

**TOWNSHIP OF MORRIS
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Feb 12, 2026, 7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order—Meeting called to order at 7:01pm

Statement of Adequate Notice

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call – Members Present

Brian Morgan
Thelma Achenbach
Barbara Buda
Jennifer Carcich
Cecile Kent
Eric Rush
Charlie Schachter

Alternate Members Absent

Kathleen Hourihan
Ned Gardner

Associate Members Present

Josh Saks
Karen Seidmon

Associate Members Absent

Amy Brunswick
Vicky Barghout
Leslie Jones-Wentz

Donna Guariglia, Mayor, Siva Jonnada, Deputy Mayor, and Annaliese Rush, Secretary

Approval of Previous Minutes—Minutes were approved as presented.

Swearing in of members for new terms

- Karen Seidmon was sworn in as an Associate Member. Leslie Jones-Wentz was not present so will be sworn in at the next meeting.

New applications referred from the Planning Board—There were no new applications from the Planning Board.

New applications referred from the Board of Adjustment

- **BA-29-25** Guru Kirpa Prop. LLC_492 Sussex Ave - The applicant seeks to redevelop a commercial property located at 492 Sussex Ave. Use Variance relief is required as well, because the applicant is proposing the construction of a gas station, convenience store with drive-thru, and apartment, which is not a permitted use in the "RA-15" zone.
 - This site review is on hold as the Township is reviewing the site application as some changes need to be made.

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Correspondence

- Brian circulated the letter from PSE&G, but it was simply a notification of the utility's applications for statewide utility blankets—no action is required by the EC.
- The second correspondence was the Denville Environmental Commission's and Green Team's Eco-Action Series, where they are hosting a robust schedule of events running from February 22 through May 4.
- The final correspondence was the letter the TC received regarding gas leaf blowers from the former mayor of Maplewood. The mayor is offering her services as well as strongly recommending that Morris Township implement similar gas leaf blower regulation policies as the program was so successful in Maplewood.

General Business

Chairperson Remarks

Accomplishments

- Four people attended the Regional Shade Tree Commission Meeting in Madison, which was extremely informative and very well attended by different towns' Environmental Commissions.
- The Newsletter continues to thrive despite Charlie's health challenges, as Amy has stepped up to learn the ropes from Charlie. Next month she will hopefully be able to issue it independently.
- Food Waste Reduction Law was passed
- Brian completed the Annual Report.
- Kathleen, Barb, and Brian completed the \$10,000 ERI Grant application with Sustainable Jersey.
- Jen Carcich is assuming the Open Space liaison position from Thelma.

Old / New Business Review

- Next Winter Market will be March 15. Please sign up as your schedule allows.
- TC Initiatives:
 - Brian asked Siva for an update on Dark Skies, and Siva reported that Tim Quinn and the Engineering Department have stated that there should not be a problem implementing the initiative with new construction, but they want to review how it may impact existing projects and what guidelines may be necessary to get these projects in compliance, so it may be at least another month before it's approved. Siva should have a final decision from the Township by next month.
 - Food Waste Pickup—Siva said this is moving forward, and the DPW is now seeking a location.
 - Stormwater Compliance—there is no word yet.
- Cece reported that the Energy Consultant is seeking a Township contact and asked if it could be Siva. Siva is going to speak to Tim as he is not available as a full-time resource.
- Tree Ordinance letter—not much progress to date.
- Styrofoam Recycling Event—Jen had no update. This is still in the fact-finding stage.
- Tour Idea—Tiny Forest in Summit, which was originally a small portion of an old field that after five years of growth has become a very impressive tiny forest. Brian will schedule the tour for late Spring and let the group know of potential dates.
- One challenge with ERI Grant is that the Master Plan is starting to go forward, and it will be a very tight timeline to complete the project in line with the Master Plan's timeline.

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- Brian reviewed the Annual Report for 2025 and the Commission's objectives for the coming year. He then asked Commission members if they could share what their passion project(s) were for the coming year.
- Eric has committed to working on Tree protection and developing a site review standard template.
- Charlie is committed to working on the gas leaf blower ban (as a private citizen), shepherding the newsletter to a new editor.
- Jen is committed to public outreach, which should also help earn points toward certification.
- Cece would like to work on the ERI, which Brian explained could be limited to public outreach for the photo contests required for the ERI.
- Barbara indicated sustainable landscaping.
- Karen said she would continue to write articles for the newsletter, and she is passionate about landscaping and trees, so she would be willing to work on the Tree protection efforts if her help is needed, as well as food waste.
- Josh is passionate about energy aggregation and composting.
- Thelma's passion is to see that Dark Skies becomes a Township ordinance this year, and she's willing to continue writing articles about this and other subjects. She also plans to continue working on the site plan review process.
- Upcoming Schedule—next Winter Market is Sunday, March 15, and various events sponsored by the Denville Environmental Commission from the end of February through early May.
- ANJEC's training sessions are scheduled for March 24-26—these are very informative webinars and worth all members' consideration.
- Nature Conservancy is hosting a workshop on dam removal on March 25 at 10am.
- April 18 is Friends of Hopewell Valley Community Conservation Conference.
- Fall Festival is September 26.
- Poster Contest vote will be after the meeting, and then winners can attend either the March or April meeting.

Newsletter Review

- Karen reported that there is an article ready to go about the New Jersey Invasive Species Act.
- Charlie reported that Amy is working with Charlie to learn more about layout, and that they hoped to get more info from Kathleen about the tour because all three sites were not covered in the article she submitted.

Project / Subcommittee Reports

- Site Reviews: Thelma reported that the committee determined that we need to better align with the Township so we can more fully understand what they expect from us. From an operational standpoint, we are evaluating if we should have subject matter experts who can weigh in as necessary for the various reviews and then have one overall person compile the report. Per statute, a Planning Board member should be an EC member, so we need to coordinate with the Township to see how to fill this role. Finally, we need to develop a standardized EC template for conducting site reviews.

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Public Commentary — Limited to 5 minutes per person

- Dean Nielson, 17 Egbert Avenue, discussed the benefits of Community Solar.

Commentary by Commission Members

- Charlie discussed how he attended the January Township Committee meeting to discuss the public health issues posed by gas leaf blowers, and he emailed the TC regarding the opportunity to make a 20-minute presentation at an upcoming meeting detailing these issues.

Commentary by TC Members

- Siva reported there should be more confirmation on Dark Skies by tomorrow as to how much we need to know, and shortly thereafter for the location for food waste. Siva may be able to write an article for the newsletter regarding his family's experience with food waste. March 5 there will be a Whippany Watershed meeting at the County library where the Watershed Ambassador is scheduled to speak.
- Donna said that she is thrilled to be back on the EC, and she appreciates everyone's patience through the changes on the TC as they search for a new member.

Adjournment—Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm.