

**Readington Township
Waterwatch Advisory Meeting Minutes
January 24, 2023**

OPEN MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chair Orlandi at 7:10 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

Members in Attendance

Mario Orlandi – Chair
Robert Becker
Steve Foster
Marlene Orlandi
David Owen
Rene Rao

Absent

Jonathan Heller
Agostino Pietrangelo

Minutes

Mr. Becker moved, and Ms. Rao seconded, a motion to approve the minutes for November 15, 2022. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates

Mr. Becker moved, and Ms. Rao seconded, a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates for 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Nomination for Chair

Mr. Owen moved, and Mr. Becker seconded, a motion to nominate Mario Orlandi as Chair of the Readington Waterwatch Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Nomination for Vice-Chair

Mr. Orlandi made a motion to nominate Mr. Owen as the Vice-Chair. Mr. Becker made a motion to nominate Ms. Rao as the Vice-Chair. Ms. Rao expressed her appreciation over the nomination however withdrew her name due to her schedule. Ms. Rao seconded the motion to nominate Mr. Owen as Vice-Chair. The motion carried unanimously.

Guest Speaker: None

Chair Orlandi raised the possibility that Mr. Becker may be leaving the Waterwatch Committee due to additional responsibilities he will be taking on in 2023. The members discussed the need to identify residents who may be a good fit for the Waterwatch committee, expressing that experience is not necessary; just an eagerness to learn.

Committee Member Updates

Mr. Foster - Nothing to report from the Environmental Commission or from the respect of broader environmental issues. He addressed stewardship and discussed the need for engaging more of the township residents in activities and the need to find ways to

educate the residents in issues that affect them that they ultimately care about. Mr. Foster wants to “create a lay person access to clean water activities that are meaningful, relatable, welcoming and clearly seen as part of Readington’s commitment to a sustainable community”. He stressed the need to rethink ways of doing things to aggressively engage residents to participate. Mr. Foster provided a document that illustrated the thoughts he shared with the other members. The members discussed communication avenues available. Mr. Becker commented that the Board of Health put on a presentation about septic care that unfortunately was not well attended however he felt the presentation was effective.

A discussion amongst members ensued where the following suggestions were made: as many things are annual activities and the committee could put out reminders; target new members to the community (real estate transfers); have a “Welcome to the Community” package potentially provided by real estate agents that provide important information.

The annual Well Testing program was discussed. Raritan Headwaters Association (RHA) provided some preliminary data on the most recent well testing done. It was suggested that a missing link to this program is information on remedies. Samantha LaRocca, RHA Well Test Program Manager, will be attending a Waterwatch Committee meeting in the near future.

Note: The recording was paused at 7:34 pm and resumed at 7:38 pm.

Ms. Rao - The discussion on the Well Test program continued with Ms. Rao stating that the 2022 program went off well. It was discovered that many people did not want to discuss septic maintenance nor test their well for fear of uncovering an unknown problem coupled with the potential cost to fix it. Some misinformation discovered had to do with residents thinking RHA is profiting off the testing and any remedy needed. Ms. Rao reported when people were asked about how they heard about the testing, the top avenues were the newspaper and the email push. Some ideas provided for improvement are: create a lecture series and invite the Readington Board of Health and the County Health Department; based on information provided, target neighborhoods that may be showing issues or not showing any testing; create signs that property owners can put up saying “I got my well tested”; create a “Friend of Readington” – similar to the plaques RHA gives to people who meet certain criteria.

Ms. Rao also discussed testing the Rockaway. Mr. Becker reminded that test results need to be sent to him so he can record them on the Asset map. Ms. Rao is looking to set up the next rain barrel workshop – possibly in September. It was suggested that Communication Ideas be added to the next agenda as a topic of discussion.

Ms. Orlandi - Made an announcement that Miss Martinez, the gifted and talented, K-3 enrichment and honors math educator at Whitehouse School, has invited the Readington Waterwatch committee and the Township Committee to the science fair scheduled for February 28, 2023. They will have an opportunity to set up a table and talk about work done in the community and they will be asked to visit the students’ displays and

listen to the presentations. The work on the bio-retention basin is on-going along with the video that is being created by two students. Anticipated opening day is sometime in April.

Mr. Owen - Reported that the trails are in good shape although quite wet. Ron Christy, DPW director, and volunteers have been working to remove trees and branches as needed. Mr. Owen stated that the new director of the County Commissioners is Zach Rich is reported to be a staunch supporter of the environment and open space. The deputy director is Jeff Kuhl.

Mr. Becker - Gave a presentation on the MS4 permit which requires the township to develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater management program (SWMP) that must include pollution prevention measures, treatment/removal techniques, monitoring, use of legal authority and other appropriate measures to control the quality of stormwater discharge. Readington's permit expired at the end of 2022 and now needs to get it renewed. MSR permitting requirements are being updated and will cast a wider net requiring ordinance to cover a range of issues as well as community wide measures.

There was a brief discussion on storm drains. Mr. Becker informed that Sustainable Jersey is adding a salt management action item for renewal. The American Water grant opportunity was brought up and it was suggested that this could be used for water test tools. The township could tell the story of contamination at Lake Cushetunk).

Note: The recording was paused at 8:53 pm and resumed at 8:58 pm.

New Business

Darts Mill Project – Mr. Owen reported that the township received a donation and the property is part of the Darts Mill Historic District and is on the National Historic List. The Historic Preservation chair, Pat Fisher-Olsen, was consulted and she gave the okay to do cosmetic updates on the house. The donated property currently has a cesspit, however, because it was transferred to a government entity, it does not have to be upgraded if it is working successfully. On June 19, 2019, the Board of Health was presented a septic solution by Kurt Hoffman, Hoffman Engineering, and it was decided by the Board of Health and the engineer that the proposed solution was not sufficient. The engineer came back on August 21, 2019 and presented an ATU (Advanced Treatment Unit) solution that was unanimously approved. The township committee is currently working on finding a use for this property.

C1 Designation: Chair Orlandi reported that representatives of the township, RHA and the DEP met to discuss the classification of Readington streams as C1. The adopted policy for the designation of streams for many years included only trout fishing and trout sustainability criteria. However, it is documented that there are two (2) other criteria that can be used and includes exceptional recreational resource and exceptional drinking water resource. Chair Orlandi stated that no stream in New Jersey was ever

proposed for or granted C1 status for something other than the fishing criteria. The DEP has expressed interest in exploring all pathways to C1 status.

Comments

Dam removal seminars are coming up and dates will be sent out when available.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Becker, and seconded by Ms. Rao, to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Radziewicz
Advisory Boards Secretary