

Chatham Township Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
Monday October 7, 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 7:15pm-Present: Jessica Romeo-presiding, Amy Mason, Celeste Fondaco, Lisa McHugh, Marty McHugh (Township Committee liaison), John von Knorring (alternate 2); Bill Craig (guest)
Absent: Cara Pacifico-Feeser, Dan Miller (Planning Board), Jim Connelly (OpenSpace Liaison), Pat Wells (alternate 1)

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

3. Approve Meeting Minutes of Sept 11, 2024:

Motion to approve the minutes of June 5th, 2024

John 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: Jessica Romeo and alternate commissioner Pat Wells have decided to resubmit, off-cycle, in 2025 to regain Silver Certification.

5. Shunpike Restoration Project

Planning session 1: CTEC has received the ANJEC Open Space grant of \$1,500, and a Jaycees signage grant of \$500. This project will be part of the Fall 2024 workday and the public is invited to assist, **October 26th from 8:30-10am**. Community groups have been invited to participate including Chatham Girl Scouts, Chatham Field Hockey and Baseball clubs, the Chatham High School Key Club and the Town and Country Garden Club of the Chathams. Two to three test plots will be fenced out and planted. 20 tree seedlings have been ordered from Pineland Nursery; Jim Connolly will be available to pick up the plants. We must submit the Home Depot order for the hardscaping materials. This event will be coupled with the Shunpike Field/Castle Park cleanup which is a part of the Township's Clean Communities activities.

6. 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. As of the Oct 7th meeting, 32 drains have been adopted.

-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%20Removal%20Permit.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.

7. 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. To date, there has been no response, however, the item is on the October 8, 2024 workshop session for the Township Committee.

8. Grants

Research continues for applying for a \$20,000 ANJEC grant to help with the technical portions of the NRI. A resolution from the Township Committee is needed for the grant. A draft resolution was reviewed and approved by CTEC and Jessica will share with the administrator and clerk. Model Resolutions are being researched. JVK to draft a note to send to the Planning Board Chair on our plans to submit for the grant and ask for input. 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.

9. Food Waste Composting

CTEC again discussed the issue of food waste and the environmental impacts of food waste going to the land fill. Ideas include hosting a composting seminar, potentially running a composter sale, or a create your own composter workshop. The EC will investigate options for a community compost drop off site – using a 3rd party vendor - similar to what some other towns have done such as Harding, Madison, Morristown, Summit and draft a proposal to bring to the town's attention for consideration. JR to reach out to the school district to understand the status of the Rocket Composter and the composting program that used to happen at the SDOC.

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. CTEC to suggest 2-3 dates to Mr. Palmer to see if he is available. If Mr. Palmer is not available, 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. Solar Energy Generation / Solar in the Township

JVK has begun looking into the feasibility of setting up solar in the Township. Next steps are for John to connect with Township administrator to see where the municipality is in the process and how CTEC can assist.

12. Pollinator Pathway Project for Municipalities – proposal to remove this from our list of priorities.

13. 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 5/4/24 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 Ontscherenki- 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

14. 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.

15. Reports:

a. Township Committee – Marty McHugh: advertising circulars to be discussed at 10/8 meeting

b. Planning Board – Dan Miller: No report

c. Open Space – Marty McHugh: reported on the corn crib and alerted CTEC that OS will be soliciting community input to some of the newly added properties

d. Education and Outreach – Jessica Romeo; Lisa McHugh: mosquito talk on 10/9/24; consider adding a compost seminar

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
- J. Monthly Editorials (600-700 words for the Courier) Next up: TBC

16. 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.

17. Informational Articles

(Subcommittee Jessica, Pat) Articles will be written to be informational. “Leaf Blowing” in March; “Anti-Idling” in April; “Adopt-a-Drain” in July; “Shunpike Restoration Project & Grant” in August; “Pollinator Pathways” proposed for September.

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

19. Next meeting: Wednesday, November 13th 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/rosi.lite.pdf> and
<https://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/openspace.html>.

