

MINUTES TENAFLY ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

January 15, 2026

In person meeting, Borough Hall.

Attendance: Olga Milanos (chair), Eve Bolkin, Julie O'Connor (Council), John Purdy, and Jon Warms (Planning Board); Jack Altman (HS liaison, representing Ben Kushman); and the following guests: Mark Ippolito (DPW, foreman of Shade Tree Division), and Linda Li, Clara Purdy, and Sue Truesdell (Green Team)

[The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.]

Statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Law.

The minutes of December 4, 2025 were accepted. Eve Bolkin to send to Omar Stovall.

DPW Update (Mark Ippolito)

Compost bin – DPW will be purchasing a new compost bin to replace the broken bin located at the Recycling Center. Julie said that Neighborhood Compost will be delivering a new lock as well.

Recycling – December 2025 costs per ton were the same as in November and are as follows:

	December
Comingled	Paid \$75/ton (48.17 tons = \$3,612.75)
Mixed Paper	Received \$11/ton (102.03 tons = \$1,122.33)
Cardboard	Received \$20/ton (3.7 tons = \$74)
Net: Town paid \$2,416.42	

While comingled costs the town money, this is still cheaper than the cost per ton for garbage collection.

Julie will include an article in the next newsletter explaining that, if residents separately bring cardboard to the Recycling Center, the town will receive more money than if they include the cardboard with the mixed paper. She will also remind them to try to reduce plastic use.

Trees –Downes Tree Service helped plant 97 trees during this past Fall planting season. Mark directed a number of trees to be planted at the back of the dog park, near where the benches overlooking Tenakill Brook are located.

As a result of the reminder in the last town newsletter, the DPW has received over 50 calls from residents requesting a free tree in the right of way on their property. Julie will include another reminder in the next newsletter. These trees are anticipated for the Spring planting season.

Mark researched the requirements for Tenafly to qualify as a Tree City, USA and the town meets all of the criteria. He will be applying for this certification after the next Arbor Day planting.

Council Update (Julie O'Connor)

Leaf Composting -

The cost of leaf composting has more than doubled and is expected to increase in the future. It cost the town approx. \$450K this past year (and not the \$200K anticipated). The town is considering various options, including potentially establishing a new compost facility which is also costly but might be cheaper in the long run. This option requires a site with more acreage than is available at the prior location Tenafly used for composting and would require ongoing compliance with numerous regulations.

Julie will include an article in the town newsletter to encourage residents to mulch or backyard compost their leaves, to reduce the volume of leaves collected. This will save the town money regardless of the future town-wide option pursued.

Tree Trust

The Council is repealing and replacing the town's tree ordinance to correct a technical issue with the Tree Trust. The updated ordinance will permit forfeited tree mitigation money (and not just donations) to be placed in the Trust. Julie and Mark will review the new proposed ordinance (which will be modeled on the NJ DEP version) to make sure it continues to include any stronger protections Tenafly's current ordinance provides. In addition, the updated ordinance will include more information about designating a tree to have landmark status. They would also like the mitigation rules to incentivize planting of more major trees rather than multiple minor ones.

The Borough Administrator, David Faslau, has advised that the town needs more tree inspectors. While no one had responded to the town's RFP seeking part-time help, we hope this will be reissued because Mark has identified some people who might be interested in applying for the position(s). Mark will discuss the reissuance of the RFP with David.

Skip-the-Stuff Ordinance

The town health inspector will be visiting Tenafly Diner to remind them to comply with the Skip-the-Stuff ordinance. This ordinance requires an eatery to provide disposable cutlery for take-out orders only if requested by the customer. Tenafly Diner workers appear to need more training in this area.

Carbon Socks for Pfister's Pond

The Council has approved \$15K from the Open Space fund to purchase carbon socks to catch some of the runoff from the fertilizer used by the golf club abutting The Nature Center. This runoff is contaminating the pond, which cost the town about \$750K to hydro rake only a few years ago. The town is pursuing steps to address this ongoing issue with the golf club.

Planning Board Update (Jon Warms):

- On January 14, the Board approved a subdivision at 52 N. Lyle.
- There has been a delay in the Starbucks approval because the applicant wishes to make changes to its design. The applicant is next scheduled to appear at the February 25 meeting.
- Note: The hardware store, Benjamin Brothers, is closing at the end of the month.

High School Green Team (Jack Altman for Ben Kushman, who could not attend):

The Green Team is collecting plastic bottle caps and will create an art project using these caps, working in partnership with the HS art classes. They will be reaching out to the Middle School Junior Key Club to participate as well. Jack asked how to contact the elementary schools to see if they would like to participate too. Julie recommended having Ms. Allen, the HS art teacher and club advisor, reach out to the elementary school art teachers directly. If additional help is needed, Jack will reach out to Julie.

As mentioned in the last EC meeting, the Green Team has been contacting nurseries in the area to see if they will donate plants for the GT to place in the front of the school, where it's currently just dirt. Mark reminded Jack to contact the nursery that the DPW typically uses; Mark had given the contact information to Ben.

The club is considering how to best utilize a composting tumbler that they have.

Julie will follow up with Jack and Ben regarding having the Hackensack Riverkeeper return to work with the Green Team for a Spring clean-up of the Tenakill Brook.

Tenaflly Nature Center Update (Olga Milanos for Deb Davidson, who could not attend)

- Reminder that promotion of the Trash-a-Thon should start. Eve asked Jack to encourage the GT to attend the event, promote the event on Tiger News, and to help put up flyers in town when they are available.
- Nature Day is June 14.
- Fireflies and Faeries is July 25.

Garden Team Update (Sue Truesdell)

The Green Team is working on the community garden. With DPW's help, they will be moving the garden to another spot to avoid the shade from one of the big trees in the current location. They are planning to mark the 10th anniversary of the garden.

The community garden is doing a project with Mackay School 4th graders. Mark agreed that the DPW (at Linda Li's request) could provide tents to block the sun on the day of the students' school trip to the garden. The children will be harvesting the garlic and potatoes they have (or will have) planted.

Miscellaneous

The cutoff for articles for the next town newsletter is January 26.

- Donna Sacks (Green Team) will remind residents that the community garden has ADA beds available at the Grove Street Park. (Deer proof cages will be purchased for the beds.)
- As mentioned above, Julie will ask residents to reduce plastic use, consider bringing cardboard separately to the Recycling Center, and to try to mulch or backyard compost their leaves. She will also remind residents that they may request a tree within their right-of-way for the Spring planting season.

For the Fall newsletter, the EC recommends including an article about sustainable options for gift wrapping.

Old Business

Michael Xin, and other members of Boy Scout Troop 86, will be building a trellis for the Rose Garden as their Eagle Scout project. (See minutes of December 4, 2025 EC meeting for details.) Mark spoke with Mike Cassidy, the prior DPW director, and Mike confirmed that no plans exist for a trellis. Accordingly, Mike Xin will look online for a design. Clara Purdy has been in contact with Mike Cassidy about the trellis design.

The meeting was adjourned at 9pm. Next meeting is February 19 at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Eve Bolkin