Environmental Commission

November 18, 2014

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest
Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:38 pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at Borough Hall.

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**Oath of Office**

◊ Associate Member (1-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2014): Brian Stabile  
*Shade Tree Commission Liaison*

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**Attendance**

**Present**  
Paul MacDonald- Chairman  
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2 (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)  
Brian Stabile- Associate Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)

**Absent**  
Brenda Cummings- Full Member  
Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
John Kashwick- Full Member (Council Liaison)  
VACANT- Full Member  
Robert Di Dio- Full Member (Planning Board Liaison)  
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member  
Sivert Hagen- Associate Member

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**Miscellaneous**

The Commission postponed a vote on minutes for the October 21, 2014 meeting to the January 20, 2015 meeting due to a lack of a quorum of those Commission members present.

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments; no one wished to be heard.

Chairman MacDonald read correspondence received by the Commission into the record, specifically, from Susan Mc Tigue (81 Poplar Street) on her concern about the overpopulation of deer and the resulting destruction of understory and impact on wildlife; he said she also wrote about means of curtailing the influx of vehicular accidents caused by deer via collaborating with other municipalities and organizations.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg distributed a draft of the memo penned by she and Mr. Colwell, which discusses deer overpopulation, for the Commission's review prior to it being forwarded to the
Governing Body; she noted that Mary Mayer, volunteer at the Nature Center, also wrote a letter indicating the Center would work with other nature centers to find solutions to the deer problem and that it has already connected with Rutgers University for support in conducting the necessary forest ecology evaluations. Chairman MacDonald stressed that the elimination method (killing deer) is not the sole means of addressing the problem, noting a catch and release approach where deer are relocated to areas where hunting is permitted (such as New Jersey-owned lands) should be considered. Mr. Stabile disagreed, saying catch and release is very expensive to conduct on a per deer basis, and many populations do not accept the introduction of deer due to the potential for spread of disease and non-harmonious interaction.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Flat Rock Brook Nature Center in the City of Englewood expressed concern about the reduction of forestry and is considering the installation of deer fencing around the perimeter of its grounds; she stated there is potentially more deer in the region today than at the time of the early European settlers. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg spoke of the great strides made in controlling the Canadian goose population in recent years. Mr. Isaacson reiterated the deer problem on Fire Island, New York where he vacationed and there existed a herd of approximately 450; he said they will persist unless a hunt is authorized or a natural predator is introduced. He noted all residences on the Island are now equipped with 8’ high fences. Mr. Stabile interjected, saying he wished not to see fencing strewn throughout the Borough, a look he considered undesirable. Mr. Isaacson noted that humans have overdeveloped the deer’s habitat, thereby causing them to search for food elsewhere. Mr. Stabile said the Borough must work with other communities and put funds toward surveying that would both confirm the dissipation of forest undergrowth and the amount of deer in particular locations. Mr. Isaacson revealed he witnessed 9 turkeys near his residence, a species adverse to human interaction; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg responded that turkeys are not a culprit in the destruction of the understory. She informed that a bear was recently trapped in the Village of Ridgewood. Mr. Isaacson said Rockland County, New York had previously contemplated allowing for bow hunting to reduce its deer population; Mr. Stabile concurred, noting it opted against such following a public outcry.

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Mr. Stabile, to transmit to the Governing Body (following its Reorganization for 2015) a memo authored by her and Mr. Colwell relaying the Commission’s concerns about the deer population with 1 noted correction; the motion passed by acclamation.

Old Business

Trails
Mr. Isaacson said there was no new information to discuss being it was wintertime; he noted that although he has not decided whether to continue serving on the Commission in 2015, he would still volunteer with Mac Bain Farm and assist with the trail system. He stressed that the New York-New Jersey Conference should be on-site to discuss upgrading of the trails and how the agency could assist. With respect to the inter-borough trail system, he hoped it would ultimately span from the New York border to the Borough of Fort Lee. He said a cause for the delay has been the proposed trail running along waterways in the Borough of Demarest so to avoid the use of roadways at certain points; he said collaboration with neighboring municipalities is necessary in order to produce a regional trail map in place of a Closter-only version. Mr. Isaacson said the design of the proposed signage for the inter-borough trail system
had been provided for by a local artist, Timothy Blunk. He said the laminated face of an existing Closter trail map ground/pedestal signs located at the Closter Public Library (and to a lesser extent those posted in more shady locations at Memorial Park and the Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park) needs to be replaced as a result of exposure to direct sunlight; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that the sign located at Buzzoni Farm Park is in good condition. Mr. Isaacson said while other signage methods are available, such as engrave and fill, such would be too expensive.

