



# **Environmental Commission**

September 18, 2012

*(Minutes)*

Prepared by:

**Paul Demarest**

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 8:05pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, September 18, 2012 at Borough Hall.

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## **Attendance**

### **Present**

Paul MacDonald- Chairman  
Steven Isaacson  
Brenda Cummings  
Keith Scholz- Shade Tree Commission Liaison  
Robert Di Dio- Planning Board Liaison  
John Kashwick- Council Liaison  
Mary Mayer- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Associate Member/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison  
Jaewook Jun- Associate Member

### **Absent**

VACANT- Full Member  
VACANT- Alternate #2  
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member

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## **Miscellaneous**

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Mayer, to approve the minutes for the August 21, 2012 meeting with a noted correction; the motion passed by acclamation, less the abstaining Mr. Di Dio.

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

Chairman MacDonald read into the record correspondence received by the Commission, specifically, a letter dated August 2012 from John Mc Caffrey, resident and caretaker of Mac Bain Farm to the Borough Administrator, Richard Sheola, discussing reimbursement for monies laid out towards storm damage repairs on-site.

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## **Old Business**

### **Trails**

Mr. Isaacson said he awaiting a response from Andrew Baron, a Board of Health member, with respect to intended repairs to several single-lane boardwalks throughout the Borough's trail

system, the design of which he was a proponent. He reported that Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW), William Dahle, indicated he does not know the

whereabouts of extra lumber supposedly stored at the DPW facility subsequent to boardwalks being installed by Eagle Scout volunteers. Chairman MacDonald stated the unused lumber could have been utilized for repairs at Mac Bain Farm 2 years ago. Ms. Mayer responded that the wood for said repairs originated from the Nature Center, not the DPW facility, and informed that the surplus lumber was not of the best quality; she reiterated that she last saw the surplus in the rear section of the DPW facility where grass clippings are dumped. Chairman MacDonald questioned from where the lumber was acquired; Ms. Mayer replied the black locust was purchased through the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, specifically Edward Walsh, whose own organization (Tahawus Trails, LLC) performed the contract work at the Center on behalf of the Conference. She explained that the Center's boardwalks consist of cross pieces (below the boards) made up of compressed plastic and wood chips known as *Trex*.

Chairman MacDonald reported witnessing several inches of water cascading onto the road bridge of High Street and concluded its cause could be from fallen tree limbs clogging the waterway below.

Mr. Isaacson stated he would soon be contacting the Conference and relevant municipalities to continue the dialogue on the inter-borough trail system.

Ms. Mayer stated that when the Nature Center installed the "Cross Closter Trail", large blue diamond markers were used to differentiate it from the Center's own trail markings (which are also blue); she said it has been decided that said blue markers will be removed for the time being to lessen confusion (cited by both visitors and the Conference) until a standard logo is established for the future inter-borough trail system, which may include the "Cross Closter Trail". Mr. Isaacson said painted labels that adhere to the plastic of the markers could be used temporarily; he reiterated that collaboration is needed where trails overlap into more than 1 municipality, noting there are several trails behind the supermarket, *A&P* (400 Demarest Avenue). He said the Borough of Demarest uses red and white markers for its trails and there are a plethora of trees with several markers leading to confusion. Chairman MacDonald reminded that the new trails in Schauble Park and Mollicone Park, created by volunteers from the senior student service program, require blazing to replace the pink construction tape currently in place. Ms. Mayer explained that 3 colors are utilized for blazing throughout the Borough (blue/white/yellow); she believed trees ought to be marked with something attached to them rather than paint because, in the event of blow downs, attached blazing can be easily relocated. Mr. Scholz reminded that marking a tree with an "X" is interpreted by the Shade Tree Commission (STC) as it being slated for removal.

#### *Farm Festival*

Mr. Isaacson reported that Ms. Mayer requested the event's hours at Mac Bain Farm be changed from 4:00pm - 6:00pm to 3:00pm - 5:00pm on October 27<sup>th</sup>, with October 28<sup>th</sup> being the rain date; Ms. Mayer cited her reasoning as being the colder weather conditions later in the day. Ms. Cummings stated she has not had responses from residents asked to provide music during the Festival. Ms. Mayer indicated Michael Pisano (44 Columbus Avenue) showed interest in playing an instrument. Mr. Jun informed that although some of his high school classmates are musicians, their genre is not country or folk. Ms. Cummings revealed she plays the ukulele, but felt it would not produce enough sound for such an event; she suggested a minimum of 1 to 2 guitarists be retained. She questioned how Steven Kelman, a former staff writer for a local

publication and musician, could be contacted; Ms. Mayer replied he will be performing at the Closter Public Library in the near future and Mr. Isaacson said Angelina's Gifts & Goodies (225 Closter Dock Road) is a regular gig for he and his band.

