

Readington Township Waterwatch Advisory Meeting Minutes February 27, 2024

OPEN MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Orlandi at 7:01 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

Mario introduced Samantha LaRocca and Tracy Gordon from Raritan Headwaters to share data and results from last year's well testing. Tracy said Readington Township is the municipality model for efforts in water matters. A map and description of what Raritan Headwaters does. Tracy discussed a grant RHA is pursuing. Samantha introduced herself and gave a brief history of the well testing event. A summary of the data was read. 177 wells were tested in October, an increase of 30 tests compared to last year. The 2019 to 2022 comparison chart was discussed. Contaminants of concern, wells which exceeded the limit of contaminants were discussed. 30% had some level of lead, 16% arsenic, PFAS 1 resident exceeded the state limit, 1 resident exceeded state limits for lead. The NJDEP requires testing for PFAS during home sales now. RHA will update their maps this year and it will include PFAS. A brief discussion occurred about PFAS in schools and possible sources. All residents received their results. Residents who tested over the limits were contacted and provided with fact sheets and potential remediation options. David Owen asked how many water sources there are in Readington to understand the comparison of 177 wells tested. In 2013 the state geologist provided a rough estimate of about 5000 wells in Readington. There are also many residents on American Water. The percentage of tests performed is very low. Samantha discussed the limited survey data collected. When the database is updated, more information will be available for review. Possibilities of subsidizing the testing cost were discussed to expand the amount of testing performed to increase data collected. Maximum capacity of wells testing is also a consideration because the labs can only take 50 tests a day on certain days and RHA has already exceeded that previously. Communication grant possibilities were also discussed. Samantha said overall the 2023 well testing event was a success.

Members in Attendance:

Mario Orlandi – Chair
Steve Foster
Marlene Orlandi
Lauren Huelsebusch
David Owen
Rene Rao

Member Absent:

Richard Geissler
Jonathan Heller
Andrew Saad

Mario noted that Tatiana is now an adjunct member of the Readington WaterWatch and asked Tatiana to share her thoughts. Tatianna looked for possible community engagement and team volunteering she found a peer is creating a volunteer library at the school. The Readington boards can put contact information and volunteer opportunities in

this new directory to reach out to students and get them involved. She discussed the current process of high school volunteering.

Mario stated that several non-committee members and non-adjunct committee members are in attendance. Jerry Cook, Taylor Johnson, and Jen Johnson.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion made to approve the January minutes as amended by Steve, seconded by Rene, and carried by all.

Committee Member Updates:

Mr. Foster - Mr. Foster reported that Earth Day is April 22nd, and a suggestion was made to promote the day, information, and ways to participate.

Ms. Rao – Stream cleanup is April 20th from 9AM-12PM. Debbie Newcomb is leading the clean up this year. A training session will be held on March 13th from 6:30-7:30. It will be recorded for those who are not able to attend. Sign up will go live on March 1st. a discussion on volunteers took place. Mario added that David will spearhead the clean up event this year and discussed promoting a Readington stream clean up day at the same time.

Ms. Orlandi – Marlene followed up on Mr. Daly’s presentation. The originally discussed idea to include high school students in the 8th grade event on May 21st will not work due to conflicts. Tatiana said the high school has exams that day and students won’t be able to participate. Ms. Orlandi would like to present to Mr. Daly that of the students who are participating go into their neighborhoods and talk to neighbors about well testing and give information and handouts. A discussion occurred on multiple possible ideas to explore.

Lauren Huelsebusch – Lauren connected with teachers in supervisory roles at the school who have expressed an interest in getting 4th graders involved. They reviewed the curriculum and discussed ideas to incorporate environmental learning during a hike in the woods. Another meeting will take place and she will report back. Taylor and Jen Johnson discussed their experiences with the trail walks.

David Owen – The stream clean up has been discussed. The trails are all open but very mucky. David cleared barbed wire from a trail behind Dubinsky. Some trees are still down, and Ron Christy is working on that. There are about 6 people who are testing to measure the salt run off to the streams. Baselines were taken and testing continues. Mario clarified Dave Owen and Robert Becker on Pleasant Run, Neil Henrickson is on Chambers Brook, Mario and Marlene are on Prescott Brook, Holland Brook, and Lazy Brook, Rene is on Rockaway Creek. The increased efforts in brineing and less salting the roads are decreasing the amount of run off into the streams.

Mr. Geisler – No Report

Mr. Saad – No Report

Mr. Heller – No Report

New Business/Other Business:

Mario discussed the calendar. Mario made a Facebook post about wetlands. It was a good format to follow. More posts will be created for March which will focus on introducing people to the water story. April is stream clean up, the annual tree giveaway, and Earth Day and would be a great month to get posts out.

The Chambers Brook Riparian Restoration project was put on hold due to hunting season. DEP was brought in to evaluate the site and identified invasive species. The plans to plant were altered accordingly. March 6th 9AM-2PM, with a rain date of March 16th, will be the date for tree injections for those invasive species. The planting date and logistic is to be determined.

Public Comment:

Taylor Johnson spoke about the possible equipment to use for tree digging and about JCPL spraying trees. They live in a low-grade flood zone near Chambers Brook. He asked the board about the possibility of increasing the size of the bridge there to eliminate the amount of water that reaches the area because it bottle necks the stream. The area was clarified as 28 Coddington Road and 30 Coddington Road. The board recommended sending a letter to the Township Commission and Administration.

Jerry Cook discussed the Trout Unlimited group's gala on April 13th at the Three Bridges Firehouse. There will be a speaker on the falconry and give a demonstration. Tickets can be purchased for \$65 per person.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Lauren Huelsebusch, seconded by Rene Rao, and carried by all. Meeting adjourned at 9:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Monaghan
Advisory Boards Secretary