



Environmental Commission

February 15, 2011

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

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Chairwoman Ravit called to order, at 8:07pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Beth Ravit, PhD- Chairwoman
- Steven Isaacson
- Brenda Cummings
- Mary Mayer
- Robert Di Dio- Planning Board Liaison
- John Kashwick- Council Liaison
- Adam Nock- Alternate #2
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Associate Member
- Jayanthi Ramaswamy- Associate Member

Absent

- Arthur Goldberg, MD
- Philip Gotthelf- Alternate #1



New Business

A motion was made by Mr. Di Dio and seconded by Ms. Mayer, to approve the minutes for the January 18, 2011 Regular Monthly Meeting; all eligible members present voted in favor.

Chairwoman Ravit indicated that, in the interest of time, the “2011 Environmental Commission Priorities- Open Discussion” portion of the evening’s agenda would be tabled until the March 15, 2011 Regular Monthly Meeting. In response, Mr. Isaacson inquired about what topics the Commission members should be prepared to have a dialogue on; Chairwoman Ravit stated the discussion should entail issues considered by both the Commission and members of the public as top priorities.

Ms. Cummings informed that there has been an assertive effort made to try and increase the membership of the “Green Team”, a body established by the Borough as part of *Sustainable Jersey*, a certification program co-sponsored by the Gerald R. Dodge Foundation (“Dodge”) that rewards those municipalities improving quality of life for its residents while controlling costs of such measures; to gain exposure, she pointed out 3 articles recently appeared in the local newspaper. She hoped such advertising would result in exceptional turnout at the body’s next meeting on February 16th. Ms. Cummings continued saying that, at the behest of the Mayor’s office, the “Green Team” filed for certification processing; she said it involves documenting the actions taken by the Borough, which, in turn, are scored using a point system ranging from 5 points to 20 points. She felt that while silver certification seemed unlikely, the body’s efforts could very well lead to it being awarded bronze certification. Chairwoman Ravit asked about the benefits of receiving certification; Ms. Cummings said the Borough would be eligible for

grants and other assistance in becoming more sustainable. Chairwoman Ravit explained that *Sustainable Jersey* originated out of Rutgers University but has since changed its affiliation to the College of New Jersey. Ms. Cummings informed that in addition to “Dodge”, the program is co-sponsored by several public and private entities; she further stated that judging is based on approximately 130 categories, among them, support of local agriculture, lowering of the carbon footprint, energy audits and collaboration with the Department of Public Works (DPW). Chairwoman Ravit asked for a summary of the last meeting convened by the “Green Team”; Ms. Cummings answered that 2 students from the middle school, John Glidden, Jr. and Bryce Zicarelli, are attempting to accomplish there what they did at the elementary school level without the benefit of the same technology being available to them. She pointed out they have their own website as well as a recycling program, both of which will go far in realizing their “green” commitment; she said she also hoped to be getting more response out of the high school student body. Ms. Cummings said Mr. Gotthelf, who she hoped would be attending the next “Green Team” meeting, had presented information on magnetic induction lighting to the Mayor’s office, which, in response, pledged to install such lighting in the Borough’s downtown area; Councilman Kashwick said he could not verify that such a commitment had been made by the Governing Body. Chairwoman Ravit believed the “Green Team” should determine which of the 130 categories could be worked on; she felt the acquisition of an *Enviroscape*, which is a watershed table-top model, could garner the Borough points towards categories pertaining to school outreach and education. Ms. Cummings stated she has already directed “Green Team” members to peruse the *Sustainable Jersey* website to determine which categories they should focus on. Ms. Mayer interjected, revealing she was recently informed by Hillside Elementary School that it is in possession of an *Enviroscape*, which has not been in use being none of its teachers are proficient with it; she noted that a Nature Center board member, Leslie Brunell, PhD, volunteered to instruct those wishing to accept training on the *Enviroscape*. With such a discovery, Ms. Mayer believed a costly expense out of the Commission’s budget could be avoided and the *Enviroscape* could be taken advantage of in terms of garnering points for *Sustainable Jersey*; she noted that the teaching tool could be stored at the Nature Center. Ms. Ramaswamy asked for Ms. Brunell’s contact information; Ms. Mayer said she would forward it to her so the logistics could be worked out.



