

# Environmental Commission Minutes

## January 22, 2026 @ 7:00 p.m.



**Roll Call** – Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Members	Attended January 22, 2026 Meeting
Peter Dlugos – Chair	X
Eric Duch – Co-Chair	X
Dana Flynn	X
Christine Aboulhosn	-
James Myers	-
Lisa Shimamoto	X
Randy Gutwein	X
Greg Smth – Planning Board Liaison	X
Harvey Roseff – Council Liaison	-
Elaine Evers – Secretary	X

EC Chair thanked Lisa Shimamoto for her long-term commitment and dedication to the EC. EC members celebrated Lisa’s contributions at the beginning of the meeting. With Greg Smith’s appointment as Planning Board Liaison (replacing Andrew McElroy), Lisa confirmed her resignation will be effective at the conclusion of this month’s meeting and she will notify the Town Clerk accordingly.

### Open Public Meeting Statement

Adequate notice of this meeting has been published specifying the time and access information in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting has also been electronically sent to the newspapers and uploaded to Byram’s website no less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting. In addition, a copy of this notice is on file in the office of the EC Secretary.

**Public Participation and Open Forum** – Recreation Director Debbie Armeno in attendance.

**Review of December 2025 Meeting Minutes** – Motion to accept December minutes made by Eric, seconded by Randy; meeting minutes approved and will be posted to website.

### Committee Reports

- **MRMC** – Last meeting December 16; next meeting TBA – Randy attended the December 16 meeting and provided updates:

#### Watershed Ambassador Presentation:

New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program is a community-oriented AmeriCorps program designed to raise awareness about water issues in New Jersey. NJDEP began hosting this AmeriCorps program in 2000. AmeriCorps is a national service initiative. Through this program, Watershed Ambassadors are placed at local host sites in twenty (20) Watershed Management Areas (WMAs) from Sussex to Cape May counties to serve their local communities.

#### *Dashboard of Watershed Ambassadors Accomplishments:*

<https://dep.nj.gov/wms/bears/americorps-nj-watershed-ambassadors/#projects>

#### Highlands Council Appointments

All vacancies filled, representation from all seven Highlands Counties restored. At its first public meeting of 2026 the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council welcomed seven new Council members. Four new members were approved at the December 18 and 22, 2025 sessions of the State Senate, and another three at the January 8 and January 12 sessions. New members are:

- Mary J. Amoroso. Bergen County Commissioner
- Joseph Basralian. Special Project Manager, New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF)
- Tammy Koop. Council Member, Town of Belvidere
- Helen Le Frois. Mayor, Town of Newton
- Melonie Marano. Commissioner Deputy Director, Somerset County
- Matthew Oswald. Council Member, Riverdale Borough
- Kelley Smith. Co-owner of J-P Smith Farms LLC, KelRick Farms LLC, and Star D Farm LLC.

## **Water Quality Update**

MWA partnered with the Lake Hopatcong Foundation and Lake Hopatcong Commission to monitor HABs in Lake Hopatcong and other lakes and ponds in the watershed, as well as some slow-moving sections of the river. A team of volunteers went to over 30 sites weekly to take readings of temperature, phycocyanin (the pigment associated with cyanobacteria), and other indicators of compromised water quality. HABs that exceeded the NJ DEP's criteria limit for phycocyanin were reported using their "Report a HAB" page. <https://www.musconetcong.org/habs>

## **Tinsley Property Development:**

A new site plan was submitted following a reset of proceedings due to board conflicts. Questions regarding stormwater runoff and permeable asphalt remain. MWA intends to resubmit Alan Hunt's previous letter regarding Section 7 review once NPS staff returns.

- **Open Space** – Last meeting January 12; next meeting February 9
  - Peter Dlugos reported that the meeting focused primarily on refining the 2026 County Trails Grant project. The need to evaluate forestry initiatives was also discussed.
- **Council** – Last meeting January 20; next meeting February 3
  - No update
- **Byram Trail Keepers** – Peter Dlugos is working on scheduling a Zoom call with Trail Keepers.

