



**Virtual Meeting  
Hawthorne Environmental Commission – Minutes  
February 12, 2026**

Call to Order: Rayna Laiosa, Mary Mahon, Holly Cowen, Pat MacDonnell, Rob Meier, Maureen Cook, and Mike Mariani (arrived at 7:48 pm)

Guests: Kathy B. Serafin, Mike Turco, Janet Turco, and Melissa Lambert

**Join Zoom Meeting**

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- I. Attendance and Acceptance of Meeting Hawthorne Environmental Commission – Minutes January 8, 2026
  - a. Motion by: Pat MacDonnell; 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion by: Rob Meier
  
- II. Hawthorne Planning Board – Robert Meier – Discussed the approval of Auto Repair at the former O’Brien Nissan on Lafayette and Goffle, Paul’s Volvo will be a WAWA; It was preliminary approved; Applicant must go to Passaic County for approval - road improvements. NJ DOT – ramp area, and State DEP because of Historic pipe near 208. Near flood hazard area. There will be no Signage on Route 208, no deliveries late at night, and no 24 hour of operation.
  
- III. Green Team Meeting
  - a. Community Garden – 2026 Growing Season – Rayna announced three (3) garden beds are available at Council Meeting February 4, 2026; Deadline Friday February 20, 2026;
    - i. Sent Press Release to Gazette and Tap Into Hawthorne; Posted on Facebook–

- ii. Sent email to previous 2024 garden bed applicants re: 2026 garden beds available;
      - iii. Posted – Community Garden Rules/Regulations and Garden Bed Application to Community Garden webpage
      - iv. Communicated to Returning Gardeners re: 3 garden beds available and will accept applications, hold & harmless form, and garden bed fee after the 3 new gardeners are announced
    - b. Next Green Team Meeting: Monday February 23, 2026; **Revised Date** Tuesday February 24, 2026 at 7:30 pm
- IV. Hackensack Riverkeeper – Clean Up Passaic River – Wagaraw Road, Hawthorne – Saturday March 21, 2026 – 10:00 am to 1:00 pm (rain/snow date: Saturday March 28, 2026)
- a. **Isaiah Leach M.S.** Outreach Coordinator – Hackensack Riverkeeper - Organized a volunteer river cleanup along the stretch of the Passaic River adjacent to Wagaraw Field (289 Wagaraw Rd, Hawthorne, NJ 07506). The proposed event would be approximately 3 to 5 hours in duration and would involve the deployment of up to eight (8) canoes provided by Hackensack Riverkeeper, with the option for volunteers to participate using their own kayaks or canoes. Also, there will be a cleanup in the surrounding area, Gateway to the Passaic River and Wagaraw Road Ballfield area.
- V. Native Plant – Sidewalk and Curb Area Discussion -
- a. **November 2025 Discussion** - A Hawthorne resident requested clarification on planting Native Plants between the sidewalk and the curb - grassy area. She received a warning for the plantings. Rita will take a photos and send them to Rayna for review. Rita will research for the appropriate native plants to be planted between the sidewalk and the curb.
  - b. **December 2025 Discussion** - It appears 3 neighbors are planting native plants on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. On November 14, 2025, Rita sent photos to Rayna – it appears that some of the native plants have been pruned while others just withered. Discussion -types of native plants and the appropriate height. Rita provided a list of native plants – ground cover, carexes, and grasses. Source: [https://npsnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/BBP\\_Going\\_Native\\_Northern\\_NJ\\_Edition\\_2022.pdf](https://npsnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/BBP_Going_Native_Northern_NJ_Edition_2022.pdf)
  - c. Discussed a 12 inch growth height seemed to be acceptable but it appears some of the plants may grow several feet higher. Maureen was asked to check with Nick, Lincoln Landscape, and verify actual native plants that could be suitable in this area.
  - d. **January 2026 Discussion** – International Property Maintenance Code BO444-25 Sidewalks, Curbs & Driveway Aprons: Maintenance & Repair- PM 302.4 - Weeds - Premises and exterior property shall be maintained free from weeds or plant growth in excess of 7” (seven inches). Noxious weeds shall be prohibited. Weeds shall be defined as all grasses, annual plants and vegetation, other than trees or shrubs provided; however, this term shall not include cultivated flowers and gardens. Note from Hawthorne’s Property Maintenance Department - A cultivated flower is a flower that has been improved or specially bred through cultivation. A cultivated garden is a garden where the soil has been loosened and weeded to improve the soil's structure and promote plant growth. Rayna will work with the Building department to understand PM 302.4 in the context of native plants in the sidewalk, curb, and driveway aprons.

- e. **February Discussion** – Melissa shared information on Native Plants from the Environmental Commission/Green Team -Native Plant webpage to develop a brochure. Also, prepared a document that identified ground cover plants that may be appropriate between the sidewalk and curb area. Rayna will provide our Haw Env Com/Green Team tri fold brochure as the template for the native plant brochure.
- VI. Terra Cycle -
- a. **December 2025 Discussion** - Kathy came to Rayna about cigarette butt pollution on Diamond Bridge Avenue at the recent Help the Hawthorne BEE Defeat Litter event. At the Sustainable Jersey award ceremony in November 2025, Rayna met Paula, Environmental Chair in Medford NJ. The Medford Environmental Commission worked with Terra Cycle and collected and sent cigarette materials free of charge to be recycled. Kathy will call Paula and gather information on the box size container for the cigarette materials and how Medford runs their recycling operation. Maureen suggested one box at the municipal building. Liquor stores and restaurants are being considered for next phase. Let's do an initial phase at the municipal building. Based on the Terra Cycle's website, it states that one (1) box is \$133.
  - b. January 2026 Updates - Kathy provided the following information: 1) one time purchase for the collection container, can purchase a 6 pack or 1 pack; 2) no annual fees, 3) collect the material in a plastic bag and Terra Cycle provides a free shipping label; and 4) Terra Cycle would not disclosure any participates names when requested by Hawthorne to learn from their experience. Maureen would contact Passaic County Recycling Department to find out if there are any other Passaic County towns that are working with Terra Cycle on the collection of cigarette butts.
- VII. 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Cel Earth Bration – Saturday April 18, 2026 – Hawthorne High School
- a. School Use Application submitted November 2025 – Approved in December 2025
  - b. 2026 Environmental Commission Activities Letter – Hawthorne School System – sent in February 2026
  - c. Entertainment
    - i. Snakes-N-Scales – Availability? Times – 11:00 and 12:30 pm – Maureen will contact them.
    - ii. The Illusion Maker – Leslie Fogarty – Three “R” Circus” an environmental magic show; can be funded by Clean Community Programs – Agreed that this may be better suited at the Schools
    - iii. Bat Program – The Wildlife Conservation & Educational Center – Maureen will contact them 201-257-2231 for pricing and availability for April 18, 2026 – 10:00 am
  - d. Brainstorm discussion on our theme and T-shirt design – Team Agreed – Theme - "**Protect, Restore, Thrive**" with a Recycle Symbol; Mike will work with his wife, Brenda, on the creating the design for our T-shirts – Recycle Sybmol – Green, Words in Blue – Protect, Restore, Thrive with a White T-Shirt
    - i. Hawthorne a Hidden Gem – (Meaning Inclusive of Hawthorne's Sites, Places, and Activities)
    - ii. Hawthorne Highlights – Your Favorite Highlights
    - iii. Hawthorne Love Where You Live
    - iv. What I Love About Hawthorne
    - v. Why I Love Hawthorne
    - vi. Our Hawthorne Pride
    - vii. Hawthorne Neighborhood
    - viii. Our Hawthorne Neighborhood

- ix. A Better Tomorrow For Hawthorne – recycle more, clean up litter, clean air and water, conserve water,
- x. Revitalization of downtown, maintaining “home friendly atmosphere” – city moving to country; city style – country charm; train station, shops and restaurants – Why did you move to Hawthorne?
- xi. Choosing Hawthorne’s Lifestyle; Choosing Hawthorne’s Environment
- xii. Hawthorne, Your Choice and Lifestyle
- xiii. Choosing Hawthorne’s Sustainable Environment
- xiv. Choosing Hawthorne’s Sustainable Lifestyle
- xv. Everyone contributing – small steps to big steps
- xvi. Hawthorne’s Sustainability is Healthy Living
- xvii. Hawthorne Sustainability = Healthy Living
- xviii. **Think** Globally, **Act** Locally

e. Co-Pilot Generated Themes

- 1. "Earth in Our Hands"
- 2. "Sustainable Futures"
- 3. "Nature's Call: Act Now"
- 4. "Green Living, Blue Planet"
- 5. **"Protect, Restore, Thrive"**
- 6. "From Awareness to Action"
- 7. "Innovate for the Earth"

VIII. Girl Scout – Christmas Lighting Collection – Hawthorne Recycling Center – Collected one (1) kitchen garbage bag;

IX. Hawthorne Shade Tree Commission – August 2026 Hawthorne Boro Bandshell – 8 Acre Woods – Tree Play – Rayna has been working with Diane on having a Tree play at the Bandshell since last year. The Commission will be a co-sponsor of the event.

X. Update on Issues and Commissioners Concerns: None

**Next Virtual Hawthorne Environmental Commission Meeting**  
**~~Thursday March 12, 2026 at 7:30 pm~~**

**Changed to Wednesday March 11, 2026 at 7:30 pm**