The Meeting commenced at 8:00 p.m.
Present were: David Scholz (Chairman), Mary Mayer, Steve Isaacson, Arthur Goldberg and, from the Historic Preservation Commission, Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg.

Old Business

Trail signage:

Steve submitted a new proposed sign which was generally approved with a few minor changes. The EC expect to purchase about 12-15 signs to mark the trails.

New Business:

David Scholz requested that any members of the Commission who were able to review the state of the woodlands in Schauble Park. The Borough received a complaint that the vines were overgrowing and destroying the wooded sections of the park. David requested that one or more members review the site and report back at the May meeting.

The Environmental Commissions budget for 2009 is $4,500.00. David Scholz noted that at a recent regional Environmental commission meeting, the subject of Commission budgets was discussed. Of the dozen towns represented, none had a comparable budget with most at ½ or less then Closter’s allowance. It was also noted that few Commissions are engaged in as many activities as is Closter Environmental Commission.

Westwood has announced that they have acquired a vehicle that can run on bio fuel, in this case, used vegetable oil. The possibility of Closter adding such a vehicle to our existing hybrid fleet was mentioned.

Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg announced that a rain garden was in the process of being constructed at her house and anyone who wished to view or learn more was invited to see it.

The film Kilowatt Ours will be shown on April 26th at 4:00PM through a joint program of the Nature Center, EC and the Belskie Museum, in conjunction with an exhibit about paintings of the Nature Center. The film will be shown at the Library Community Meeting Room, followed by a presentation/discussion about energy conservation techniques that may be adopted by families and businesses. The Commission passed a vote on paying for refreshments to serve at the opening.

Subcommittees Reports:
• Trails:
  a) Improvements to the handrails on the existing bridge and the railing going up the hill to the Mac Bain Farm from the Anderson Avenue Trail need to be done. Dave Scholz will contact Bill Dahl of the DPW to inspect the situation and make recommendations/repairs.
  b) The manure piles have been relocated to place them a greater distance from the stream.
  c) Plowing of the field in preparation of planting has been completed.
  d) Boy Scouts will be constructing board walks in three areas of wet areas in the Cross Closter Trail this spring. Materials have been purchased and delivered to the DPW.
• Mac Bain: The issue of introducing bamboo to the Mac Bain Farm was discussed. The Commission agreed that at the present time it may be to invasive a species unless evidence to the contrary is presented. John McCaffery will be invited to present a case for its entrance on the farm.
• Events/Education:
• Green Building:
• Building Plans: Plans for the renovation of Closter Plaza where presented. Because of the extensive renovation being proposed and the limited response time, it was agreed the Commission’s review and recommendations to the planning Board be noted as a first response with a follow up response being submitted at a later date. Listed are the items being submitted for the site review:
  • Variances granted at the time of initial construction are not valid justification for continuance under the massive reconstruction being reviewed today. Because they are no longer relevant, the reconfiguration of Block 1607/1 should comply with present code requirements, eradicating the harmful excesses that prompted our current codes.
  • A 1% reduction in impervious surface on a 15.24 acre parcel is not a statistically meaningful reduction. This excessive non porous surface taxes our storm water drainage infrastructure and curtails future development within our town. Compliance with green space code requirements reduces the amount of storm water that must be removed and replenishes subsurface water tables. This subsurface filtering begins the process of natural purification. Given that the rate of redevelopment for the site is 50 years, look to the projections for 100 years 24 hour rainfall depths. There is a 1 in 2 chance that this redevelopment will see that 8.4 inches of rain or higher levels and Closter will need to deal with that damage to the surrounding area and the storm water drainage system. The submitted plan will reduce the 100 year storm runoff by .17 of 1 percent according to Omland Engineering Associates, Inc. Stormwater Summary For Closter Town Square.
  • Drainage basins to feed surface water into the subsurface strata could be incorporated into the parking and pedestrian areas to provide relief on Closter’s storm water system. Areas over the collection basins in the parking and pedestrian areas could contain green areas to help meet code levels.
  • There is a dearth of green areas along Homans Avenue to the detriment of the ecology and the visual appearance of the local.
• Elimination of the pass through lane between Kmart and the former Stop and Shop will greatly increase the traffic flow on Lewis and Piermont which is ill equipped to handle this increase. The added traffic will increase the amount of idling emissions from stationary traffic.
• The issue of light pollution from raised lights and stores is not addressed. One needs only to look at the driving range in the evening to see the negative impact this can cause.
• Since the site is significantly short of required parking, 9.5% (even after the serious reduction below the code required parking space footage), we can expect increased emissions as drivers spend excessive amounts of time attempting to locate parking. Reduction of retails footprints would increase available parking footage. There is no parking space count if there is no variance given to reduce the individual parking space footprint. The 9.5% shortage would be considerably higher.
• The site lacks sufficient loading docks and unloading sites. The narrow delivery lane parallel to Homans Avenue means delivery trucks will not have access to stores when the Whole Foods bays are in use or a store is receiving merchandise. This can lead to creating blockages on Homans and excessive idling times.
• Traffic patterns on VerValen and Homans will undergo radical changes. These flows may increase the number of accidents and the ensuing contaminants released as a result. The police report should be a more substantial statement than this.
• The plans lack any area set aside for merchant recycling efforts. Smaller businesses will not have the opportunity to recycle paper and plastic goods now or in the next 50 year cycle.
• Where is the Green Component as outlined in the Boroughs Master Plan? This shopping center could be a leader and a legacy for environmental efficiency in the New York Metropolitan area. Rain gardens, green roofs, solar electric and solar hot water would work well in the open and exposed site. Yet the plans lack even modest attempts at environmental concerns.
• The Board should very seriously consider requiring that the site be Leeds certified to insure it meets currant environmental standards.
• Because of the size of this project and its’ impact on the Borough, the Borough should require Signature Properties of NJ, LLC to provide an Environmental Impact Study of this project by a firm of the Boroughs choosing.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM