NJ who have done this. The item was discussed with the 11/12/24 Township Committee meeting and will be revisited.

## 9. Grants

Research continues for applying for a grant from ANJEC to help with the technical portions of the NRI. A draft resolution was reviewed and approved by CTEC; Jessica shared this with the administrator and clerk. Marty to advise on the threshold for an RFP to see if there is a process to follow for engaging a consultant on the NRI update. The NRI is due for an update and should be done before or in tandem with the Master Plan update. It was noted that the Master Plan must be updated for 2027.

## 10. Strike Force Team

Plans to host a Walk and Learn event with former CEC member Matt Palmer (Columbia University Senior Lecturer in the department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology) have been slow to develop. Jessica has reached out to Mr. Palmer and Joanne Lockwood White to see if they would like to partner with CTEC. To date there has been no response. CTEC may host the first walk on our own, using educational material from various sources. Most logical location for the first walk is the Green Village Pond trail.

## 11. 2024 events (running list)

- EV Expo with Madison and Chatham Borough 11am-4pm– (4/27/24) (John)
- Spring yard sale with Madison, Chatham Borough, Great Swamp Watershed Association - 5/4/24 (Jessica) Over 85 participants.
- Plant sale & distribution with the Great Swamp Watershed Association on 5/4/32 at 10:30am at Colony Pool in combination with the following seminars: (Jessica, Pat, Celeste)
  - \*Creating a Woodland Garden with Indigenous Plants & Vertical Structure – (1/18/24)
  - \*Plug in To Native Groundcovers (2/15/24)
  - \*Pollinator Conservation: Creating and Protecting Habitat for NJ's Bees, Butterflies, and Biodiversity (3/13/24)
  - \*Plants for Pollinators: Plant Sale Overview and Kick off with Hazel England GSWA (4/1/24)
- Celebration of Native Plants w/ the Library of the Chatham – May 2024 (Jessica)  
Jessica authored an ordinance regarding native plants on Municipal properties. See above.
- Speaker event at the Library of the Chathams “Fight Invasives, Go Natives” Speaker Master Gardener Ilona Ontscherecki- 5/6/24 at 7pm. Determine an additional educational seminar (Celeste)
- Fishawack – (6/8/24) (Celeste, Jim, Pat) See above.
- Tree seedling giveaway- 100 trees from Arbor Day Foundation -Possible dates include Fall Sustainability Fair or Township Fall Festival (Cara, Jim, Lisa)
- Fall Sustainability fair** – (9/21/24, 8am-1pm) (John, Pat) Discussion regarding who will volunteer and what information will be included. Good opportunity for Adopt-a-Drain information and the Trail Map brochure. Question: Can a QR code be used to obtain a map of Chatham Township trails? A Hybrid Police car will be on display.
- Fall yard sale with Madison, Chatham Borough, Great Swamp Watershed Association (10/18/24) (Jessica)

-Township Fall Festival/Shunpike Restoration Workday & Fall cleanup event (10/26/24 11am-1pm) (Jessica, Pat, Jim, Lisa) Discussion regarding details of events such as a tree seedling giveaway. Developing a more professional look for CTEC was also discussed which could include picture boards and table covering with CTEC logo.

-Trail work day- DATE TBC - tie in Walk & Learn on invasive plants with Matt Palmer

#### 12. NRI (subcommittee Lisa, John, Jessica)

CTEC will pursue the ANJEC grant. JR to send draft resolution to the township administrator to be added to an upcoming agenda. JFK to draft a letter to be sent to the Planning Board to explain our rationale for updating the NRI and how this will benefit the Master Plan update due in 2027. Subcommittee to review potential consultants and have initial discussions with a short list. Chatham Township lies within the Great Swamp, we have the aquifer, the river, steep slopes as well as many other natural resources; it's important that we update the NRI to keep current in documenting and protecting such assets.

#### 13. Reports:

a. Township Committee – Marty McHugh: advertising circulars were discussed, and revisions are being worked on.

b. Planning Board – Dan Miller: No report

c. Open Space – be on the lookout for info regarding the Nash trail connector.

d. Education and Outreach – no updates

e. Invasive Species – Jessica: Contacted Matt Palmer regarding Walk and Learn event; no response to dates so we may proceed w/out Mr. Palmer. Primary goal in the first phase is to raise awareness of how what we plant in our yards impacts the ecosystem.

f. Social media – Jessica: if post worthy, send to Jessica. Agreed that we should add an Instagram account

g. Website – Jessica/Jim: All agreed a process for updating is necessary.

h. Pollinator / Native Gardens – Jessica/Pat: no new update

i. Grants- Jim Connelly: no update

#### 14. Updating the Conservation Easement Inventory

Follow up with the town to ensure that the new map, which Amy Mason created, is added to the Township website to replace the outdated map.

#### 15. Reminder to bring list of 2025 goals and priorities to the November meeting.

#### 19. Next meeting: Wednesday, December 4 at 7:15pm

Location: The Senior Center. Parking and entrance from the lower lot.

#### 20. Adjournment

##### *Motion to adjourn*

Lisa motioned to adjourn at 8:30pm; John seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by

Jessica Romeo

APPLICATION/ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT REVIEW – CTEC members attend site visits and prepare comments for Board of Adjustment and Planning Board applications.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

- Good NJDEP website for maps, parcels and environmental information at NJ-GeoWeb, <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/gis/geoweb splash.htm>
- . Use Internet Explorer.
- Very good Morris County mapping utility at <https://morrisgisapps.co.morris.nj.us/apps/parcelsearcher/>, hit Map and use the i tool. Gives information about each parcel and has aerials layer. Search for more detailed information about a parcel at <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>.