

**BOROUGH OF OLD TAPPAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
JANUARY 18, 2023**

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
Larry Weil	
Nora Mann	
Wendy King	
Gary Mascolo	
Tom Gallagher	Council Liaison (arrived 8:30pm)

Absent:

Ryan Weaver	
Anna Haverilla	Borough Administrator
Barbara DiTrolio	
Gene Kosmark	

PRIOR MINUTES:

Minutes from the November 2022 Meeting were approved as revised. Motion to approve by Larry; seconded by Nora. Motion was approved.

Chairman Keil noted that a new recording secretary has still not yet been appointed. He will draft the minutes from tonight's meeting.

OPEN MEETING TO THE PUBLIC:

No members of the general public were in attendance.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT:

Newly appointed Council Liaison Tom Gallagher was not present at the time of the report due to a conflict with an Ambulance Corps meeting. Mr. Keil as advised the Commission of the recent Council Liaison updates provided by Bill Boyce earlier in the week—as well as updates received from Borough Hall since the last meeting in November. The updates included the following:

-The Tree Inventory for 244 Old Tappan Road was submitted by Steve Levy Copies of the Report were submitted to the OTEC in December 2022. The Inventory assigned a monetary value on the trees to be removed from 244 OTR--that was significantly higher than the value placed on the trees by the Applicant. (It was noted that the Planning Board approved the application at the January 11 meeting and that a reconciliation of the tree values needed to be made as a condition of the approving Resolution).

-The Borough has not identified a Recording Secretary for the OTEC. The question of how/whether the funds earmarked for the Recording Secretary can be transferred to the OTEC for general use was tabled until the February meeting as a discussion item with the new Council Liaison.

-Former Council Liaison (Boyce) reported last week that the Amendments to the Tree Ordinance were still under review by the Borough Attorney.

-In correspondence with the Borough CFO, it is OTEC's understanding that approximately \$1,300 in capital budget remains from last year's Community Garden budgets. Those funds reportedly roll-over for use by the Commission in 2023.

CORRESPONDENCE: There were no correspondences to discuss

ADENDA ITEMS:

Community Gardens:

Larry discussed conceptual plans for garden redesign at the Central Avenue Garden. The goal is to increase the number of available plots. Dave will continue to collaborate with Dan Hartman at DPW to help implement the design changes. Larry reported that there are presently two applicants on the waiting list.

Presently the parking area at Central Ave is being used to stage materials for a sewer infrastructure project. That project is reportedly delayed and access to the Garden is hampered. It is hoped the materials will be removed before start of the spring planting season.

At the Old Tappan Road Garden: the dumpster has been removed. Awaiting delivery of leaf mulch from DPW so that plot users can supplement the garden soils before the spring planting season.

A discussion was raised about the garden fee for 2023. After a lengthy discussion, Gary made a motion to keep the fee unchanged from last year. The motion was seconded-and by voice vote the motion to keep fees at \$40 was approved. Based on this vote, Larry will finalize the Garden Application Form and Hold Harmless Form.

OTEC Budget Requests for 2023 through 2025: Dave received a request from the Borough CFO to submit OTEC budget requests for the next three years. =The budget request was submitted in early December 2022. The meeting to approve\ the budget is reportedly being held sometime in February.

Tree Sapling Give-Away: Wendy placed an order for saplings with the NJ Forest Nursery to cover 86+ students at TBD School. Sapling give-away will be coordinated to correspond with Arbor Day April 28. Event at TBD at 2:20pm. Melanie Rie (former OTEC member) will reportedly be on-hand to make a presentation. Barbara (absent) is also expected to participate.

2023 Photo Contest: it's back-on for 2023. Photo Contest for students at CDW School is tentatively scheduled to begin on Earth Day (April 22) and run to the end of the school year in June. Prizes for the top three winners are planned. Nora volunteered to assist Wendy in this initiative which now enters its fourth.

TD Green Space Grant: Information for a grant was circulated to OTEC members at a previous meeting. Grant awards are based on restrictive stipulations which would be challenging for the Commission to meet. The time for submissions is also expiring and without a specific project in mind, the Commission decided not to submit an application. However, this led to a discussion of the next revision of the Master Plan (2026) and the identification of properties that might warrant preservation—should those properties become available for purchase. Members of the OTEC will reach out to the Historic Commission for information about historic properties in the Borough that warrant preservation.

Walk/Bike to School Day/Week: No Report. OTEC will look to support this event in 2023—to correspond with National Walk to School Day October 4, 2023.

Pollinator Garden: OTEC decided on two locations to create pollinator gardens in 2023. Using funds secured with the assistance of Barbara DiTrollo, OTEC plans to install the pollinators at the Community Gardens at OTR and Central Avenue. Plans will be formulated over the next few months. Dave indicated that funds raised for the Eagle Scout project might be used to purchase landscape materials/pavers and a deer resistant fence. Grant money could then be used to purchase the pollinators. Wendy suggested purchase of a commercially-available soil called “Happy Frog Soil Conditioner” that she saw at Cleatus Farms in Northvale. Several months ago, Councilman Binaghi provided the Commission with the name of a wholesaler in South Jersey—from whom the pollinator plants may be purchased.

Application for 244 Old Tappan Road: at its January 11, 2023 meeting, the Planning Board approved the development application by a vote of 5-2. As many of the OTEC commission members were present at multiple application hearings, there was a general impression that

Board’s vote was based more on avoiding a future potential lawsuit—rather than the merits of the application.

Amendments to the Borough Tree Ordinance: See Council Liaison report for updates. The Ordinance is reportedly under Borough Attorney review.

Commercial Development in Bordering Orangetown, NY: No updates to report however, based on previous communications with David Rosen of Buckingham Court, the Orangetown PB has been somewhat more open to Old Tappan Resident concerns. Mr. Rosen indicated that the remaining open items included an easement to provide secondary access to the site in case of fire or other emergency; the placement of landscape buffers; noise abatement measures and systems; and the elimination of references to “Phase II” for the application—which Old Tappan residents strongly oppose due to its proximity to the neighboring residential properties in Old Tappan.

Open Forum Discussion: in open forum, Larry reiterated his views on climate impacts around the world—and plans for adaptive action—even if the Borough is not directly impacted from climate-change impacts. Independent of the OTEC, Larry is trying to organize experts with who to consult for advice and implementability.

Wendy opened a discussion about lawn biodiversity and her experiences on her own property.

Council Liaison Gallagher arrived during the Open Forum Discussion and introduced himself to the Commission. He congratulated the Commission on its past achievements and pledged his support of OTEC initiatives and annual events.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES 2023

February 22

March 21

April 17

May 16

June 20

September 19

October 17

November 21

ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion by Nora and seconded by Larry and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED: