Environmental Commission

August 19, 2014

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest
Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:43 pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, August 19, 2014 at Borough Hall.

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**Attendance**

*Present*
Paul MacDonald- Chairman  
Brenda Cummings- Full Member  
John Kashwick- Full Member (Council Liaison)  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2 (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)  
Sivert Hagen- Associate Member

*Absent*
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Robert Di Dio- Full Member (Planning Board Liaison)  
Keith Scholz- Full Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)  
Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
Jaewook Jun- Associate Member  
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member

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**Miscellaneous**

A motion was made by Councilman Kashwick and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to approve the minutes for the June 17, 2014 meeting with a noted correction; the motion passed by acclamation.

A motion was made by Councilman Kashwick and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to approve the minutes for the July 15, 2014 meeting with 2 noted corrections; the motion passed by acclamation.

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments.

Brian Stabile, 138 Demarest Avenue, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself as a life-long Borough resident, less time away at college. He informed he is a geologist with a Borough of Florham Park-based environmental/engineering firm which, while conducting most of its business in the Morris County area, also does business in Bergen County as well. He said his presence this evening is not to solicit but rather contribute to his community. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg offered her scrapbook of newspaper articles documenting the Borough/Commission’s past accomplishments to Mr. Stabile for viewing.

Chairman MacDonald read correspondence received by the Commission into the record, specifically, paperwork from a private environmental consulting firm (unnamed) regarding recent activity at 1 Knickerbocker Road, an abandoned service station; he said the required
barricading of the site has been removed, which indicated it could be reopened for business in the near future.

Old Business

Trails
While Mr. Isaacson was absent, Chairman MacDonald informed of a recent news article describing the Borough of Norwood’s intention to delineate trails within its Fox Hill Woods (wetlands); he hoped such would lead to a link with Closter’s. Councilman Kashwick reminded of a $24,000.00 trail grant for which specifications must soon be written for purposes of bidding. Chairman MacDonald suggested such be completed before he leaves for vacation on August 26th.

Green Team
Ms. Cummings announced that all but 2 of the Team’s high school student members, Anthony Arzenzano and Veer Shah, have graduated, and noted Mr. Jun and 3 others have left for college.

Mac Bain Farm
Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said, as per the Farm’s volunteer coordinator and former Commission member, Mary Mayer, a date for the annual Harvest Festival, customarily held in October, must be determined. She also noted that the problem of non-residents picking free produce at the Farm must be addressed. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg revealed that the Mayor’s office and John McCaffrey, the Farm’s resident and caretaker, often invite people, such as Borough employees, to pick. She suggested Mr. McCaffrey be allowed a limited number of “passes” to give to non-residents, noting a financially-strapped woman from the Borough of Bergenfield was allowed to pick at the Farm so long as she agreed to volunteer; she said the Farm volunteers recently started such an independent policy to attract more people towards Farm volunteerism. She informed that 1 volunteer resides in Norwood and puts in a tremendous amount of volunteering and is, thus, deserving of such a perk. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said during her 2 to 4 hours of weekly volunteering last year, she estimated to have witnessed a dozen or so non-residents picking. She said the Farm volunteers also believe property/business owners who do not reside with the Borough should be permitted to pick at the Farm being they pay property tax as well. Regarding the suggestion of “passes”, Chairman MacDonald reminded that the recently produced signage for the Farm’s entrance reads that picking is strictly for Borough residents. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the problem of illegal picking is compounded when the tomatoes ripen. She said the current procedure of tracking visitors is that they must sign-in before entry.

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Councilman Kashwick, to issue Mr. McCaffrey, on a trial basis, 12 single-visit Farm “passes” (to be numeric for tracking purposes) per season for distribution to those he sees fit; the motion passed by acclamation.

Ms. Cumming stated the Harvest Festival should not take place on October 18th being the Improvement Commission is holding an event that day. Chairman MacDonald inquired about the amount of pumpkins and their condition at the Farm; Councilman Kashwick stressed the Commission must not go over budget for the festivities as in years past.

The Commission agreed to have the Harvest Festival on October 25th from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.
Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported that the HPC is preparing a nomination report for Blanch Avenue; she noted whether the entire thoroughfare or only a portion thereof will be nominated has not been decided. She confirmed that Hickory Lane, in its entirety, will be nominated for historic designation.

Councilman Kashwick reminded that the subdivision proposal involving the property on which the Harold Hess Lustron House sits (421 Durie Avenue) is being presented to the Zoning Board of Adjustment on September 18th.

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Liaison Reports

Governing Body
Councilman Kashwick said the Governing Body decided that the road improvement of Hickory Lane will include both the installation of slanted Belgian block curbing, which costs roughly the same as concrete would, along with resurfacing of the roadway. He said a decision regarding sidewalk installation has yet to be made, noting that while there is no intention to remove trees, the project will undoubtedly have a negative impact on them; Mr. Stabile concurred, saying all types of curbs require a foundation of some depth. Councilman Kashwick stated the entire project is estimated to cost $700,000.00 including sidewalks, and slightly less without them.

Councilman Kashwick said he could not comment on the purportedly illegal fence installed by Temple Emanu-El of Closter (180 Piermont Road) across the paper street known as Hartford Boulevard because the Governing Body discussed the matter in closed session.

