

TUCKERTON BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Thursday, November 13, 2025 @7pm in Borough Hall

Call Meeting to Order

Chairperson Beth Obiedzinski-Garvin called the Tuckerton Environmental Commission meeting to order on Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 7:00 pm in Borough Hall.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement “Provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act have been complied with as notice was published in the Tuckerton Beacon and the Asbury Park Press stating the time, date and place of this meeting.”

Flag Salute

Chairperson Beth Obiedzinski-Garvin led the salute of the flag.

Roll Call

Beth Obiedzinski-Garvin	P	Cynthia Coritz	P
Anthony Scaglione	P	John B. McCormack	Abs
Paul Solimani	Abs	Vincent Lauricella	P
Debra McMunn	P	Carolyn Keen	Abs

Also, In Attendance: Liaison Mike Dupuis Sr.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the October 2025 meeting were unable to be approved for at this meeting due to the lack of quorum of members that attended the October meeting. It was determined to table it until the December meeting.

Recording of Hours

The Tuckerton Environmental Commission recognizes their member's donation of time and knowledge for studies and research along with attendance of the monthly meetings and available workshops / seminars for the months of October 2025

Beth Obiedzinski-Garvin	11	Cynthia Coritz	3
Anthony Scaglione	3	John B. McCormack	Abs
Paul Solimani	Abs	Vincent Lauricella	5
Debra McMunn	15	Carolyn Keen	Abs

Old Business

Adopt-A-Highway:

The commission examined their Adopt-a-Highway obligations and verified three scheduled cleanup dates: April 11th, July 11th, and September 19th. Ms. Coritz obtained photographs from Ms. Keen and will transmit them to the coordinator. They established reminders to complete registration two weeks in advance and to purchase new vests and bags due to previous quality concerns.

The team will explore enlisting volunteers from area high schools and Scout organizations. Members will contact Boy and Girl Scout groups, recognizing that Eagle Scout candidates may collaborate on future initiatives, which must be organized by the Scouts independently.

Sustainable Jersey:

Members observed that the program's action requirements vary considerably from year to year. They referenced the local elementary school's Sustainable School designation from roughly three years prior, although recent action requirements were uncertain. The commission contemplated collaborating with the school for its forthcoming 100th anniversary celebration next year, proposing a notable Arbor Day or Earth Day event to commemorate the milestone.

Grants:

The commission explored pursuing grant opportunities, with members recognizing that numerous available grants, such as Green Acres funding, are predominantly allocated for recreation and open space initiatives rather than environmental commission operations. They questioned whether their entity has the jurisdiction to undertake certain projects and agreed to seek guidance from Borough officials.

Water ways:

The commission examined ongoing dredging and coastal protection initiatives. Councilman Brian Martin provided Mr. Scaglione an update on plans for Little Egg Harbor Boulevard, but the DEP recently determined that dredged material from other lagoons cannot be utilized for backfill, creating complications for the project.

Members highlighted that historical approaches to marsh restoration—such as community rebuilding initiatives in the 1960s—differ from current DEP policy, which supports natural erosion even when it endangers properties. They also referenced a Green Street beach restoration that was stopped following Army Corps objections, despite DEP

authorization, compelling the Borough to extract placed material under threat of penalties.

The peninsula has substantially eroded over the decades, diminishing from approximately 220 feet wide to as little as 10 feet. A proposed living shoreline would utilize boulders and other materials to safeguard the northeast corner from storm-driven wave action. Members also voiced dissatisfaction with the Army Corps' absence of response on Tuckers Creek dredging, which was anticipated around the beginning of COVID-19.

Ms. Scaglione verified that the spit is breached during almost every northeaster, permitting water to flow over land intended to function as a barrier. The commission is expecting detailed plans from Brian Martin.

Ms. McMunn described how the area has transformed, recalling raised furniture during flood season, cedar trees that previously helped stabilize Tuckerton Beach properties, and marsh elevation decline due to dredged material being positioned upland instead of reinforcing marshland.

Tree Replacement:

The commission examined the authorized tree replacement project for Main Street's south side, extending from South Green to Marshall (near the former Borough Hall). The initiative involves extracting six trees: five smaller specimens and one larger tree standing approximately 20 feet tall. For safety considerations, the larger tree will be dismantled in sections using pole pruners or an aerial lift.

After utility mark out procedures, an unusual complication surfaced. The gas company identified the site as high-risk due to substantial gas mains in proximity. Though the tree extraction can advance without special precautions (since no excavation is necessary), stump removal will require having a NJ Natural Gas representative on-site. One stump is located less than two feet from a gas line.

Tree extraction is scheduled for Saturday, December 22nd at 9:30 AM. The police department will provide assistance with safety protocols and traffic control. Volunteers will be needed to direct pedestrians during cutting operations and transport tree debris via pickup trucks to the municipal recycling facility's brush dumpster.

Stump removal will occur on a subsequent date, dependent upon the gas company representative's availability, presumably during regular business hours.

Members discussed whether to notify businesses along this Main Street section about the scheduled tree work. Though business owners lack authority to prevent the project (since it involves public property), the commission determined that advance notification would be courteous.

A concern emerged about the kickboxing establishment, which recently installed two arborvitae shrubs in public planters designated for the commission's sweet bay magnolia trees. Members contemplated approaching the business to request removal of these unauthorized plantings, offering assistance to relocate the arborvitae closer to their entrance or in different planters. The code enforcement officer was noted as having authority over unauthorized modifications to public property.

Committee Reports:

Invasive Species Educational Program-- Ms. Coritz reported receiving communication from Green Galloway, the organization that produced a documentary on "12 Tenacious Invasive." They are prepared to present the film in Tuckerton. The commission discussed synchronizing this educational event with the distribution of Callery pear tree information. Two potential venues were evaluated: the Tuckerton Library (which can host approximately 30-35 people) and the Tip Seaman Park county building meeting space.

The library was recognized as particularly successful at promoting events and has strong membership. The documentary highlights the most prevalent invasive plants in the region, such as Burning Bush, Barberry, and Russian olive—species that people commonly purchase despite their invasive characteristics. A member mentioned that legislation may be forthcoming to ban the sale of these plants. The commission agreed to delay scheduling until after the holidays, considering a cold January day when people might be more inclined to attend an indoor event.

Grant Research - New Jersey Community Forestry Program-- Ms. Coritz reported investigating grant opportunities through the New Jersey Community Forestry Program, which functions under the DEP Forest Service. The grant program for 2026 has not yet been released, but based on previous years' timing (announcements around November 19-20), it should be published soon. Past grants from this program have been considerable, around \$100,000, and typically necessitate matching funds from recipients.

Lumber Company Drainage Issue-- Mr. Dupuis reported an ongoing situation involving the Tuckerton Lumber Company. A resident named Bob Suralik, whose property adjoins the lumber company, shares a drainage berm that extends the length of his property and drains into the swamp. The berm contains retention pipes running underneath the road.

The lumber company, without securing any permits or consulting authorities, filled in their section of the berm, generating the appearance of a level surface where there should be drainage infrastructure. When Mr. Suralik attempted to report the violation, he was eventually connected with Ocean County Soil Conservation, but they had not responded. The code enforcement officer also attempted to contact them without success.

A call to the DEP confirmed that a case number had been issued and the matter was under investigation, though no further information was available. This unauthorized fill could potentially trigger flooding on Mr. Suralik's property, as water that was previously distributed across both properties would now be channeled entirely onto his land. Members noted that any soil disturbance requires approval from Ocean County Soil Conservation District—an exemption form for disturbances under 5,000 square feet, or full engineering review for larger areas. The lumber company appears to have circumvented all required procedures.

Proposed Legislation - Environmental Bills-- Ms. Coritz informed the commission about several environmental bills currently before the state legislature that ANJEC (Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions) is monitoring:

- **Food Waste Reduction Law:** Legislation requiring development of a plan to keep 50% of food waste out of landfills.
- **Skip the Stuff Act (S3195/A5157):** Statewide legislation that would prohibit providing single-use utensils and condiments except upon customer request for takeout and delivery orders. This mirrors the local plastic bag ban in scope. The commission decided to wait and see if this passes at the state level rather than expending energy on a local ordinance.
- **Open Space Conservation Tax Incentive Act (S32287/A197):** Would provide income tax deductions for property owners who sell real property for conservation purposes, encouraging voluntary land protection to benefit open space, clean water, and wildlife habitat.

Members were encouraged to contact their state legislators to support these bills.

Building Height Requirements - NJPAC REAL Rules-- The commission discussed Governor Murphy's proposed executive order regarding building elevation requirements, known as NJPAC REAL (Jersey Protecting against Climate Threats - Resilient Environments and Landscapes). This rule would strengthen land use planning and regulations to incorporate climate change and flooding impacts.

The regulations would mandate buildings to be elevated five feet above base flood elevation. Tuckerton currently requires three feet above base flood elevation, so the net increase would be two additional feet for new construction. The rules also address impervious surface coverage requirements. The executive order was scheduled to take effect in January with a 180-day grace period before enforcement begins.

Members noted that regulatory enforcement could shift significantly depending on which administration is in office, and the incoming state administration might adopt a different approach. One member recommended the NOAA sea level rise mapping tool, which allows residents to visualize how different levels of sea level rise (1 foot, 2 feet, up to 10-15 feet) would affect specific neighborhoods. For Tuckerton Beach, even one additional foot

of sea level rise would result in significant marsh loss, while areas like Paradise Cove would remain viable even with 5-6 feet of rise.

The regulations are based on Rutgers modeling of expected flood levels by 2050, rather than current FEMA maps. Members expressed concern about the fairness of using executive orders rather than legislative processes for such significant policy changes, noting that executive orders can be more easily reversed by future administrations.

Helpsy Clothing Recycling Program-- Ms. Coritz presented photos of Helpsy clothing collection bins recently installed at the West Tuckerton Fire Company. The Borough logo that Clerk's office provided has been placed on the bins. Plans include promoting the program through the commission's new Facebook page and submitting information to the Sandpaper newspaper.

Ms. Coritz is researching the possibility of organizing clothing collection events that would generate modest revenue for the commission. Instructions for setting up such collections are available on the Helpsy website, with details to be presented at the next meeting.

Members discussed the difference between Helpsy bins and other clothing collection options. The Helpsy system accepts even unwearable clothing, keeping textile waste out of landfills. The thrift store in town sends unwearable donations to Helpsy, though it doesn't have an on-site bin. Some members prefer the convenience of the municipal recycling center's clothing bins near the water towers, while others find the West Tuckerton Fire Company location more convenient.

Rutgers Environmental Stewards Program-- Ms. Obiedzinski- Garvin reported contacting the coordinator of Rutgers' Environmental Stewards in Action program. This program trains volunteers in various environmental skills through a 12-week course costing approximately \$325 (with a discount if registered in December for January classes). Upon completion, participants must complete a community service project.

Ms. Obiedzinski- Garvin sent an email explaining Tuckerton's rich environmental resources and how a partnership could benefit both the commission and program participants. As of the meeting, no response had been received, though the inquiry was sent only days earlier.

Members discussed whether this would be similar to a previous attempt to recruit a Stockton College intern to help with Sustainable Jersey documentation. That effort had failed due to logistical challenges—the intern would have needed office space and on-site supervision, which the commission couldn't accommodate at the time. The Sustainable Jersey action items require extensive documentation, scanning, and submission for review, making the administrative burden substantial even when the underlying environmental work is relatively straightforward.

Rain Barrel Project-- The commission learned that their proposed rain barrel demonstration project at Old Borough Hall faces unexpected resistance. Mr. Dupuis reported having an unproductive conversation about the proposal, with pushback centered on cutting the building's rain spout and diverting water to a collection barrel.

Mr. Dupuis revealed that New Jersey has laws on the books prohibiting rainwater harvesting in certain circumstances. The primary concern is that collected rainwater might be used to flush toilets, thereby avoiding water meter charges. Since sewer bills are calculated as a percentage of metered water usage, using free rainwater in toilets would reduce apparent water consumption while maintaining the same sewer output. This creates accountability issues for municipal sewer treatment capacity and billing.

Mosquito concerns were also mentioned, though the commission had already planned to address this with mosquito prevention inserts. The rainwater harvesting prohibition may not be actively enforced, but remains in the legal code.

Members expressed frustration that these concerns were not raised when Ms. Obiedzinski- Garvin publicly presented the rain barrel project at a council meeting. Mr. Dupuis suggested that council members may not have been aware of the legal and practical complications at that time. One member proposed that environmental commission members could attend a council meeting or send emails to advocate for the project. The commission decided to wait until after the reorganization meeting before pursuing the matter further.

Members Forum: None at this time.

Approval of Secretary Services: Mr. Scaglione motioned, seconded by Ms. McMunn to approve the secretary's services for the month of November. It was so moved by unanimous consent of the Commission.

Public Forum- No Public Form.

Adjournment- Seeing there were no more comments from the Commission, Ms. Coritz motioned, seconded by Ms. McMunn to adjourn the meeting. It was so moved by unanimous consent of the Commission.

The Environmental Commission meeting ended at 8:50pm.

Sincerely,
Savannah Beaulieu
Tuckerton Environmental Commission Secretary