Old Business

Ms. Mayer introduced Susan Brender, who is coordinating the Mac Bain Farm cookbook project. Ms. Brender stated the project is a work in progress going back more than 1 year; she expressed her joy in knowing the Borough is 1 of the few communities in the region blessed with a farm. She informed the concept of a cookbook came about from her wanting to share her enthusiasm about the benefits of having a farm in close proximity. She said the committee spear-heading the project, known collectively as “Friends of the Farm”, consists of 3 adults and 1 high school student; she said the committee has researched the public’s use of produce in their cooking habits, emphasizing those visitors of the Farm with different ethnic backgrounds and having knowledge of diverse cuisines. As an example, Ms. Brender said a person of Japanese descent could contribute their insight as to how a vegetable picked at the Farm becomes an ingredient in a dish that is customary with a certain festival celebrated in their culture; she said such narratives on recipes, history, etc., would be a focal point of the cookbook in showcasing the Farm as a valuable resource. Ms. Brender said the committee’s course of action has been to

utilize the Borough's middle school study body for acquiring recipes and stories from families while having the high school study body design and publish the cookbook via its art and computer design departments. She informed that, based on the opinion of an acquaintance employed as a manager at the Whole Foods Market located in the Village of Ridgewood, the cookbook project would be something the supermarket chain would want to support. She said she emphasized the need for monetary funding, the bulk of which is needed for the actual printing of the edition being the high school can only provide preliminary work on the cookbook; Ms. Brender said she has since received email from the Ridgewood store expressing its interest. She felt proceeds from the cookbook sales should be given to the Borough for, say, temporarily employing students to help out at Mac Bain Farm. She asked for the Commission's guidance on both how the financial aspect (collection/disbursement of monies) of the project should be handled and also how to promote the cookbook to generate sales. Mr. Isaacson, while he knew the Commission would gladly accept any proceeds, expressed his opposition to the cookbook project primarily due to the potential involvement of Whole Foods Market, which he believed would turn into a business deal; being in the printing field and familiar with associated costs, he felt to "sell out" the Borough's land for a few hundred dollars is not in the community's best interest. He also believed that Ms. Brender's only request of the Commission should be its blessing to use the "Mac Bain Farm" name for its project. Ms. Mayer favored the project, especially its involvement with the Borough's school system; being there is student participation, she hoped to begin production in September. She did not concur with Mr. Isaacson's sentiments regarding Whole Food Market because she saw nothing the company has to gain from the project other than the mentioning of its name at the bottom of the book cover; to avoid any potential inappropriateness, Ms. Mayer suggested the use of a local printer to underwrite the project and negate the need of Whole Foods Market altogether. Councilman Kashwick, after approving of the cookbook project, spoke of the financial measures, informing that the monies would need to be a dedicated fund but not necessarily in a dedicated bank account. Mr. Di Dio also approved of Ms. Brender's idea, along with the school system's assistance, but had reservations about Whole Food Market's participation; instead, he proposed that she determine the cost for publication and then charge for the book in advance, via pre-orders, with its delivery to follow a few weeks later (he suggested a sale price of \$5.00 if the publishing came out to \$2.00 per copy). Ms. Ramaswamy felt Ms. Brender should reach out to the Closter Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), being it always seeks "boosters" for its own publications and felt it would like to have its name mentioned in the cookbook; she also suggested the use of a free web blog online for advertising the upcoming release and its mentioning in the Borough's calendar that is dispersed to its residents. Ms. Cummings expressed her support for the project and reported positive feedback from those she has conversed with at Mac Bain Farm. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she liked the idea as well but was ambivalent about Whole Food Market's help. Chairwoman Ravit asked that Ms. Brender speak with the "Green Team" at its next meeting; with respect to concern about Whole Food Market's involvement, Chairwoman Ravit revealed that, based on her decade-long collaboration with the company on fund-raising for both the Teaneck Creek Conservancy and *Riverkeeper*, she finds it to have a very aggressive community outreach/support program. She noted that, for instance, it will dedicate a day at a store location to a particular non-profit organization, and allow it to present material to its customers as well as give the non-profit a percentage of the sales taken in that day. She also felt those high school students who need senior year service credits, and who prefer not to volunteer for outdoor activities, would be ideal for the cookbook project. Chairwoman Ravit said that proceeds from sales would be best used by funding programs that deal with how Mac Bain Farm can be used to expand the edict of the Commission. Ms. Brender agreed and said she wants the cookbook to be professional in content, appearance, touch, etc., so that revenue would continue to come in for quite some time; she pointed out that \$500.00 in

