**Montclair Environmental Commission**
**September 2026 Meeting Notes**
**September 2, 2026**

**Meeting held at:** Municipal Building, 2nd Floor Conference Room, in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was published on the Montclair Township and MEC websites.

- MEC Commissioners Present: Bill Martens (Chair), Alison Tribus (Vice Chair), Mac Carbonnell, Keith Brodock, Judy Meyers (alternate)
- MEC Commissioners Absent: Gray Russell (excused), Imke Oster
- Town Liaisons: Lisa Johnson (Department of Sustainability), Councilor Eileen Birmingham, Deputy Mayor Susan Shin Andersen

**Administrative Updates – Township Email Setup, Google Drive, Open Seats**

- All township emails are set up; remaining MEC members need to activate their emails.
- Explore if Google Drive is compatible with the township email system or if SharePoint should be used as the folder repository.
- Two open alternate commission seats need to be filled. Some applications have been submitted and will be shared via Google Drive along with those from previous applicants (Demetria to provide.) Targeting October meeting to complete applicant review and vote on who to recommend to the town council.
- ANJEC Membership – Membership was paid for 7 commissioners, alternates, and a few additional individuals. Specific town emails to be sent for roster completion.

**Master Plan Re-Examination**

Comments on the master plan re-examination are due by September 11 to Janice Talley, who is collating all submissions. Links to existing documents (full master, MEC comments from 2023, conservation element from 2009, sustainability amendment to the unified land use and circulation element from 2023-24 were shared via email during the MEC meeting.

**State Law Reconciliation – Invasive Species Management Act**

The interim town attorney (Ruby Kumar-Thompson) email was received to clarify the Invasive Species Management Act passed in February 2026. The law takes effect in February 2027 and applies to public and private property; Montclair's ordinance is only for public property. The town's 70% native planting law for public property (Chapter 42, native vegetation) does not conflict with the state law and can remain. The ban on planting native takes effect in February 2027, however. So, unfortunately invasive species planting is permitted until then since the state law supersedes local law. The new town attorney will opine on this imterpretation.

**Synthetic Pesticides – Tribune Use at Edgemont Park**

A Montclair Local article reported that Tribune (active ingredient: diquat dibromide) was used at Edgemont Park. Under the current Township ordinance, diquat dibromide is not permitted without an exception, which was never applied for. Tribune is a herbicide and algaecide. It has reportedly been used at the park for many years. Organic alternatives exist but would require multiple products to replace Tribune's combined functions, raising cost and complexity questions. The Wildlife and Ecosystem Committee will research alternatives and make a

recommendation, and Lisa Johnson will speak with Michael Primavera, the interim utilities director, about the exception process. Yantacaw Pond may also be using similar treatments. There is a broader need to streamline the exception process for synthetic pesticides, as raised in the July MEC meeting by Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and Bonsal Wildlife Preserve Conservancy. They will be contacted to see how their proposal is developing.

**Pond Dredging – Edgemont Park**

The previous dredging was in 2013. All available grants require shovel-ready projects with engineering plans already completed. The first step is to pursue funding from either the Township or another source (state/federal) to hire a firm to commission engineering plans, including sediment toxicity testing, so the project can be grant-ready when opportunities arise.

**Tree Ordinance Update**

The updated tree ordinance is now in full legal review by the new Township attorney, who needs time to vet several proposed provisions before the Council can vote. Councilor Birmingham noted that progress has been slowed by turnover of Township personnel. Some provisions still lack four Council votes, requiring the Council to prioritize achievable provisions over perfect ones.

**Shade Tree Division RFP – Merck Grant**

An RFP has been issued for a $60,000 Merck grant with a $15,000 match for a comprehensive review of the shade tree division, covering ordinances, equipment, staffing, and contracts. The Star Ledger will publish the RFP on Sept. 7th, with responses due by the 30th. Davies Resource Group has expressed interest, and Bartlett Tree Experts may also respond. The review is to help optimize operations and determine the true cost of meeting the Township's canopy goals.