Regarding uniformity with the penalty amounts for dumping, smoking and using all-terrain vehicles within Borough parks, Councilman Kashwick said the Borough Attorney’s office confirmed the current ordinance reflects said 3 violations can result in up to a $2,000.00 penalty each. He noted the new signage to be installed throughout the Borough’s parks and playgrounds should indicate such. Councilman Kashwick revealed that he recently viewed a fresh pile of dumping at the exit of Farrell Woods behind the Closter Public Library. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg questioned the status of generating a letter to property owners about illegal dumping; she said having an article written in the Borough’s e-Newsletter (“Currently Closter”) does not suffice. Chairman MacDonald said the Commission must be provided a mailing address list of property owners to do so; Councilman Kashwick said the cost to mail all residents would be about $2,000.00. Ms. Abrams suggested using the Reverse 911 system; Ms. Cummings replied that the Green Team attempted using the telephone system to advertise the recent Earth Fair but was refused by the Police Department because it is for emergency announcements only. Mr. Stabile concurred, saying if it is used too often, the approach loses its effect during an actual emergency situation. Chairman MacDonald noted it is difficult to determine who is dumping on Borough property especially since many private properties abut public lands such as those along Haring Street; he said a new dumping area has been discovered on a lone trail by Lockwood Lane.

James Whitney, Code Enforcement Officer, 295 Closter Dock Road, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself and explained that when issuing notice of violations, he initially gives notification by placing a yellow-colored paper door hanger at the subject site, such as in the case
of lawn maintenance and snow removal; he said such method is 90% to 95% effective. He noted that if the violation is not abated, 2 to 3 letters are mailed to the property owner and/or tenant before a summons is issued to appear in Municipal Court. Mr. Stabile stressed that the use of door hangers should not be perceived by the public as harassment. Ms. Cummings said the Police Department would likely post a message on its Facebook page about illegal dumping to garner more public awareness and suggested the Borough create its own page. Councilman Kashwick confirmed security cameras have been installed at Borough playgrounds and restroom facilities to deter criminal activity. Mr. Whitney said when he was asked to investigate the illegal dumping on trails along Haring Street, he realized the Borough Code tasks the Police Department and Department of Public Works, not the Code Enforcement Bureau, with such enforcement. He mentioned that if a resident were to witness dumping in real time and notify the police, it would generate a report and forward it to the Bureau for follow-up.

Planning Board
In light of Mr. Di Dio’s absence, there was no activity to report.

New Business
Ms. Bouton-Goldberg distributed information, along with a draft of her research, on measures being taken by municipalities to control the deer population in the area. She said there is a plan being developed in the Borough of Bernardsville whereby its Green Team is hosting workshops to increase public awareness. She said she was alarmed by the number of automobile accidents involving deer, especially in Bergen County. She also revealed that they are the largest cause of accidents statewide, 2nd only to driving under the influence. Mr. Hagen said Marc Gussen, the director/naturalist of the Nature Center, offered to speak to the Commission about deer population control. Ms. Cummings said she conversed with Carol Stanko, the chief biologist heading up the white-tailed deer research study being conducted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Fish and Wildlife, noting she gives free lectures; Councilman Kashwick interjected, saying Ms. Stanko is in essence a lobbyist for hunters, noting the Division is funded by license fees paid by hunters. He suggested Ms. Cummings reach out to the Animal Protection League of New Jersey for a more balanced viewpoint on the topic. He also believed the New Jersey Audubon Society is biased since it is pro-bird and its goal is to create habitats for them, which benefits deer since the marginal environments between woods and grasslands is what they and birds are attracted to. Chairman MacDonald revealed he recently saw 2 sets of fawns together. Ms. Cummings responded such is becoming more frequent because deer now start to breed at 6 months of age having 1 offspring; however, she said subsequent breeding often results in twins or triplets. Chairman MacDonald expressed disappointment in getting no feedback from surrounding communities in response to his outreach regarding deer population control. Ms. Cummings said many municipalities must join in their efforts if change is expected countywide. Mr. Hagen said he recently spoke with a friend residing on eastern Long Island, New York, and remembered noticing the wooded areas being stripped of vegetation from 6’ high downward during his last visit. He said the local government, in response to said damage caused by the deer which includes eating tree saplings, has since installed 7’ high wire fencing to prevent deer from jumping into protected areas. Mr. Hagen said he friend saw 30 deer congregating in 1 field recently. Chairman MacDonald inquired about a single-shot method for deer contraception; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg replied she is only aware of a 2-shot method which is very expensive and ineffective. Ms. Cummings stated
conservationist hunters would volunteer but Bergen County would have to 1st ease its restrictions on hunting. Mr. Hagen said bow hunters cannot come within 150’ of a habitation; Councilman Kashwick disagreed, saying bow hunting is cruel, noting starvation is at least natural. He further commented that very little of the Borough’s open space is not within 150’ of residences. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg felt the support of the Palisades Interstate Park is needed to move forward on enacting a plan. Councilman Kashwick explained hunting is permitted in Bergen County on New Jersey-owned public land only.

Ms. Cummings said the Green Team is searching for new members with computer skills, which would assist in documenting requirements to hopefully obtain certification from the Sustainable Jersey program; she said she was hopeful that after speaking with the new principal of Tenakill Middle School, the Team could attract students to volunteer.

Ms. Cummings announced that on August 20th, free rain barrels would be distributed by United Water Co. in connection with the Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization, which would advise residents on their use.

Councilman Kashwick stated that the People’s Climate March would be held on September 21st in New York City starting at Columbus Circle to be followed by a rally ahead of an upcoming event at the United Nations the following week.

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Plan Review

Being no land use board applications were forwarded to the Commission for its consideration, plan review was not conducted.

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Adjournment

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Councilman Kashwick and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to adjourn the meeting at 8:54pm. The motion passed by acclamation.