

Borough of Somerville
Environmental Commission
Minutes of May 13, 2014 Meeting

Meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM by Chair Gina Stravic

Roll Call: Gina Stravic, Katherine Hughes, Harry James, Jr.
Larry Cleveland, & Granville Brady, Jr., Vijay Tulsiani, Timothy Hayes, Tara St. Angelo,
Thompson Mitchell, Counsel Liaison.

1. **Minutes of the April 8, 2014 meeting was approved.**
2. **Communications—None**
3. **Speaker: George Stafford** representing the Highlands Coalition. Mr. Stafford explained that there are 88 towns involved in the Highlands region. The Highlands Commission governs development of the region and is under pressure to change the Master plan to develop the area. The development would increase nitrates in the watershed that could negatively impact the drinking water of towns such as Somerville. Mr. Stafford approached the Borough Council to adopt a resolution to maintain the original master plan. Council referred him to the EC for comment and possible recommendation that Council approve the resolution presented by Mr. Stafford.
G. Brady moved for adoption with Vijay seconding but the Commission decided to table the motion pending further study.
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **Sewer plans** no additional report
 - b. NJEC grant application for rain gardens was denied. Tara St. Angelo is involved in the Leadership Somerset program and will explore if their group would like to take on the rain garden project.
 - c. Sustainable Jersey application is due June 8. Vijay reported that we have enough points to qualify for Bronze designation. Still need to reaffirm the Green Team and will request Council to memorialize the Green Team prior to filing the application.
 - d. Somerset Garden Club grant—project completed and trees planted near gazebo.
 - e. Earth Day/Arbor Day report 52 bags of trash were collected; 34 bags for recycling with various other debris. Over 50 volunteers came out for a very successful event.
 - f. **Main Street Tree conservation project-**
The latest casualty was a tree located in front of Picasso Restaurant. The reason given for the removal was that the tree caused a safety hazard according to the borough Insurance agent. A lively discussion ensued about who authorized the removal and how quickly Picasso Restaurant occupied the space in front of their store to take in most of the sidewalk, leaving room for only two pedestrians to pass by. Several commissioners brought up the issue that once Picasso Restaurant was able to get the tree removed from in front of the their store, how many other restaurants would demand the same favor?

Gina brought up the issue of safety with so many restaurants moving their tables so far out onto the sidewalk, especially during peak days such as Friday evening.

The commission asked Councilman Mitchell to request a moratorium from having any more trees taken down until all parties were able to weigh in on the issue. Commissioners Brady, Hughes and Hayes indicated that they would reach out to members of the Council for their support.

Gina stressed the importance of this issue since it could signal the end of the beautiful trees on Main Street unless a plan to conserve the trees can be developed and implemented. Larry reiterated his suggestion that the EC meet with the DSA members and Council to walk through Main Street.

5. Planning Board- SMC is being absorbed by RWJ-UH and asked Planning Board for minor variances to erect new signs...

6. Adjournment—Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 PM

Respectfully submitted

Granville Y. Brady, Jr.

Granville Y. Brady, Jr., Secretary