Green Team
Due to Ms. Cumming’s absence, no report was given.

Dumping & Signage on Public Lands
Chairman MacDonald said being the 2014 lawn maintenance season ended, the Commission would take up the issue of illegal dumping, including grass clippings, onto Borough property in 2015. Mr. Isaacson stated local landscaper businesses should be contacted as well to hopefully get their assistance in curtailing the problem. Chairman MacDonald added that some residents are also guilty of illegal dumping, noting several points along the Borough’s trail system in Schauble Park where there are offshoots of private paths leading to houses. Mr. Stabile questioned who was responsible for fallen trees on a parcel near 383 Durie Avenue (construction site for a new 1-family house), which may have originally been situated on an adjacent lot owned by the Borough. Mr. Isaacson replied a permit for tree cutting is required and the trunks/stumps must be removed.

Speaking of 383 Durie Avenue, Mr. Isaacson revealed that the demolished house previously on-site was owned by family member(s) of Scott Garrett, the United States Representative for New Jersey’s 5th congressional district, a fact he learned via a Facebook page called “Are You From Closter?”; he explained a brother of the Congressman posted a video showing the house being built in the 1950’s. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg noted that Borough resident and artist, William Angresano (58 Susan Drive), posted paintings he made of Mac Bain Farm on said page. Mr. Isaacson suggested such Borough entities encourage artwork and photography at their locations and then a silent auction could be held to sell the pieces to raise money which could fund the Farm, Nature Center, etc. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and Mr. Isaacson said Ms. Mc Tigue and other current and former residents like Michael Rothschild, Joseph Corrado, Leslie Burnell and Donald Farrell practice photography and may be able to contribute to such an event.

Plastic & Reusable Bags
Ms. Abrams reiterated that Kmart (19 Ver Valen Street) does not recycle its plastic bags; Chairman MacDonald questioned the point of its customers returning the bags if the store does nothing with them. Mr. Stabile agreed, saying such retailers are doing a disservice because its customers who are willing to make an effort are in fact being deceived. Ms. Abrams stated Ms. Cummings confirmed that ShopRite is the only local supermarket that can substantiate its recycling program (A&P and Stop & Shop cannot). Mr. Stabile asked if the Department of Public Works (DPW) can house a container at its facility for plastic bags turned in by residents that would eventually be transferred off-site to a 3rd party for recycling; Mr. Isaacson informed that a large green barrel is already used for such at the DPW facility and is situated between 2 dumpsters that collect grass clippings. He further stated that according to its signage on-site, the DPW accepts only plastic #’s 1 and 2 of the resin identification coding system developed by the Society of the Plastics Industry (SPI). Chairman MacDonald replied the Recycling Coordinator, Carol Dacey, stated the Borough’s recycling vendor, Miele Sanitation Co., accepts plastic #’s 1 through 7; he said what resulted is the Borough giving its residents mixed messages as to whether certain
items are recyclables or trash. Mr. Isaacson believed a greater concern should be that the Borough does not accept batteries; in fact, he said the DPW tells residents to place them in their garbage. Ms. Abrams revealed she used to hand over her batteries to Bergen Community College in the Borough of Paramus, which no longer accepts them being they contain mercury; Mr. Isaacson stated the College now only accepts lithium batteries. Chairman MacDonald noted that compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs apparently have mercury in them which complicates their disposal as well; Ms. Abrams replied the College accepts CFL bulbs. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated the Borough should have clearer recycling guidelines to educate its residents; she noted stores selling CFL bulbs often accept returns needing replacement. Not taking into consideration the quality of the manufacturer, Mr. Isaacson explained the life of a CFL bulb is 20 years. Ms. Abrams opined that the Borough should reinstitute having a hard copy version of its calendar which incorporates recycling information; Mr. Isaacson replied the Borough recently ceased the production of a hard copy version to save $6,000.00 and opted for an online version only. He felt that if the Borough placed an insert into the centerfold of the calendar and sell the advertising inside to local businesses, the cost to produce the hard copy version would be paid for. Ms. Abrams questioned the possibility of printing recycling guidelines on reusable bags; Mr. Stabile responded it would be much cheaper to do so with a calendar.

Liaison Reports

Governing Body
Being Councilman Kashwick was absent, no report was given.

Planning Board
Due to Mr. Di Dio’s absence, no report was given.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)
Mr. Stabile said that other than the STC attempting to confirm pruning options before the end of the year, there were no new issues. He noted the STC is hoping to plant 40 trees along the Borough’s right-of-ways at a cost of approximately $300.00 each (totaling $12,000.00); he did not know the species being contemplated. Chairman MacDonald wished that pear and other fruit/ornamental trees would be frowned upon being they are softwood with short lifespans. Mr. Stabile stated, however, that hardwood plantings can lead to sidewalks being uplifted so species with deep root systems are preferable.

Green Team
Due to Ms. Cumming’s absence, no report was given.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)
Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the HPC continues to prepare a nomination report designating Blanch Avenue, both its improved and unimproved (paper street) sections, as historic.

New Business

2015 Meeting Schedule
Chairman MacDonald suggested that beginning in 2015 the Commission convene monthly for 1 meeting, including December, totaling 12 yearly as opposed to 11 meetings as has been the case in 2014 and years past. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg noted the Historic Preservation Commission combines its November and December meetings into 1 taking placing the 1st week of December instead of its usual 4th week of the month.

A motion was made by Mr. Stabile and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to have the Commission convene monthly for 1 meeting, including December, totaling 12 yearly beginning in 2015; the motion passed by acclamation.

Plan Review

The Commission prepared the following administrative report(s):

Planning Board
20 Arnold Avenue: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the construction of a new 1-family house. The Commission made the following comment: 1.) request to remove 39” oak should be denied.

Zoning Board of Adjustment
309 Closter Dock Road: This is an application for a Use Variance and Site Plan Approval involving the construction of a new building (containing a delicatessen). The Commission made the following comment: 1.) increase proposed rear yard setback (facing office building at 14 Ver Valen Street) to enhance visual appeal.

59 West Street, 11 & 15 Van Sciver Street: This is an application for a Use Variance and Site Plan Approval involving the construction of a new building (containing an assisted living facility). The Commission made the following comments: 1.) proposed impervious coverage should be reduced; 2.) application is deficient in that all bulk items are not indicated within Limiting Schedule; 3.) provide detail on proposed storm water management system; 4.) site would be clear-cut with no proposed tree mitigation; 5.) adjacent lot(s) owned by Borough should not be utilized for replanting by applicant (buffer deciphering between subject properties and Borough land should be provided).

Adjournment

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg felt it important that those who have not been acknowledged officially for their service to Mac Bain Farm as volunteers during 2014, such as a group of autistic students, should be via a letter of gratitude from the Commission; Chairman MacDonald promised to follow through on doing so.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said many local nature centers are promoting insect hotels commonly used in gardening; she suggested a group of volunteers, possibly Boy Scouts, build some made of recycled materials for Mac Bain Farm and Buzzoni Farm Park. She explained the structures would provide shelter (nesting) for pollinators such as solitary bees and butterflies. Ms. Abrams
said there are chemical sprays being sold by large retailers that emanate into the atmosphere and cause harm to the bee population. Mr. Isaacson said the public generally cannot decipher between different species of bees, noting there are honey bees, pollinator bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets, etc. He said that although on a warm summer day, there can be swarms of wasps surrounding garbage bin near a ball field at Memorial Park, Borough residents, and more importantly the Health Department, objects to the Commission maintaining bee hives at Buzzoni Farm Park.

Chairman MacDonald distributed a report prepared by John Mc Caffrey, resident and caretaker of Mac Bain Farm, detailing the activities on-site from August through October this year; he said the document indicated Mr. Mc Caffrey met the $2,500.00 minimum required in labor costs expended annually as per his 10-year contract with the Borough.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm. The motion passed by acclamation.