Environmental Commission

October 17, 2017
Meeting

***Notes***

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest
Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:34pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at Borough Hall.

Attendance

Present
Paul MacDonald- Chairman
Steven Isaacson- Full Member
Keren Kuperman- Full Member
David Barad, MD- Full Member/Council Liaison
Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison
Steven Lopez- Associate Member

Absent
Thomas Colwell- Full Member
VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison

Miscellaneous

The Commission postponed a vote to approve the minutes for the September 19, 2017 meeting until the November 21, 2017 meeting.

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

Old Business

Borough Hall Parking Lot Project
Councilman Barad updated the Commission on progress of the parking lot, stating portions of the curbing have already been completed; he stated the milling and repaving of the lot would occur simultaneously when the same is done for Homans Avenue before the start of winter. He said when the public bid for the now-completed repaving of Ver Valen Street occurred, the Borough was able to purchase asphalt at a reduced price. He reminded that the original proposal to install 11 new parking spaces had been withdrawn; as for removing the existing green space peninsulas, Councilman Barad informed that 1 located midway in the aisle closest to Lewis Street would be removed. Ms. Heymann expressed frustration about how she believed the Governing Body had not kept its promise to implement a
design of the parking lot which it had agreed upon during an open discussion with the public at a recent meeting. Mr. Isaacson felt curbing had been replaced which was not warranted, thus, a waste of taxpayer money. Councilman Barad said the striping of the lot would be color-coded as a means to assign parking spaces. Ms. Heymann questioned if the striping would mirror the double-line design provided in the parking lot of the redeveloped Closter Plaza shopping center, which helps drivers to center their vehicles inside the space.

**Trails**

Ms. Heymann questioned if a certain yellow trail marked on the revised trail map of the Borough is actually blue; she promised to visit the area and confirm which blaze it is.

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**Liaison Reports**

**Governing Body**

Councilman Barad said the Borough Attorney, Edward Rogan, Esq., would be contacted about amending the ambiguous sections of its contract with John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm; he said such would clarify the responsibilities of both the landlord and tenant. Ms. Heymann reiterated the residence situated at the Farm must have its roof pillars repaired before the structural stability is compromised. She noted the Commission should determine what Mac Bain Farm-related projects it envisions for next year (on-going fence maintenance, installation of irrigation system, utility meter reconfiguration, etc.) and submit its list to the Borough Administrator for the 2018 budget proposal.

Councilman Barad reminded that the Borough will convene a Joint Meeting on October 21, 2017 at which the Board, Planning Board, Governing Body, Historic Preservation Commission, Environmental Commission, Shade Tree Commission and Improvement Commission gather to discuss land use issues affecting the Borough. He said some of the topics would be the Planning Board reexamining the Master Plan in 2018, the impact of the Closter Plaza shopping center redevelopment on the downtown area and how the recent acquisition of 511 Durie Avenue (former site of Village Middle School) would impact the Borough’s pending plan for providing affordable housing as per the Supreme Court of New Jersey’s decision in March 2015 to relinquish oversight of the state’s affordable housing process from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH).

**Planning Board**

With respect to recent applications for Subdivision Approval, Ms. Heymann said the Board approved 11 Willis Drive but denied 99 Haring Street.

**Shade Tree Commission (STC)**

Councilman Barad said the Borough must try to curtail a common practice whereby contractors remove hardwood trees and mitigate with softwood species.

Ms. Heymann opined that the trees in the Borough’s right of way along High Street are in tremendous condition, however those on Buzzoni Drive, Garry Road and Susan Drive appear quite haggard due to them being planted 60 to 70 years ago and badly-pruned in recent years. She also believed new home construction that has been ongoing in the neighborhood for 20+ years contributed to their demise.

**Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)**
Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the contract between the Borough and Michael Pisano, a local painting contractor, for the latter to serve as caretaker of the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue) has been finalized. She said the Borough Administrator is following through with having the electric and water utilities restored on-site.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg asked that the nomination report designating 511 Durie Avenue as a historic landmark be forwarded to the Governing Body upon the Borough’s purchase of the site.

**Mac Bain Farm**

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stressed a storage facility, possibly a prefabricated shed, is needed on-site, noting she houses many Farm-related items at her residence. Ms. Heymann responded that there is ample space throughout the buildings of the Department of Public Works (DPW) facility on Ruckman Road. She continued saying that several Farm volunteers have tools, etc. stored at their homes.

Ms. Heymann reported the recent Harvest Festival was a major success and asked that those Commission members who purchased related supplies with their own money submit their receipts to the Borough immediately. Mr. Isaacson estimated there to have been 500 to 600 people present at the event; Ms. Heymann concurred, saying only 30 pumpkins remained out of the 300 purchased.

New Business

**Landmark Trees**

Chairman MacDonald said a complete inventory of trees designated for protection along with their location and condition is needed; to help with such, he said Paul Demarest reviewed the minutes of the Commission’s meetings he has prepared for several years and found the addresses and species which were discussed and either contemplated or approved by the Commission for landmark status and forwarded to the Governing Body for approval.

**2018 Eagle Scout Project at Mac Bain Farm**

Ms. Heymann said she along with Chairman MacDonald and Ms. Bouton-Goldberg have been collaborating with Connor Goranson, a Life Scout for Troop 63 in the Boy Scouts of America organization, on what the Farm lacks in terms of amenities. She said while he originally hoped to install an herb spiral garden at the Farm, it was decided he would construct a 10’x10’ pergola; she noted details were still being discussed.

Plan Review

**Zoning Board of Adjustment**

91 RUCKMAN ROAD: This is an application for Use Variance and Site Plan Approval involving the tenancy by a children’s indoor swimming instruction establishment within a mixed-use building. The Commission made the following comments: 1.) indicate where swimming pool water would be drained to if necessary especially given patrons are solely children (accidental defection) and who would be responsible for related water disposal; 2.) explain how drainage originating from parking lot would be handled.
Adjournment

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