sales cannot sustain a program once it is started. She asked about the making of legal contracts with those entities to be connected to the project; Chairwoman Ravit deferred the question to both the Borough Administrator and, possibly, a subcommittee yet to be set up, that would advise on the financial elements of the project; Ms. Mayer felt 1 to 2 Commission members should be involved in Ms. Brender's own committee, merely to be kept abreast of progress and to avoid the need for "Friends of the Farm" to appear before the Commission every month with status reports; Chairwoman Ravit agreed with such an approach and hoped that Ms. Mayer and Councilman Kashwick would join said committee being they are versed in the farm and financial aspects, respectively. Chairwoman Ravit suggested the committee seek out the advice of an independent bookseller who is experienced in marketing local interest publications. Mr. Isaacson asked whether or not the Governing Body's approval should be sought for the project; Chairwoman Ravit felt that the role of Councilman Kashwick, as the Commission's Council Liaison, was sufficient enough in keeping the Governing Body up-to-date; Councilman Kashwick concurred and said the Mayor and Council would have the final approval for any financial decisions dealing with Borough-owned property, but that a full presentation before them is not necessary at this stage of the project. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated she was involved in a book project for the City of Englewood in which its library sold it and kept all of the proceeds without needing a resolution memorialized by the Governing Body. Councilman Kashwick inquired about the use of Borough imaging such as the official seal; hoping to avoid making the project more complicated than it needs to be, Ms. Mayer said if there are no legal or monetary arrangements involved, the Mayor and Council's blessing should not be needed, and the Commission would only supervise those activities dealing with education, such as speaking engagements. Chairwoman Ravit said she would contact the Borough Attorney for guidance. Ms. Ramaswamy reiterated her idea for a web blog, which could forecast how successful book sales would be, based on the blog's traffic from online visitors; Ms. Brender believed that such an advertising approach would be a big endeavor/responsibility, and so the best path for this project, is through word of mouth.

John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm, expressed his reservations about having the cookbook project exploited by Whole Foods Market; he believed the project should be put forth in a way that it highlights *Jersey Fresh*, a state-sponsored promotional program that informs consumers about agriculture; having said that, he was very much in favor of the project and requested to serve on Ms. Brender's committee along with Ms. Mayer and Councilman Kashwick. He also reminded that he does not, nor is he permitted, to sell any product out of Mac Bain Farm.

Patrick Dolan, an Eagle Scout heading the patio project at Mac Bain Farm, introduced himself. He distributed a summary of the project to the Commission members. He explained if one were to walk up the driveway and look to the left, there is a small entranceway along with a Celtic-style patio; he said construction will consist of installing a 12' x 18' area of brick pavers at the end of the existing patio, along with 2 planters. Mr. Dolan said the reasoning behind the design is to accommodate disabled visitors who would, otherwise, have difficulty with the terrain, especially during inclement weather; he said he hoped to commence work in March when the ground has thawed and finish up in 4 days. He apologized for not bringing the plan with him to the meeting; Ms. Mayer thanked Mr. Dolan for his efforts and said Mr. Mc Caffrey appreciated ways in which Mac Bain Farm can be accessed by a larger portion of the population. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg asked what species of plants would be put in the planters, hoping special attention would be made to scent and touch so to cater to children, the blind, etc.; Mr. Dolan said Mr. Mc Caffrey would handle such details.

Mr. Mc Caffrey apologized for not having a planting plan to present this evening; he noted he spent much of the past month in Florida visiting heavily-concentrated agriculture areas from which he learned a lot. He promised to provide, at the March 15, 2011 Regular Monthly Meeting, a layout of the farm and stream beds (an area of 7.5 acres) that shows existing and proposed projects on-site.

Chairwoman Ravit informed that preliminary architectural drawings of the new barn, to be built at Mac Bain Farm, were received earlier in the day. Ms. Mayer said Douglas Radick, RA, has designed a 25' x 35', 1 1/2 story structure. Chairwoman Ravit thought the barn's size was to be 35' x 40'; she said Mr. Radick does not want to either under- or over-build it and, therefore, has asked to be provided with the sizes of equipment, appurtenances, etc., to be stored in the barn. Mr. Mc Caffrey compared his own barn sketch to that of the architect's; he said his version has 2 doors, a single-opening which serves as a drive-thru from 1 side of the barn to another and a double-opening having 1 window. He said his sketch includes an eyebrow, an architectural detail that is essentially another shed roof approximately 1' below the main roof line, which comes out roughly 8' for the entire length of the barn; he said it also has 1 stanchion post on either end of the barn. Because of the land's pitch, he noted his plan has the drive-thru door located at the higher side of the barn so not as much fill would be needed going into the fence line. Ms. Mayer said the architectural drawings are a slanted/open design, whereby the barn could serve as both an indoor and outdoor classroom; she mentioned there is to be 1 bathroom as well. Mr. Mc Caffrey revealed that the utilities (sewer, water, electric) are existing by way of a single trench, which allows for the lines to be run from the residence on-site to the barn. Ms. Mayer noted that the front opening has a pocket-style door. Chairwoman Ravit reiterated that the architectural drawings are only in the beginning stages, with a site plan still needed to determine whether or not any variances must be obtained; she noted 3 "green" elements that Mr. Radick, with the Commission's guidance, should try to incorporate into the design: 1.) installation of rain garden, rather than seepage pits, to provide zero increase in storm water runoff; 2.) installation of composting (waterless) toilet; 3.) installation of solar panels on roof. Chairwoman Ravit said that to better educate the architect and those officials who are to review/inspect the project, the Commission should produce/provide them a manual detailing "green" construction. Mr. Isaacson asked about obtaining Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for the barn; Chairwoman Ravit felt that would be too tall of an order, but thought the project could acquire some points for *Sustainable Jersey*. Returning to the "green" elements for the barn, she said their inclusion could showcase that both solar panel installation has become far less costly and the potential for unused electricity, generated for the barn, to be returned to the power grid to off-set the residence's utility bill, is a real possibility. Mr. Mc Caffrey said he was recently at a New Jersey Farm Bureau symposium, which dealt with eligibility for earmarks towards wind, solar and geothermal power. He mentioned he owns a farm in western New Jersey, which qualified for such earmarks; he noted that 3 of the 7 barns on said farm, some of which date back to 1890, have drive-thru doors. Ms. Mayer said the architect should consider increasing the size of the large door, to enable a truck to drive in far enough to allow for entry room and maneuvering of a smaller vehicle, such as a lawn mower. Mr. Mc Caffrey assured that he would forward his equipment's measurements to Mr. Radick; he said a 10' door height should be sufficient.

Mr. Mc Caffrey wished to review a few outstanding invoices. He explained 1 bill (Northern Electric Co.) stemmed from an emergency repair to the electrical service for the residence, which was torn off the house by a neighbor's storm-damaged tree; he said 1/2 of the electric panel short-circuited, resulting in a fire hazard. He said the electrician ran new cable to the pole, followed by the utility company, Rockland Electric Co. setting a new pole. Ms. Mayer was not

sure if the Commission could put an 11 month-old bill through the Borough's insurance policy; Mr. Mc Caffrey said the bill was not submitted immediately following the March 2010 storm because he was not sure if payment could come through the neighbor's homeowner's insurance. He also stated the damage was documented by pictures and a permit was obtained from the Building Department. Councilman Kashwick explained that, where a damaged tree lands, determines whose insurance would be used. Mr. Mc Caffrey stated a 2nd bill, regarding Robert Francavilla, has been paid and that he would submit documentation at the March 15, 2011 Regular Monthly Meeting.

