

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time:

Monday, January 12, 2026 – 7:45 p.m.

Meeting Location: Zoom and Borough Hall

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87611416423?pwd=vVnxwb7gWetr3HEwobeuvTpOoNqtSs.1>

Open Public Meeting Statement:

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Bergen Record and/or The Ridgewood News, informing the public of the time and place according to the provision of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1976)

Roll Call:

Members: Lou Baldanza(P), Lisa De Pellegrini(P), Chairman Robert Hanrahan(P), Mairead Jensen(A), Randall Preston(P), Lisa Skoglund(P), Antonio Vozzolo(P), Michelle Zink-Jojic(P), Planning Board Liaison/Member Sherwin Tsai(P)/Joseph Puglisi(P) (transition meeting) & Council Liaison Christopher Roche(P)

Approval of Minutes – December 15, 2025 - A motion to approve was made by L. Skoglund and seconded by L. Baldanza.

Meeting Opened to Public Agenda & Non – Agenda - A motion to open was made by L. Baldanza and seconded by L. Skoglund.

Present from the Public:

- Matt Epstein
 - Has lived in Montvale for 15 years. He is now managing the farm stand (formerly DePiero farm).
 - R.Hanrahan thanks M. Epstein for his contributions to the community including participation with Boy Scout Troop 334.

Meeting Closed to Public - A motion to close was made by L. Skoglund and seconded by R. Preston.

Communication/Correspondence:

- The Wegmans Wine, Liquor and Beer Store is under renovation.
 - C. Roche states that the handicapped parking on north end will be renovated and they are replacing an entry stairs with a metal loading ramp.

New Business:

- Review of Planning Board Submissions
 - UB Chestnut Ridge - Block 3103, Lot 1 - 1-30 Chestnut Ridge Rd
 - J. Puglisi states that the entire mall will be renovated.

- C. Roche states that parking will be added along the north end of the property.
 - There are environmentally protected areas on the north end of the property but the DEP reviewed and cleared the property
- Viola Property – 127 Summit Avenue – trail discussion
 - Viola states that they are uncomfortable with a trail on the property because of security reasons.
 - R. Preston states that when Viola showed interest in the property prior to purchasing it they showed acceptance of the idea of a trail.
 - L. Baldanza states that the water tower structure will be fenced. The rest of the property is unfenced.
 - R. Hanrahan states that a trail structure (loop) can be done. It will take proper paperwork and planning. This was the type of thing we assumed we could put in place once the project got to a certain state. It will need a designated parking area. We should bring this up with Viola now. R. Hanrahan will write a short paragraph requesting that a trail be considered with a parking area.
 - L. Skoglund reminds the EC members that Montvale is at the bottom of the list in Bergen County for designated open space. It doesn't make sense to have this amount of land unusable to residents. We could have another open space for the community to enjoy.
 - R. Hanrahan urges members to look at code and ordinances that discuss the purpose of the EC and our role in maintaining open space. This would also assist with the affordable housing calculation.
- Montvale Clean Up Day 2026 - April 25, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (rain or shine)
 - We have been successful with this event in past years. We will apply the same procedures that we previously used.
 - The DPW works in concert with our efforts.
 - We will have items to give away as provided by the County of Bergen. Food will not be provided.
 - EC members are requested to volunteer to support the effort from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Old Business:

- Community Project Update (Lisa De Pellegrini)
 - Working to schedule an educational lecture by the Raptor Trust. Hoping for a date this spring.
 - R. Hanrahan asks EC members to contribute to educational activity ideas. We have access to use the community center. It's a wonderful way to connect with the community. Events are free to residents.
- Pascack Trail/Huff Pond Update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - The aerators were left in the pond past when they should have been removed. There should be a schedule for installation in March and removal in October as a matter of routine without prompting by the EC.
 - If they are not removed before temperatures freeze they could suffer damage.

- R. Hanrahan will discuss this with borough officials.
 - The inlet which gets clogged is covered with leaves and debris again. It only gets cleaned when we reach out to boy scouts for assistance.
 - R. Hanrahan asked J. Voytus if the DPW can maintain the inlet, remove branches and manage clearance of debris from the storm drain which requires regular attention.
 - We did a good job this year with stocking fish and keeping algae growth to a minimum.
- Electric Vehicle Update (Antonio Vozzolo)
 - There is no federal money available to support electric vehicle initiatives.
 - NJ only offers incentives to individual consumers.
- Bicycle and Walking Plan (Antonio Vozzolo)
 - Has information to share with the EC members in anticipation of having a more robust discussion at the next meeting.
 - R. Hanrahan asks J. Puglisi for suggestions on allotting space for a bike path in Montvale. Other towns put ordinances in place that require future work to include space for bike paths. This increases the opportunity as work continues to be done. At some point down the road there will be enough space to start connecting and creating a bike path.
- Community Garden Update (Robert Hanrahan)
 - R. Hanrahan visited the farm with the Mayor who was supportive of moving the project forward. We now have more residents in multi-family housing who would benefit from an outdoor space.
 - The name will be The Montvale Community Garden.
 - The Mayor would like the garden ready for the growing season.
 - 40 raised bed units were purchased.
 - Right now we have 10 residents who want to volunteer to be part of this project.
 - The EC will oversee the project but we will require a subcommittee of people to manage the garden.
 - Participants will be required to provide a set number of hours of service to the garden.
 - M. Epstein states that there will be security cameras and some lighting on the farm.
 - We will require fencing to protect the garden. We could put slats in the fencing to obstruct the view through it so that deer won't jump over the fence.
 - We will have to decide on the proportion of the fence to install slats so that light will still come through.
 - The plan is to use rolls of geotex before installing the galvanized beds and filling them with organic soil.
 - We may want spigots to assist with watering.
 - We need some type of shed structure. Ideally we would build a pavilion with a shed and bathroom attached.
- Repair of Environmental Learning Center, trail discussion (Robert Hanrahan/Michelle Zink-Jojic/Lou Baldanza)
 - L. Baldanza states that our garbage pails need replacement.
 - We should have one at either end of the trails.
 - R. Hanrahan will send a communication to borough officials requesting the dual function garbage pails that are around town.
 - The trail requires ongoing maintenance.

- Down the road we can budget for the complete replacement of ELC trail flooring.
- Update on the Interconnect Trail between the ELC and Wegmans
 - Suggestions to find someone with a backhoe to scrape the area and mulch the trail.
- Tree City Application
 - R. Hanrahan and E. Riccardi will complete submission of the application.

Council Liaison Report – Chris Roche

- We are waiting for the Judge to approve our plan for affordable housing. We should have had a settlement on 12/31/25.
- The Mayor presented to federal court to get the order stayed so that we are not forced move forward. Judge seemed moved by the Mayor and attorney's speeches.
- We are hoping for updated information by the end of the month.

Planning Board Liaison Report – Introduction of Joe Puglisi

- Has been a resident of Montvale since 2019.
- He enjoys walking with his wife in the mornings.
- His background is in technology and was a CIO for over 45 years. He states that he likes to bring order to chaotic situations.

Adjournment - A motion to adjourn was made by L. Skoglund and seconded by L. Baldanza all in favor stating aye.