Mr. Isaacson said the language of the post cards he will produce for advertising the Festival will be have the following changes as per Ms. Mayer: 1.) replace "evening" with "afternoon"; 2.) delete "flashlights"; 3.) replace "and other activities" with "music and storytelling". Mr. Isaacson said of the 1,000 copies he makes, 600 would be distributed throughout the local school system. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg asked if there would be volunteers to assist in activities such as pumpkin painting; the Commission replied it would reach out to the public. Mr. Isaacson informed this year is the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, which has always been successful including last year's when there was a freak snowstorm the day of.

Ms. Mayer said Mr. Mc Caffrey informed that the remaining pumpkins at the Farm are reserved for groups of students in the coming weeks, but he would attempt to locate others elsewhere. She stated she would contact D'Amico's Flower Farm (460 Demarest Avenue) to ask if it would provide pumpkins to the Commission at cost, noting it will be the major expense of the event (approximately \$300.00 for 2 bins containing 100 pumpkins in each). She reminded that last year's supply came from The Farm in Closter (515 Piermont Road). Mr. Isaacson reported that both pumpkins and apple juice are supposedly quite expensive this season. Ms. Mayer stated advertising within schools outside the Borough was purposely avoided in order to keep the event for Closter residents only; Mr. Isaacson reminded that the Farm, while utilized as such, is actually a park and, therefore, available to all Bergen County residents.

#### Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Mayer said Mr. Mc Caffrey recently returned from a month-long vacation throughout the western portion of the United States. She reported the Farm is operating reasonably well with the current number of volunteers, of which more are needed; she commended Ms. Bouton-Goldberg for her efforts. Ms. Mayer believed the Farm to be quite mellow this season in that there have been less instances of crop over-picking by the public. She noted that weeding is still a matter of concern. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reiterated that visitors continue to inquire about a water source on-site to wash up after picking; Ms. Mayer responded she has been discussing such with Mr. Sheola, and there is intent to have Mr. Mc Caffrey supply a diagram of what irrigation system is best for the Farm. She said the bidding process would then follow (noting Mr. Mc Caffrey could be a bidder) along with the logistics of connecting to the water utility service at Hickory Lane; Mr. Di Dio remembered a prior Borough attempt, several years ago to have such a hook-up, as being quite expensive. Ms. Mayer believed gas and either water or sewer connections already exist between the Farm and Hickory Lane and she hoped such a project would be funded through open space monies; Councilman Kashwick said he would research if there is any surplus remaining in this year's budget. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated that, at a minimum, a spicket is necessary to negate having to stretch a hose from the water well intended for Mr. Mc Caffrey's residence only; Ms. Mayer said there is concern, especially with the recent dry weather, that the well can be compromised.

Ms. Cummings inquired about the status of the Farm's barn proposal. Ms. Mayer replied there is no update and noted the Commission's former chairwoman, Elizabeth Ravit, PhD, was spearheading the project; she stated, however, the estimates for the original design proved to be too costly. She reminded that the barn was to be approximately 20'x40' in area with the following green building features: 1.) roof solar panels; 2.) compost (waterless) toilet; 3.) rain

garden; 4.) green roof. She felt the irrigation system is a more pressing issue, especially since the farm equipment has been stored outdoors for the past dozen years.

#### Landmark Trees

Chairman MacDonald indicated there are no new matters to discuss.

#### Nature Center

Ms. Mayer said the pond at the Nature Center has refilled 2', with 4' of depth still remaining; she reported that there was a dedication held recently and both Bergen County Executive Kathleen Donovan and the head of the County's Mosquito Control Program, Peter Pluchino, were present. Ms. Mayer commended both the Program and the DPW, agencies both critical in funding and implementing the dredging project. She said the slopes of the pond's walls will take time to settle and reported that the crayfish, turtles and frogs have returned. She said she would contact Mr. Pluchino about obtaining mosquito larvae-eating fish (such as gambusia and silver shiners).

#### 119 Hickory Lane

Mr. Isaacson said a that a conservation plan for the future Metropolitan Farm has yet to be filed with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and/or the Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB); he said apparently, until such time, a decision on the pending appeal before the Superior Court of New Jersey- Bergen County Chancery Division, which was filed by several residents in the vicinity, would be delayed. Mr. Isaacson said it is rumored the principal owner of the Farm, Frank Vastano, may put the property up for sale.