Ms. Brender said her committee would be submitting a written proposal to the Commission being several issues arose from her appearance this evening. Ms. Mayer informed that the committee's name, "Friends of the Farm", must be changed to "Friends of Mac Bain Farm" since there is a corporate entity known as "The Farm" located at 515 Piermont Road; Ms. Bender agreed to do so.

Mr. Nock said the Commission had previously discussed how to improve Shauble Park; he suggested contracting the DPW to curtail the overgrown vines by means of chainsaw cutting several times over the course of the year (the cheapest solution); Ms. Mayer suggested those students needing senior year service credits could possibly do the improvements at Shauble Park under the supervision of Paul and Janet Mac Donald, who would volunteer this year only under certain conditions. Mr. Nock believed the vines, which are roughly 5" in diameter, are, in fact, fox grapes, not poison ivy; he felt the DPW should probably do the initial trimming and the students could mark the subject trees beforehand as well as manage the subsequent cuttings. Chairwoman Ravit said she would get him the contact information of the DPW Superintendent. Ms. Mayer stated the Mac Donalds will be vacationing and, therefore, supervision of the students would be needed for the 1st 2 days (May 16th and 17th) of the 5 to 6 week senior year service program; Chairwoman Ravit said she could possibly cover those days for them. Ms. Mayer continued saying the Mac Donalds expressed having prior difficulty with the students working multiple sites; she said it would be best to have them focus their efforts on Shauble Park and that any extra free time be dedicated at Mac Bain Farm. Chairwoman Ravit agreed and instructed Mr. Nock to inform the Mac Donalds of the itinerary for Shauble Park this year (vine trimming and trail re-blazing) so the students could be up and running on their 1st day. Councilman Kashwick said there is 1 particular trail (Bergenline Avenue) that is so wide open that it resembles an expressway; he felt it should be closed up to halt the erosion running through it. Ms. Mayer thought French drains and railroad ties could be set up to stop the erosion; Councilman Kashwick said he was thinking more along the lines of putting branches there, letting nature take its course and relocating that trail. Ms. Mayer responded that trail is a main walking access from the lower level up to the ball field and while it could be worked on, it should not be eliminated altogether; she said the site would be evaluated once the winter has passed. Councilman Kashwick wished to have said trail form an "L" shape around both the ball field and wooded area, and connect it up to Pearle Road. Chairwoman Ravit added that she would like Mr. Nock and the DPW Superintendent to work together on how to get trail markings on curbs, at street crossings and other urban connectors to optimize safety.

Mr. Nock revealed that there is supposedly a completed and paid-for sign which is "sitting around" but ought to be at a trail entrance by Temple Emanu-el (180 Piermont Road); Chairwoman Ravit countered that marking additional trail entrances is not a top priority for the Commission at this time. Ms. Mayer agreed, saying once the sign is installed, the trail line must be maintained and the Commission does not currently have such capability.

Chairwoman Ravit announced that United Water's legal department has resolved its issues with the Borough's trail and, therefore, the utility company decided that from April 1st through November 30th, its gate would remain unlocked; she added that logs are in place for the Eagle Scouts to build a bridge across the creek. She summated that started early spring, a new trail section would be open and the Commission can propose to United Water that it agrees to blaze/maintain it as well as install benches; she instructed Mr. Nock and Mr. Isaacson to reach out to Raymond Cywinski, the Borough's Certified Tree Expert who is employed by United Water, on how to proceed.

Chairwoman Ravit reported that a woman, who last month complained about unleashed dogs, has been satisfied with the Borough's response; she said, in the future, the Commission may wish to revisit the idea of opening a dog run in 1 of the Borough's passive parks. Ms. Mayer asked how the dog complaint was abated; Chairwoman Ravit answered the Police Department reiterated the relevant ordinance to the pet owners involved.