**Shade Tree Committee Draft Resolution**

Councilor Birmingham presented a draft resolution to establish a 7 member Shade Tree Committee, with 1 ward captain per ward to monitor street trees and coordinate community involvement. This advisory committee would support the arborist and sustainability departments without having decision-making authority. Key concerns raised: (1) ensure the responsibilities are reasonable for volunteers; (2) avoid overwhelming communications to the arborist, who works 2 days per week; (3) the need for educational resources for recommended/prohibited tree species and tree removal/replacement requirements. An October town hall with arborist John Anderson will discuss canopy, plantings, and vision.

**GovPilot Permitting System (to replace manual permit handling)**

The permitting system is nearly live, with staff being trained and logging existing paper permits in spreadsheets. Devin is the point of contact and will be asked to present the system workflows at the next MEC meeting. GovPilot ticketing will help manage tree maintenance.

**Essex Park and Hillside Trees**

Three trees were discussed: (1) A dead 39" diameter white oak at Essex Park will be removed. (2) Two tulip trees at Essex Park (41" and 53" diameter) have 50% crown dieback; arborist John Anderson will monitor and remove them if they do not leaf out by spring. (3) A Hillside School oak was heavily pruned and removed after a large branch broke off. Replacements are planned for Nov/Dec. The arborist is open to MEC involvement in the Essex Park replacement plan and Alison volunteered. Councilor Birmingham suggested exploring a tree-planting program with the BOE where community members could donate trees in honor of teachers or retirees.

**Yard Waste Ordinance Proposed Changes**

Judy Meyers presented proposed changes to the yard waste ordinance to reflect current practices (found on Leaves and Vegetative Yard Waste Township of Montclair, NJ) which would (1) define vegetative yard waste, (2) specify that all yard waste is collected with recycling pickup [with a change to April 1 – mid December), (3) remove the 2 bag limit which is ignored by DCS, and (4) lengthen branch size limits from 3 to 4 feet.

This change was not approved due to concerns that codifying yard waste pickup would increase Township costs by raising landscaper awareness and encouraging them to bag and leave grass rather than mulching. Judy will request the Township's bills from Environmental Renewal [who does our composting] to analyze current costs by waste type for potential future reference.

**Single-Use Plastics Outreach**

A town outreach campaign is planned to inform restaurants and food service businesses about the state's single-use plastics law. https://dep.nj.gov/get-past-plastic/outreach-toolkit/ is the NJDEP toolkit to be used to ensure all restaurant staff are aware of the law. Judy to follow up with Daniel White (Planning & Community Development) and Amy Monaco (Health Dept.) about how they plan to proceed; personal visits are better than just a mailing.

**Recycling Receptacles at School Athletic Fields**

Alison Tribus reported that recyclables are being put in regular waste bins at MHS fields, particularly at Aubrey Plaza/Woodman Field games. She spoke with Matthew, the MHS director of athletics/facilities, who has ordered 2 recycling receptacles for Woodman Field and needs financial help getting 8 more to cover all school fields since the BOE does not have a budget for this. She will send his details to Councilor Birmingham to see if the town can fund this.

**Public Comments**

**Tree Ordinance Enforcement Concerns** – Anna Grossman was called by a tree removal company pressuring her to back off tree ordinance advocacy, due to increased cost of compliance. She also mentioned that a company removed 4 trees under an "emergency tree on roof" permit issued same-day by code enforcement, despite no high winds that week. The company was charged an in-lieu fee for only 3 trees instead of 4 and faced no other consequences. She stated that enforcement failures—not weak ordinance language—are the primary problem and urged the commission to resist industry pushback.

**Noise Ordinance – Athletic Field Music -** Ms. Grossman raised concerns about ongoing loud music at school athletic fields causing health and mental health impacts for nearby residents. Repeated requests to lower or stop the music have been ignored. She noted that noise is an item on the master plan re-examination to-do list and asked noise ordinances to specify the type of noise measured (e.g., bass frequencies), not just decibel levels.

**Tree Ordinance vs. Shade Tree Committee Scope Clarification -** An audience member asked for the distinction between the tree ordinance and the shade tree committee. Councilor Birmingham clarified: the tree ordinance applies to all Township (public and private) property but with different rules for each. The shade tree committee will focus on public tree canopy management, community outreach, and education regarding private trees. It will have an advisory role, with potential involvement in decisions about ward planting, monitoring newly planted trees, coordinating watering and care for new trees.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 at 7:30 pm.**