



# MEETING MINUTES

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

Sara K. Schultzer, Chair

**Meeting:** Jersey City Environmental Commission Public Meeting

**Date / Location:** 13 September 2016 – 6:30 p.m.  
Caucus Room, City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, NJ 07302

**Attendees:**

Commissioners/City Representatives	Public Participants
Sara Schultzer, Acting Chair	Elmer Andal, MUA
Alison Cucco	John Hroncich, Suez
Gregg Lanez	Gabriel Ristorucci
Michelle Luebke	
Takeya Meggett	
Mario Verdibello	
Kate Lawrence, Secretary	

**Prepared By:** Sara Schultzer

**Date Prepared:** 13 September 2016

## ROLL CALL

Six of seven active commissioners were present (Commissioners Luebke and Meggett arrived late); four constitutes quorum. Commissioner Goldsmith was absent.

## SUNSHINE ANNOUNCEMENT

## APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

No comments from commissioners. May minutes approved.

## SCHEDULED SPEAKERS

**John Hroncich, Suez & Elmer Andal, MUA**

- John Hroncich spoke first.
- City-wide improvement in water usage
  - Jersey City census 2010-2014 increased 1.5% per year, but water demand declined.
  - Decline credited to water main breaks fixed, system leaks repaired.
  - Also, change in land use and therefore water use: High-use Industrial & Commercial properties replaced by low-use Residential & Office properties.
- Rates
  - Commissioner Verdibello: Water & Sewage rates have risen significantly over decades. What is the contributing factor to the rate changes?
  - John Hroncich: Capital upgrades & improvements. Suez fee is set per contract. If rates go up, increase doesn't go to Suez. No plant within Jersey City; just collection systems. Goes to Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC).
- Elmer Andal spoke about MUA Priorities:

- Objective of treatment plant projects is to save money, i.e., recent gravity-fed pipeline to save on electricity otherwise used for pumps.
  - Capital plan to rehabilitate the system. Will “smart meter” the city; Automated Meter Instrumentation (AMI) will be programmed to pinpoint a leak within a minute’s time. Foresight for recently installed meters to be AMI-compatible. There will be 2 towers that can read all meters at any time frequency. Projected to install in the following 2 years.
  - Commissioner Ristorucci: What are your concerns?
  - Elmer Andal: Main breaks & weather fluctuations.
- Stormwater Tax
  - Commissioner Luebke: Can a stormwater tax be implemented?
  - Elmer Andal: MUA has been advised by NJ that it’s illegal. There has to be considerable research and an attempt to justify it as a budget line.
  - Commissioner Luebke: Such a tax would benefit residents and appropriately tax larger companies/users.
- Elmer Andal: Tackling a lot of Green Infrastructure projects, partnering with the City, will contribute engineering work with Rutgers University, working to reduce flooding with rain gardens, rain barrels, etc.
- Water Supply
  - Boonton + Split Rock = 11B gal, versus Jersey City’s demand of 16-18B gal, plus Rockaway River contributes 33B gal to Boonton.
  - MUA sells minimal water from those same aqueducts to others, i.e., Suez NJ and regional towns.
  - Commissioner Verdibello asked about what emergency measures would be taken in a scenario of severe drought. Elmer Andal replied that there may be a future state decision for reservoirs to be interconnected so that water can be balanced/shared between reservoirs in emergency conditions.
- Water Collection
  - Commissioner Meggett: Have you considered partnering with non-profits, to implement a system to capture water from established neighborhood gardens?
  - Elmer Andal: Yes, we’re open to that.
- Quality Standards
  - Commissioner Lanez: In light of Flint, Michigan, any tests/report cards on Water Quality?
  - John Hroncich: There’s EPA super-competence report. Did lead test last year, no exceedances. Issue for samples is lack of crowd-sourced samples, even with monetary incentive.
  - MUA would like to address lead line issue in Jersey City, with no cost to residents.
- Meter Connections
  - Commissioner Verdibello: Is there insurance for replacing line from meter to curb?
  - John Hroncich: HomeServe. This is a widespread issue since lead was used in service lines up to 1960. An EPA-approved lead test can be bought at store.



## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Rebuild by Design**

- Secretary Lawrence: There is a presentation tonight at NJCU, at the same time as our Environmental Commission meeting. Mayor Fulop will be giving opening remarks. The content is to include an update on the project and the preferred design (alternative 3).
- Jersey City Planning Department has expressed concern with the proposed wall to be built around area designated as open space in Jersey Avenue Redevelopment Plan.

### **Resiliency Planning Documents**

- Secretary Lawrence spoke about the progress of the project.
- City's consultant is Maser, with subconsultants Matrix New World, The Goldstein partnership, Deltares, and ORG Permanent Modernity
- There will be a public open house about the project on Oct 25<sup>th</sup> **6:00-8:30PM** in City Council Chambers to discuss scope of work and information gathered to date.
- Resiliency Planning Documents is NJ Dept of Community Affairs/Sandy project which includes 6 distinct documents:
  1. Resiliency Master Plan
  2. Adaptation Master Plan
  3. Urban Environmental Design Plan (aka Green Infrastructure Master Plan)
  4. Zoning and Building Code Revisions
  5. Design Standards
  6. Capital Improvements Plan

### **GHG Energy Audit/Emission Inventory**

- Energy audit of city buildings completed by "Greener by Design" of New Brunswick.
- Report is not yet public, may be finalizing report before posting.
- Secretary Lawrence will review report and let Commissioner Cucco know appropriate follow-up action items.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Plastic Bag Ordinance**

- Chair Schultzer, Secretary Lawrence, and Commissioner Luebke provided updates.
- NY/NJ Baykeeper has offered interest & support.
- ANJEC has provided template documents.
- NYC recently passed a 5 cent fee on plastic/paper bags.
- First step: to review guidance documents after which to model ours.

### **Tree Ordinance**

- Ordinance is still being drafted. It needs to be simplified from a previous version.
- Ordinance needs to incorporate reactivated Shade Tree Commission.
- Jersey City doesn't have a forester/arborist.

### **Stormwater Ordinance**



- Chair Schultzer noted there were multiple initiatives and iterations, and needs to verify between her records and Secretary Lawrence on its current status.

## **CLOSING REMARKS AND OTHER BUSINESS BY COMMISSIONERS**

- Chair Schultzer to send Secretary Lawrence thread regarding posting agendas and minutes.
- Commissioners to complete their bios. Commissioner Cucco will provide her template.
- Highland Protection Act – Mayor Fulop spoke about the HPA to get state legislature to block the Act.
- This **Thurs 15<sup>th</sup> 6:30PM in Council Chambers** there will be a pre-meeting to inform public about the issuing of an RFP for a “comprehensive plan” to be completed by 2020.
- ANJEC Congress is at end of September.

## **GENERAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next Environmental Commission meeting is scheduled for 11 October 2016 at 6:30p.m in Council Chambers, City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, NJ 07302.