Ms. Mayer informed that the fencing project at Mac Bain Farm has been completed and believed a check has been issued to the vendor; Chairwoman Ravit said she would ask the Borough Administrator for payment confirmation.



Plans

The Commission prepared the following administrative reports:

Planning Board

◇ 204 High Street: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval, whereby the applicant wishes to construct a new single-family house; no variances are required.

Chairwoman Ravit said the existing house, built around 1910, is to be demolished; she revealed she, at 1 time, resided near the subject property. The Commission had no comments at this time.



Other

Chairwoman Ravit informed that the Township of Montclair's Environmental Commission routinely recommends in its administrative reports to the land use boards that any applications proposing seepage pits for storm water management be replaced with rain gardens; Ms. Mayer asked what is the difference in land consumed between the 2 approaches. Chairwoman Ravit said each site is different and that the rain garden's size depends on topography and the amount of impervious coverage it is to treat. She said engineers tend to chose seepage pits more often because the holding tank goes into the ground, becoming "out of sight, out of mind" until sediment build-up needs to be cleaned out. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg believed a Borough ordinance addresses the issue and said she and Ms. Mayer viewed a rain garden located near the Borough's library; Chairwoman Ravit stated both the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Department of Community Affairs (NJCA) sanction rain gardens as a technique; she said the trick is to encourage engineers to use it. She said the result would be tree

preservation and having vegetated areas year-round, with flowering during the warmer months. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the rain garden at her residence has the roof's gutters routed to it; Chairwoman Ravit added seepage pits may be easy, but it is not the best alternative, comparing it to septic for storm water (percolation into the water table). She felt the barn project at Mac Bain Farm could highlight such a technique as well; she believed she could convince a few engineers at Rutgers University to be part of a rain garden installation for the barn at no cost.

Ms. Mayer said she would handle the solar unit aspect for the barn project since such is being considered for the Nature Center.

Councilman Kashwick, regarding to Mr. Mc Caffrey's wish to have an artistic spread on 1 side of Mac Bain Farm, said such funding could not come from the Shade Tree Commission, which has a set budget; rather it would be considered open space, and thus, he said he could make an addendum requesting monies, during the Finance Committee's next meeting, for trees at Mac Bain Farm. Ms. Mayer said the issue could come up next month when Mr. Mc Caffrey returns to the Commission with his schematic, and figures for border plantings and species could be determined and submitted as part of next year's open space request.

Chairwoman Ravit expressed her wish to keep Mac Bain Farm as a farm rather than it having landscape features and horticulture; she disagreed with Mr. Mc Caffrey's vision of more garden club-type initiatives and suggested giving him parameters to work within. Councilman Kashwick cited *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan, saying the book spoke of a balance between woodlands and farms; Ms. Mayer spoke of concern she had about not keeping a woodland in the area of Mac Bain Farm along the steep hillside because of the location's temperature and water retention. She further stated that a garden club that cannot be sustained by 1 caretaker should not be organized in the first place; Chairwoman Ravit concurred, saying New Jersey is losing its farmland and that there is a long-term benefit to preserving Mac Bain Farm as it is.

With respect to the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions' (ANJEC) Smart Planning Growth grant, Chairwoman Ravit inquired if a letter of support was needed from the Commission in time for the March 30th deadline. Councilman Kashwick answered that such was going through the Planning Board; she asked that the Commission be provided with a copy of said grant before it pens the letter.

Ms. Cummings said there is a child-friendly, environmental summit being held in Clarkstown, New York, on March 6th, which will include lectures and youth seminars.

Chairman Ravit said an associate of hers, who is a climate change expert, will be giving a lecture in the Township of Teaneck on February 28th.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that the Borough of Westwood shows environmental documentary films at its library on weekends; Ms. Cummings added the current series deals with water issues and she hoped the "Green Team" could organize its own film series at either the library or Nature Center.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Di Dio and seconded by Councilman Kashwick, to adjourn the meeting; all those present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 10:11pm.