

**BOROUGH OF OLD TAPPAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
JANUARY 14, 2025**

REGULAR IN-PERSON MEETING:

The Open Public Meeting Notice: In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law, notification of this meeting has been sent to our official newspapers and other publications circulated in the Borough of Old Tappan, and notice was posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall.

ATTENDANCE:

David Keil	Chairperson
Nora Mann	
Wendy King	
Patrick Gambuti	
Bill Boyce	Council Liaison

Absent: Barbara DiTrollo (reportedly has resigned from OTEC)
Ryan Weaver

Public: Cherie Fonorow

PRIOR MINUTES:

Minutes to the OTEC from November were approved as amended during the reading of the minutes by Wendy.

OPEN MEETING TO THE PUBLIC:

Cherie Fonorow was present as a member of the public. Public She participated in the discussion of 244 Old Tappan Road during the Council Liaison Report (below).

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT: (Bill Boyce)

Bill reported that he met with the Attorney and Engineer for 244 OTR—and reported that minor adjustments were being made to the property boundary. He said the current plan is for the Borough to receive 2.1 acres of the approximately 4-acre site. It was unclear whether the developer (who reportedly purchased the property from the original applicant, would have to appear before the Planning Board before construction is allowed).

In discussions with the Public, Cherie made several suggestions and posed several questions including:

-if a wealthy benefactor provided the funding, can the property be purchased before construction begins?

-can the Borough host a public meeting, to discuss the pros and cons for a tax increase so that the funds can be raised for the Borough to purchase the property?

-with regard to affordable housing credits, Cherie questioned why the Borough was only getting 10% of the credits—when Borough Ordinances require 15%? Are we being shortchanged in the agreement?

-the construction of the facility at 244 OTR will essentially expand the commercial zone westward into what is currently a residentially zoned district. Will the Borough take measures to buffer the remaining residential areas from the new commercial district (i.e., noise, lights, trees or other buffers)?

It was the consensus of the OTEC that if the developer comes before the Planning Board, in the future, that the plans be shared with the OTEC for review and comment.

Patrick questioned where the 244 OTR tree replacement monies will go. Into the Borough's general fund or into a special fund designated specifically for tree replacement? He added that the value of the trees as quoted two years ago—when the application for 244 OTR was originally approved by the Planning Board--might have changed. He asked whether the Borough would research this to obtain a revised total based on 2025 dollars. Wendy added that in Harrington Park, tree replacement funds go into a special fund that are used by their Environmental Commission and at their sole discretion.

With regard to the new DPW Building at Chestnut Avenue, Bill reported that the plans were not brought before the Planning Board however, the Borough is reportedly not required to present to the Planning Board but may do so as a courtesy. It was reported that during the January Planning Board meeting held January 8, that there was testimony questioning the Borough's transparency and authority to conduct the project without public participation. Based on that testimony, the Planning Board has requested that the Borough/DPW prepare a landscape plan and appear for questioning and to address concerns about stormwater management, tree replacement and project evolution.

Bill also invited members of the OTEC to his local office to review the landscape plans for the new DPW facility when they are available.

Bill added that the current DPW yard on Russell Avenue is in need of repair and that preliminary discussions are currently taking place to redesign and upgrade that facility.

CORRESPONDENCE: There were no correspondences to discuss

ADENDA ITEMS:

Community Gardens:

Gardening season has ended for most members. Minor repairs to both gardens are planned before the 2025 planting season. Communications with the current garden membership will be initiated soon. Dave to coordinate. There were discussions whether to raise the garden membership fees from \$40 to \$50 per plot. Dave asked the commission to consider the proposal and to come back at the February meeting prepared to discuss and vote on the matter.

Tree Sapling Give-Away: Wendy volunteered to spearhead this effort for 2025. OTEC members suggested that she look at native species such as Red Oak and Red Bud for the Arbor Day tree sapling give-away which will be for 3rd graders at TBD. Arbor Day 2025 is scheduled for Friday, April 25.

Photo Contest 2025. OTEC will plan to hold this contest in April – June 2025. Looking to boost participation with the CDW school kids.

Northern Valley Earth Fair No Report. However, Wendy reported that she had a conversation with Angeline Sheridan about NVEF. Angeline expressed interest in getting involved and perhaps re-energizing the organization—which has been essential idle since 2020. Dave will follow up with Angeline.

Walk/Bike to School Day/Week: OTEC will look to support this event in 2025—to correspond with National Walk to School Day October 8, 2025.

Pollinator Garden: OTEC looks to make improvements to the protective fencing at the gardens on Central Ave and Old Tappan Road and to add native pollinators to the plant list.

Amendments to the Borough Tree Ordinance: No report

Hooked on Fishing 2025: Tentatively scheduled for June 7 or June 8. Ryan and Dave will coordinate the event.

Open Forum Discussion: in open forum, discussions regarding:

- Continued discussion of the new DPW facility at Chestnut Avenue.

-Bergen County Farmland Preservation: Dave attended the meeting in Hackensack last week and reported that only 2 farms in the County have been preserved so far. Another 13 farms are being considered. No farms in Old Tappan are on the preservation list at this time.

-Participation of young people in OTEC meetings. Wendy is/has reached out to NVOT students.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES 2025

February 19

March 18

April 15

May 20

June 17

September 16

October 21

November 18

ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion by Bill and seconded by Nora and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED: