

**Readington Township
Waterwatch Advisory Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2024**

OPEN MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Orlandi at 7:02 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
Steve Foster
Marlene Orlandi
Lauren Huelsebusch
David Owen
Richard Geissler
Jonathan Heller
Rene Rao

Guests in Attendance:

William Daly
Juergen Huelsebusch
Dennis Fimbel

Guest Speaker:

Mario introduced Willam Daly and gave a background story on the how the connections were made at the start of Water Watch advisory committee and the schools. Mario offered to serve as a funnel to Will for student information from all boards.

Mr. Daly teaches the Civics Program at Readington Middle School. He discussed the Viking Visionaries project taking place on May 21st. The entire eighth grade, 196 students, will be out on the same day for community service. He is coordinating with community leaders to determine sites for community service. Discussion occurred on possible locations and logistics. RWW and EC have been working together along with a resident who has a portable sawmill, to make benches out of the dead ash trees. Tatiana mentioned working with the interact club as well. Mr. Daly said this is the first year and will start with just the 8th grade but partnering with Central could be discussed in the future. Last week Gov Murphy signed into law legislation that allows for students to have one excused absence per year for community service. Mr. Daly and members discussed other possible events or community service opportunities throughout the year. The food pantry community service project was discussed, and a member asked if the students wrote about it after. Mr. Daly said the experience also provided a potential resource that wasn't known about to students themselves. 36% of students are on the free reduced lunch program in Readington middle school. They have discussions on the experience with students afterwards and look forward to expanding that into a reflection piece. The township has 20 acres of land to reforest with a \$250,000 grant received that could also be a possible Spring 2024 project to include students in. Additional possibilities for student involvement were discussed by members. Mr. Daly recommended having a calendar of volunteer opportunities be created to offer to students' month by month. Mr. Daly requested a short synopsis be provided of the purpose of the water watch, ideas for student involvement, and a list of municipal point of contacts to propose to the Board of Education. Mr. Daly gave an overview of the Civics Program and provided examples of what was incorporated in the curriculum in the past.

Nominations for Committee Positions in 2024:

1. Committee Chair

David Owen made a nomination for Mario Orlandi as Committee Chair. Motioned seconded by Jonathan and carried by all.

2. Vice Chair

Mario Orlandi made a nomination for David Owen as Vice Chair. Motioned was seconded and carried by all.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from the November 21, 2023, meeting was approved. Motion made by Steve, seconded by Marlene, Rene abstained, and carried by all. Mario and Dave discussed the corrections made to minutes regarding members are speaking or making motions without identifying themselves and the disconnect from listening to recordings. Dave will take meeting notes, specifically identifying members, to send to the secretary.

Approval of Dates:

A correction was noted to correct the meeting time to 7:00 PM. A motion to approve the meeting dates was made by Rene, seconded by Marlene, and carried by all. The approved dates are as follows:

February 27th	7:00pm
March 19th	7:00pm
April 16th	7:00pm
May 21st	7:00pm
June 18th	7:00pm
July 16th	7:00pm
August 20th	7:00pm
September 17th	7:00pm
October 15th	7:00pm
November 19th	7:00pm
December 17th	7:00pm

Committee Member Updates:

David Owen – The trail systems are in good shape, but it is winter. He and the head of the trail’s subcommittee gave a list of downed trees to DPW. The County Commissioners reorganized in January. Jeff Kohl is the new Director and Susan Soloway is Deputy Director for 2024. Both are big supporters of Open Space. East Amwell will have a new playground, Similar to Deerpath, but with an extension for kids to train on bicycles. \$40,000 was awarded to the township to renovate Bowman Stickney porch. A small discussion occurred on the Bowman Stickney property. Dave conducted his 3rd stream salt testing and provided his findings. Mario stated the 5 volunteers and the locations of those who are conducting stream salt testing. At the end of the season all data will be consolidated and presented to DPW.

Mr. Foster - Mr. Foster reported that Robert Becker has been appointed the Chair of the Environmental Commission for 2024. Robert would like to create a process for people to learn how to use the interactive database of the ERI. EC would like to discuss Earth Day on April 22nd and what kind of awareness can be brought to the township.

Ms. Rao – Stream cleanup is April 20th from 9AM-12PM. Debbie Newcomb is leading the Raritan Headwaters clean up this year and discussing possible training sessions. Samantha LaRocca reached out to report on the Well Testing results and his available for February or March. Steve asked if the Environmental Committee be invited to the meeting, so it will be presented to everyone at once and members agreed. Members discussed the logistics of coordinating that presentation. Mario added joint meetings are a good idea and could be done for the ERI presentation as well.

Ms. Orlandi – Nothing further to report after the discussion with Mr. Daly. Mario added that a lot of progress has been made and the efforts to incorporate student involvement was recognized.

Mr. Heller – No Report

Juergen Huelsebusch – Mr. Huelsebusch stated he is the Water Watch liaison to the Township Committee for 2024. The demolition of the house in Raritan at the Rockafellows Mill Dam is scheduled for February. The ultimate goal is to transfer properties to the state wildlife management area. C1 focus is starting up again to schedule a meeting with the new assistant commissioner of the DEP. Mr. Huelsebusch is setting up the south branch initiative which will summarize the work that has been done in the last 3-4 years and looking forward to what else can be done in the future. David asked how much grant money was received by Raritan Headwaters recently. Some funded projects were discussed.

Mr. Geisler – No Report

Mr. Saad – No Report

New/Other Business:

Mr. Orlandi discussed Tatiana's membership status and the final decision was to name her the first student ambassador to the Water watch committee. Mario discussed the use of social media use to promote events and information. The Chambers Brook restoration project that began with Raritan Headwaters needed to be postponed due to the deer management program use of land during hunting season but will resume in March. The tree planting projects were discussed. The injection treatments were discussed in preparation for the tree planting. The creation of a trail to Chambers Brook was discussed. A partnership with the Raritan Basin Organization will be formed to address storm water management. Projects, primary contacts, and initiatives will be identified and expanded upon.

Calendar

Mario discussed the first draft of the calendar. Several suggestions were made. January will be Readington Waterwatch Awareness Month. Mario has drafted Facebook posts. The idea is to organize regular activities and a variety of events and information. Members will identify themes for each month. Juergen also mentioned that List Serv is another outlet to disseminate information in addition to the website and Facebook. David spoke on the topic of communication and a discussion occurred amongst members.

Public Comment:

Dennis Fimbel introduced himself and said he is interested in learning about the topics discussed.

Mr. Foster mentioned a neighbor who is having an issue with flooding. The events are becoming more severe. The question is can someone help determine the erosion. There might be an opportunity for a lecture on what can be done to prevent erosion, possible solutions to mediate erosion, and educate themselves. Mario mentioned the riparian zone restoration led to the discussion of the possibility of hosting a workshop on the topic. This, in addition to other expert speakers, could also be an event for the calendar.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Rene Rao, seconded by Marlene Orlandi, and carried by all. Meeting adjourned at 9:11PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Monaghan
Advisory Boards Secretary