

Environment Committee Meeting, April 6, 2021 (via Zoom)

Present: Barton Rubenstein, David Kathan, Donna Harmon, Ralph Wooden, Andrew Bartley, and Patty Friedman

1. Minutes of the March 10 meeting was approved. Donna moved their approval, and Ralph seconded.
2. Report on Town Council Actions
 - Barton relayed a message from Stephen Surko that the Town did pass the resolution declaring a climate emergency. Barton reported that the Council is now waiting on the Environmental Committee to measure our footprint, etc. The Committee will need to address this in the future.
 - Barton reported that the installation of an apiary was also approved by the Council. It will be installed near Little Falls Creek about 100 yards from Wisconsin Ave. A fence enclosing the apiary will be constructed starting next week. Honey from the apiary will be available for sale from the beekeeper. The beekeeper will also make herself available for education and outreach. Patty Friedman commended Barton for his efforts.
 - David reported on the Council's deliberations at the Town Meeting on PEPCo's offer to install a public electric charging station at the parking lot next to the Town Hall and tennis courts. David stated that the Council had a lot of questions about whether the Town or its residents would receive any benefits from the chargers, and that the Council was concerned about the length of the contract that PEPCo wanted to sign. The Council asked the PEPCo representative to see if a shorter contract with opt-out capabilities could be acceptable with the company.
3. Gas-Fired Leafblower Ban Education

Barton brought up the need to start an education effort to get Town residents aware of the gas-fired leafblower ban and to get the word out to landscaping companies. Barton asked committee members to start writing down the names of the landscaping companies that work in town, so that Barton can develop a list.
4. Miscellaneous Items
 - Andrew asked if there was anything that could be done to encourage LED lights in homes. He asked if the committee could do a door-to-door campaign to recommend their usage. David had an alternative suggestion. He reported that Montgomery County has a long-standing bulb exchange program, and suggested that we might get the program to come to Somerset one day. David agreed to contact the County staffer to see if she could come to a town event to do a bulb exchange like at the shredding event or new resident's party.
 - Patty noted that new residents are not aware of the composting service, and wondered if a flyer in the Journal would help educate residents.

- Patty reported that the PNRC has requested \$500 to do education in the town. She thought the education could be done jointly with the Environment Committee or with the Stormwater Committee.
- Barton suggested that we need could attempt other means of education, such as going door to door or something on webpage.

5. Presentation from Plastic Tree

Lara Ilao, the founder of Plastic Tree, presented the services that her company can provide to remove additional materials from the trash. Her company started in 2019 and is a waste management company that focuses on reuse, not recycling. Her company collects various items such as Amazon boxes or thermal coverings and then finds markets for these materials. They have been working in parts of DC and Virginia. They work in conjunction with recycling and use their own collection container and pick-ups. Her company is considering getting into providing full recycling in the future. She hopes that Somerset will consider using her company. Barton noted that the Town's recycling contract is up for renewal and there may be possibilities for using her company in the future.

6. Meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm.