BOROUGH OF SADDLE RIVER
REGULAR MEETING
ENVIRONMENTAL COMISSION

AGENDA

January 8, 2026
7:00 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **PUBLIC NOTICE**
Clerk to Read - Notice of this Meeting of the Planning Board of the Borough of Saddle River was provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by sending notice to The Record and The Ridgewood News on December 17, 2025, posting it on the Municipal Building bulletin board and the Borough website, and filing it in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

Notification of fire exits

3. **ROLL CALL**

4. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

5. **OPEN TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

6. **REPORT BY CHAIRMAN**

7. **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

   A. December 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes

9. **UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS:**
   - Arborist Elizabeth Stewart was Appointed by the Governing Body via Resolution 13-26
   - Arbor Day Event - April 24, 2026

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE SADDLE RIVER ENVIRONMENTALCOMMISSION HELD on December 11, 2025 AT BOROUGH HALL 7:00PM

The meeting was held in person.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm and secretary, Cindy Kirkpatrick, read the Sunshine Notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. Notice of this meeting was sent to the Record and Ridgewood News on October 22, 2025 and advertised in said newspapers on October 28, 2025 and October 31, 2025. Also posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

Notification of fire exits

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Present: Alisa DiGirolamo, Manuel "Manny" Gonzalez, Sanjay Kapoor (arrived at 7:19), Chairman Robert LaViano, Diane Lucianna, Dr. Angel Mulkay, Dior Vass

Also present: Councilman Jeff Liva

The meeting was opened to the public, but no member of the public was present.

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN

Chairman LaViano explained that the Commission wishes to interview a tree expert mainly to assist in maintaining compliance with its Tree City designation. Ron Yates helped to get the borough certified as a Tree City approximately 8-9 years ago.

Chairman LaViano invited Liz Stewart, a licensed tree expert, to the meeting so that she could introduce herself and speak about her experience.

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Ms. Stewart explained that she is a consulting arborist for Woodcliff Lake and Westwood. She is the arborist for Ho-Ho-Kus and has a dedicated email address with them. She provides them with a tree inventory, files annual tree reports, maintenance, inspections, educates DPW employees and Shade Tree members.

Westwood calls her in on an "as needed" basis.

Ms. Stewart is the former president of New Jersey Shade Tree Federation. She is still involved with the group for education outreach.

Members confirmed they reviewed Ms. Stewart's proposal for arborist services.

Chairman LaViano reviewed his objectives:

1. Communicate with Tree City USA to establish present status and compliance.

Ms. Stewart responded that should be easy because the borough has an Environmental Commission and a tree ordinance. The borough must spend $2/capita (approximately $7,000/year) on urban forestry and celebrate Arbor Day.

She mentioned there is another certification through the State that is more rigorous but the town could receive grant funding. Chairman LaViano said that might be an objective for another year.

2. Arbor Day event

3. Survey town roads and identify problem trees and who is responsible for taking care of the tree. (Mr. Spence, borough engineer, arrived at the meeting. He was asked to attend by Chairman LaViano.)

4. Tree inventory located on town properties. Identify valuable trees and include current status, identify if they are heritage trees, etc.

5. Provide guidance and recommendation to Environmental Commission as to where new trees could be planted.

Chairman LaViano invited members to ask questions of the arborist.

Members spoke about the lighted Christmas tree in front of borough hall and the fact that it does not look as healthy as it should since it was only planted a couple

of years ago. Mr. Vass suggested planting a younger tree on the lawn so that when the younger tree matures, it can replace the older tree.

Ms. Stewart explained that when a tree is 5-6' high it is ideal for replacement as long as the root ball is intact. Roots need to establish.

Mr. Spence explained that the original Christmas tree (in front of borough hall) died and was replaced two years ago.

Mr. Spence spoke about tree applications that are submitted to the building dept. An arborist would be of value to the building department to review those applications.

The engineer asked if Ms. Stewart sees any conflict working with Downes who is a vendor of the borough. Ms. Stewart responded that she does not see a problem. She does not work with contractors and she is an independent contractor.

Mr. Vass asked who directs Ms. Stewart. Chairman LaViano said that if the Planning Board is in need of Ms. Stewart's services they could reach out to her as well. Mr. Levy, landscape architect, probably deals with plantings and hardscape but does not concentrate on trees.

Mr. Spence explained that a homeowner can remove 4 trees per year on a 2 acre lot. Ms. Stewart could assist with those applications that involve more than 4 tree removals.

Chairman LaViano thinks that Ms. Stewart would be an asset to the town.

Mr. Vass asked what specific methods and tools are used for tree inventory and risk assessment and would the borough receive records and maps to integrate with existing records? Ms. Stewart said she could provide a GIS based system, but it would involve someone maintaining the program. Otherwise, she could start with a survey. If the borough decides to aim for a New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry accredited town, then there is a grant for $20,000 plus other benefits. Ho-Ho-Kus and Oradell have the accreditation.

Mrs. Lucianna spoke about the lack of curb appeal at Saddle River Day School and the need for plantings there. Ms. Stewart said that shrubs and bushes would be a conversation with landscape architect. However, there are grants that schools can apply for to acquire trees.

Mr. Spence confirmed there are landscaping plans for the school. He can speak to the landscape architect about it.

This is Ms. Stewart's full time job and is reachable via email, phone, text.

Chairman LaViano would like to appoint certain individuals to interact with the arborist. Perhaps someone from building dept., Administrator Molinari and someone from Environmental Commission.

Mr. Gonzalez motioned to recommend Liz Stewart as Borough Arborist to the Mayor and Council with a second by Mrs. DiGirolamo. All in favor; no objections. Chairman Liva will report same at the next Mayor and Council meeting.

At 7:41, Chairman LaViano, Liz Stewart and Martin Spence departed the meeting.

The Environmental Commission was budgeted $15,000 in 2025. Members spoke about ways to utilize the budget such as improving landscaping by the entrances to town. Or perhaps beautifying the land (island) by E. Allendale heading to Rt. 17 North.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Kapoor motioned to approve the November 11, 2025 minutes with a second by Mrs. Lucianna. All in favor, none opposed.

UNFINISHEDAND NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Lucianna submitted the newsletter article to the town (that was discussed at the last meeting) on behalf of the Environmental Commission. The newsletter should be coming out mid-January.

Discuss meeting dates for 2026. Members discussed they would like to continue to meet in person, second Thursday of every month, no meetings in July and August.

National Arbor Day is April 24, 2026. (Last Friday in April.) Dr. Mulkay suggested activities such as tree planting, educational programs, free tree giveaways, focus on community involvement.

Members would like to include the arborist on the Environmental Commission agenda 1x per quarter.

Annual Report – The Environmental Commission shall keep minutes and records of its meetings and activities and shall make an annual report to the Mayor and Council.

At some point during the year, an annual report will need to be submitted to the Governing Body. If more money is being requested in the budget, justify the reason.

Mr. Vass stated that as a member of the Planning Board, he knows there are several large projects that are being built in town. He has heard concerns regarding flooding, environmental concerns, erosion, impervious coverage. These are concerns that may impact the Environmental Commission and Mr. Vass just wanted to give the members a "heads up."

With no other matters for discussion, at 8:26 pm, Mr. Gonzalez motioned to adjourn with a second by Mrs. Lucianna. All in favor, none opposed.

Next meeting is January 8, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Kirkpatrick, Secretary
Parks & Recreation Commission

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