



MEETING MINUTES

Jersey City Environmental Commission
City Hall – 280 Grove Street, Jersey City NJ 07302

Sara K. Schultz, Chair

Meeting: Jersey City Environmental Commission Public Meeting
Date / Location: 17 May 2016 – 6:30 p.m.
Caucus Room, City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, NJ 07302

Attendees:

Commissioners/City Representatives	Public Participants
Sara Schultz, Acting Chair	John Frohling, Morris Canal Assn.
Gregg Lanez	Jean-Marie Hartman, Rutgers University
Mario Verdibello	Brittany La
Michelle Luebke	Elaine Hansen, Morris Canal Assn. LLC
Gabriel Ristorucci	Peter Goldberg, Sustainable Jersey City
Allison Solowsky	Rosetta Arrigo
	Frank Gallagher, Rutgers University

Willow Latham, Secretary

Prepared By: Willow Latham

Date Prepared: 18 May 2016

ROLL CALL

Five of eight commissioners were present (Commissioner Luebke arrived late); four constitutes quorum. Commissioners Goldsmith and Cucco were absent.

SUNSHINE ANNOUNCEMENT

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

No comments from commissioners. April minutes approved.

SCHEDULED SPEAKERS

Professor Frank Gallagher, Director at Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

- Professor Gallagher presented to the Commission on brownfields to parks conversions, focusing on the case of Jersey City's Liberty State Park (LSP). In particular, he discussed the park's value to Jersey City and New Jersey in terms of the triple bottom line, including economic, social, and ecological value. Additionally, the value of park in terms of identity, as an ecological placemaker in a densely populated urban area, was emphasized.
- With 5 million visitors per year, LSP is second-most visited state park in the USA after Yosemite. The park costs \$2 million/year to run and brings in \$1 million/year in fees, but its real economic value far exceeds this – directly and indirectly, the park drives about \$305 million/year to state's economy, plus \$100 million in tax revenue.
- The park also has significant value for scientific research. Studies at LSP show contaminated land are capable of supporting high plant productivity, providing ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, and have resilience levels comparable with non-contaminated sites. Additionally,

there is a low risk of contaminant transfer indicated in animal samples, even in areas with high soil contaminant concentration where bioaccumulation effects would be expected.

- LSP covers a total of 1200 acres, of which 600 are usable— mostly concentrated along the north (active) and south (passive) recreation zones. The center of the park is largely preserved for ecological value, while other planned spaces include traditional park design and species.
- Modeling shows LSP has a total visitor capacity of 10 million per year, if users were spread over park and through seasons. However, some areas are already at capacity, and some individual events concentrate users so the park exceeds capacity.
- Going forward, the park will face the challenge of how to program open space to provide services for people, plants, and society.

OLD BUSINESS

Environmental Resource Inventory (Dr. Jean Marie Hartman, Rutgers University)

- The ERI drafting process is reaching its midway point in both funding and time.
- Biological maps are expected to be concluded this month. The Rutgers team continues to seek public input – through the G-Drive file— on Jersey City’s plants and animals for the “flora of Jersey City” list they are compiling.
- Rutgers graduate students are currently undertaking field work in Jersey City for in-depth analysis of particular areas, including those with high NJDEP fire indexes. The team will also overlay tree canopy data with habitat information to highlight areas where habitat improvements can be made.
- The analysis element of the ERI will now begin, including correlations across maps and between sections. Dr. Hartman expects to have a review draft completed by early September 2016. The final version is expected to be complete by December 2016-January 2017.
- All documents are available on Google Drive, and anyone can request access to review the documents and provide comments via email or in Drive comments.

Rebuild by Design: update

- Public meetings focusing on the urban design of the three alternatives have been held to gather public input. Two elements of the design will include the border with Jersey City.
- Flood modeling is expected to be concluded soon. Jersey City Planning staff will be made aware of these results and are monitoring the process to ensure there is no negative impact on Jersey City.
- Updates are available at www.rebuildbydesign.org/category/location/hoboken-location/

Resiliency Planning Documents: update

- The City Council approved a contract with Maser Consulting, P.A. at its May 11 meeting. This is for a suite of resiliency planning documents, including a Resilience Master Plan, Adaptation Master Plan, Urban Environmental Design Plan, Zoning and Building Code plus Design Standards, and Capital Improvement Plan. A kickoff meeting with consultant and City Planning staff will take place within the next week.
- Public outreach will be conducted as part of Maser’s contract.
- The total drafting process will last 1 year, concluding in June 2017.



NEW BUSINESS

Jersey City Water Supply letter

- A letter was drafted by Commissioners Verdibello and Cucco concerning Jersey City's water supply. Questions regarding the sufficiency of the City's reservoirs to satisfy continued population growth, especially in the case of drought, were raised by Tom Gibbons (Board member, Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority) at the Commission's April meeting. This letter echoed and expanded upon these concerns, stressing the importance of ensuring the maintenance and planning for the expansion, as necessary, of the City's water supply.
- In particular, Commissioner Verdibello raised the question of whether Split Rock and Boonton Reservoirs are fully dedicated to Jersey City's use; the reservoirs are owned by Jersey City but managed by Suez, which manages the city's water distribution system.
- The letter was approved 6-0 by the Commissioners and will be sent to the Office of the Mayor and the City Council.

CLOSING REMARKS AND OTHER BUSINESS BY COMMISSIONERS

Announcements

- The 40th anniversary celebration for Liberty State Park will take place on June 14. The event will especially commemorate the successful defeat of privatization plans for the park, which NJDEP Director Martin announced this week will be abandoned after strong public opposition.

GENERAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John Frohling, Morris Canal Associates
Brittany La

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next Environmental Commission meeting is scheduled for 21 June 2016 at 6:30p.m at Council Chambers, City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, NJ 07307.