#### Sustainable Closter Initiative

Mr. Jun stated the settings of the Green Team's website have been corrected as requested by Chairman MacDonald. Speaking of the Borough's website, Ms. Mayer said the information listed about the Farm is inaccurate and she would submit a draft of corrections for the Commission to review before it is posted online.

#### Vehicle Idling Enforcement

Chairman MacDonald said he witnessed several vehicles idling at Closter Plaza over the course of several days in connection with the cast and crew of "The Wolf of Wall Street", a motion picture shooting on location in the Borough. Councilman Kashwick noted that the film's star, Leonardo Di Caprio, is known to be an environmental activist.

Ms. Cummings stated the Police Department distributed a "mild" notice to the local school system with respect to parents waiting in idling vehicles until their children are dismissed. Councilman Kashwick said the notice mentioned enforcement would commence in October; he hoped the Chief of Police, Dennis Kaine, would occasionally utilize wheeled electronic signs to make the public aware of pollution and fuel waste. Ms. Cummings said she would contact Chief Kaine to reinforce the Commission and Green Team's commitment to such an issue. Chairman MacDonald felt the relevant ordinance should have been cited on the notice.

#### Bicycle Racks

Mr. Scholz said the 1 rack supposedly installed by the DPW (possibly at Pfeiffer Park) has yet to be located.

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## **Liaison Reports**

### **Green Team**

Mr. Jun said an email was received from Shiran Slutzky (5 Flamm Brook Road) suggesting the Borough provide for more frequent collection of residents' recyclables. Councilman Kashwick

stated the current schedule is for plastics and cardboard to be collected every 2 weeks and month respectively. He informed that the Borough has gone out to bid for changing said schedule, noting there are several variations being contemplated. Mr. Isaacson revealed that an unnamed DPW source said that because the Borough is collecting more recyclables than garbage, weekly collections were warranted. Mr. MacDonald said he knows of municipalities that collect garbage twice per week during the summer (due to concerns with decomposition and odors) and weekly for the remainder of the year. Ultimately, Ms. Cummings said she would forward Ms. Slutzky's inquiry to Mr. Sheola; Ms. Mayer interjected, saying, rather than deferring, the Green Team should response to the resident directly to promote its standing within the Borough.

### **Governing Body**

Councilman Kashwick stated the Governing Body voted in favor to both allocate \$6,000.00 for the acquisition of the defunct Closter Swim Club and an additional \$49,000.00 to assess contamination on-site; as per Mr. Di Dio, he clarified the Mayor and Council's voting: 1.) FOR: John Glidden/David Barad/Alissa Latner/Sophie Heymann; 2.) AGAINST: Arthur Dolson/Victoria Amitai/John Kashwick.

Councilman Kashwick informed the Governing Body is considering an ordinance to ban smoking in all public parks, noting the Borough of Paramus has adopted such a measure to curtail health risks over secondhand smoke; he pointed out that littering and ingestion of such by wildlife are also concerns. Ms. Cummings believed such to be a petty issue and that a far more appropriate action would be to make plastic bags and bottles illegal within public parks. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg revealed that shoppers at the Borough's A&P supermarket are far more likely to be found using their own mesh bags instead of plastic than those frequenting the ShopRite in either the Borough of Northvale or City of Englewood.

Councilman Kashwick said the Mayor and Council have authorized a notation to be placed in Chapter 183 of the Borough Code (Vehicles & Traffic) to cross-reference Chapter 142 (Parks & Playgrounds) with respect to the prohibition of motorized vehicles in open spaces; Ms. Mayer believed an exception should be made for Borough equipment necessary to maintain certain public lands. Councilman Kashwick replied such an indication was not possible at this time since there is no change being proposed to the actual wording of the ordinance.

### **Planning Board**

Mr. Di Dio stated there have been no new cases filed with the Planning Board.

### **Shade Tree Commission (STC)**

Mr. Scholz stated there were no developments to report on STC activities.

### **Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)**

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated she has yet to inspect Buzzoni Farm Park because she waiting on a response from Dr. Goldberg. She informed that the HPC has rejected the initial proposal for the

reconstruction of a dilapidated chicken coop at 119 Hickory Lane and is awaiting revisions; she noted the re-pointing of the stone facades on-site has been completed.

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### **New Business**

The Commission discussed no new matters.

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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. Mayer, to adjourn the meeting at 9:01pm. The motion passed by acclamation.