

Montclair Environmental Commission February Meeting Notes

February 18, 2026

Commissioners Present: Keith Brodock, Mac Carbonnell, Bill Martens (Chair), Ruchi Misra (Secretary), Judy Meyers, Imke Oster, Gray Russell, Alison Tribus (Vice Chair)

Town Liaisons: Lisa Johnson, Susan Shin Anderson, Eileen Birmingham, Aminah Toler

Approval of December 2025 & January 2026 Notes: Unanimous

Administration & Digital Infrastructure

Administrative updates included confirmation that most commissioner terms have been updated on the town website, with Keith's term still pending due to planning board discussions. A Chair Transition Playbook is being developed and will be stored in Google Drive. The MEC Google Drive was reorganized into a 2026 folder, with access provided to most members pending review for one liaison. The MEC Gmail account is accessible to the chair with email forwarding to Allison for oversight. The MEC website domain was renewed for approximately \$15–\$20. Social media accounts were transferred to the MEC Gmail account, with follower goals set at 3,000 on both platforms and marketing strategies including cross-promotion, QR codes, and event promotion. The full 2026 meeting schedule has been posted to the town calendar and MEC website.

Communication Compliance

Members were reminded that group communications involving four or more commissioners constitute a quorum under the Open Public Meetings Act and cannot be used for substantive commission business. Logistics-only communication is permitted.

Annual Report & Contacts

The MEC will prepare its 2026 annual report using meeting notes. A contacts file was created in Google Drive to maintain relationships with environmental organizations and partners, and members were encouraged to contribute contacts.

Membership & Diversity

Following a vacancy created by Suzanne Aptman's resignation, Gray Russell was unanimously recommended to move from alternate to full commissioner pending town council approval, creating a new alternate vacancy. Recruitment efforts will focus on candidates from the Fourth Ward with sustainability experience, consistent with town affirmative action goals.

Bylaws & Legal Updates

Bylaw amendments were approved unanimously after required notice. Changes added two special

committees—Wildlife and Ecosystem Management and Waste Reduction and Recycling—and introduced conflict-of-interest transparency requirements. Discussion of a state-required Open Space Index was tabled. Additional bylaw revisions received after the notice period will be voted on at the March 4 meeting. Legal updates require publication and archival of legal notices on the MEC website moving forward.

Deer Management

The commission reviewed a draft resolution to form an ad hoc deer management working group. Recommendations included explicitly noting ecological impacts of deer and vehicle safety concerns in the resolution language. The township continues to favor non-lethal management options, though lethal management would require ordinance changes. A deer population survey using a drone-based vendor is expected to conclude in March. MEC will submit written language edits before council introduction.

Sustainability Plans

The Community Energy Plan is nearing completion, with a public engagement session scheduled at the start of the March 4 meeting from 7:00–7:30 PM. Once approved, the township may apply for a grant of up to \$500,000 for implementation projects such as solar or energy efficiency upgrades. The Climate Resilience Action Plan received critical feedback for being repetitive and lacking strategic direction, and revisions are pending. Turf-related language in the Planning Board Climate Resilience Master Plan amendment can be changed with a future public hearing.

Tree Ordinance & Urban Forestry

Work continues on a new tree ordinance based on New Jersey model language, with goals of introducing it in spring. The commission prefers size-based tree replacement standards rather than simple one-for-one replacement to better protect canopy coverage. Enforcement challenges include limited arborist staffing, lack of tracking software, and inconsistent contractor registration enforcement. The commission will request annual arborist reporting on tree planting, removals, and maintenance data.

Recycling & Waste Programs

The Montclair Public Library approved hosting a textile recycling bin that will accept non-salvageable textiles and convert them into insulation materials. The commission will launch an educational campaign to promote the program. Recycling education work is also underway with Atlantic Coast Recycling to clarify acceptable materials and potentially arrange a facility tour.

Community Solar

The privacy agreement and consulting contract with Gable for community solar programming were fully executed. Gable will begin data collection to determine program feasibility for low- and moderate-income households.