**Member Reports** - None.

## **New Business**

- Debbie Armeno provided brochures of upcoming Recreation events/programs trips for Spring 2026. Additional topics discussed, all TBD:
  - Spring Recreation Hike or Full Moon Hike
  - Family "Trails Passport" concept – a simple and inexpensive way to encourage families to explore all of Byram's trails. Families get a "passport book" and earn a stamp each time they walk a new trail. Peter mentioned that this might be a good companion program to the new GPS map rollout.
  - Earth Day activities for kids – could be in conjunction with adult programming - to be discussed again next month. Debbie also reminded the EC that Community Pass can always be used for event registration.
- Trail Keepers – Peter circulated a draft set of Club By-Laws for the EC's review and comment. Eric Duch suggested that the opening mission/purpose statement of the Trail Keepers could use some revision/strengthening.
- First Energy Tree Planting – Peter requested that the EC consider a tree planting project on an open space parcel, or identify a local private landowner who might want to participate. The challenge, if the former, is keeping the seedlings watered for three years.
- 2026 Main Action Steps toward Big Goals (Trails, Invasives, Watersheds, Community Outreach, Zero Waste):
  - Sussex County Trails Grant (w/ Open Space Committee) is a major focus of activity right now. Meetings with landowners and easement holder (NJDEP) for trail access have been taking place.
  - Peter aims to complete and roll out a new Byram GPS trail map this year. It would make sense to pair the "ribbon cutting" with another trails event.
  - Next steps on the prescribed burn in Tamarack Park were discussed. Eric agreed to coordinate the public relations from the EC.
  - There was initial exploration of ideas for celebrating Arbor and Earth Days, which are too early in the season for a native plant giveaway. To be continued next month.
  - Collaboration with schools: The EC is reaching out to Byram schools and LVRHS to invite collaboration with the EC on various projects. To be continued.
  - Riparian buffer or green infrastructure project(s): no obvious or problem-free sites have emerged yet. Will continue to study and explore.
  - In support of the "zero waste" goal, Peter would like to investigate the possibility of a composting initiative for homeowners. To be continued.
- Peter briefly described a noteworthy aspect of the Tilcon 2026 License Application – the monitoring of a large wetlands area north of—and uphill from – the quarry site. There are currently no signs of drainage from the quarrying activity.

- Planning Board Applications
  - [Block 360 Lot 6, Jans Way, Marcelino Lopez](#) (for new home construction)  
The Environmental Commission noted that the Grading Soil and Erosion Plan calls for all downspouts to be directed to the drywell system adjacent to the house, but also that all trees within the limits of the disturbance will be removed. We recommend adding native shrub and understory plantings within the disturbed area to slow and absorb additional stormwater runoff. There were also questions about whether a variance(s) would be required given that 47.7% of the property is classified as a “Severely Constrained” Steep Slope Protection Area, and 99.
  - [Z14-2025, Block 360 Lot 1.01, 183 Forest Lake Drive, Gockeler](#) (for accessory structures and tract disturbance)  
No comments at this time.

#### **Old Business**

- Preparing for prescribed burn in Tamarack Park - already covered.
- Mansfield Trail Superfund Site - no new updates.
- “Dirty Dirt” on Hemlock Drive - no updates on the Hemlock properties, but Greg Smith inquired about the dirt pile illegally dumped at the Harborview Beach parking lot in Forest Lakes. The DEP has requested proof, prior to removal, that the soil is not contaminated. Peter will follow up with Joe Sabatini on communications with the DEP.
- MWA Drain Way Project and West Brookwood River Cleanup- no updates

**Training** – NJUCF CEUs – 8 needed – Peter completed Backyard Forestry webinar.

**Membership** – Alternate II and Lisa’s positions are vacant.

**Annual Budget** – \$2,600 – ANJEC \$500 renewal – temporary budget amount \$900.

**Next Meeting** – scheduled for Thursday, February 26.

**Motion to Adjourn** made by Greg, seconded by Dana; motion accepted and adjourned at 9:00 p.m.