



# **Environmental Commission**

December 20, 2016

*(Minutes)*

Prepared by:

**Paul Demarest**

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:31pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, December 20, 2016 at Borough Hall.



## **Attendance**

### Present

Paul MacDonald- Full Member  
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
Sivert Hagen- Full Member  
Brian Stabile- Full Member/Council Liaison  
Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison  
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member

### Absent

VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison



## **Miscellaneous**

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Hagen, to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (5-0-0):

**YES-** Bouton-Goldberg/Abrams/Hagen/Isaacson/MacDonald;

**NO-** n/a;

**ABSTAIN-** n/a;

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Hagen, to approve the minutes for the June 21, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (7-0-0):

**YES-** Goldberg/Bouton-Goldberg/Heymann/Hagen/Colwell/Isaacson/MacDonald;

**NO-** n/a;

**ABSTAIN-** n/a;

A motion was made by Mr. Colwell and seconded by Ms. Abrams, to approve the minutes for the August 16, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (7-0-0):

**YES-** Bouton-Goldberg/Abrams/Heymann/Hagen/Colwell/Isaacson/MacDonald;

**NO-** n/a;

**ABSTAIN-** n/a;

**LATE ARRIVAL-** Stabile;

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Mr. Colwell, to approve the minutes for the September 20, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (6-0-0):

**YES-** Bouton-Goldberg/Heymann/Hagen/Colwell/Isaacson/MacDonald;

**NO-** n/a;

**ABSTAIN-** n/a;  
**LATE ARRIVAL-** Stabile;

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to approve the minutes for the October 18, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (5-0-0):

**YES-** Bouton-Goldberg/Abrams/Hagen/Isaacson/MacDonald;  
**NO-** n/a;  
**ABSTAIN-** n/a;  
**LATE ARRIVAL-** Stabile;

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Ms. Heymann, to approve the minutes for the November 15, 2016 meeting with a noted correction. The motion passed (6-0-0):

**YES-** Bouton-Goldberg/Abrams/Heymann/Hagen/Isaacson/MacDonald;  
**NO-** n/a;  
**ABSTAIN-** n/a;  
**LATE ARRIVAL-** Stabile;

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

Keren Kuperman-Nahum, 55 Walker Avenue, Closter, New Jersey, introduced herself. Chairman MacDonald informed her that he recommended to the Mayor's office that she be appointed to the Commission; Ms. Heymann noted she had previously suggested that a resident who had also attended several Commission meetings in the recent past, Steven Lopez (89 Union Street) employed with SolarCity, a leading solar utility provider in the United States, be considered for appointment as well. To create a 2<sup>nd</sup> vacancy along with Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg offered to resign her position as Alternate #2 and become a non-voting Associate Member so long as she could retain her status as Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Liaison.



## **Old Business**

### **Trails**

Ms. Heymann stated Kevin Riley continued to make progress on trail improvements related to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014; she commended Mr. Isaacson's efforts in updating existing trail maps, which have enhanced Mr. Riley's output. Mr. Isaacson stated Timothy Blunk, a graphic artist who previously prepared prior trail maps for Closter, was recently chosen to create the artwork for an updated trail map; Ms. Heymann revealed he would be paid \$1,000.00 to prepare a map containing illustrations giving an overall view of the entire trail system with a more detailed close-up of 3 tentatively selected trailheads located in its northeast region (Nature Center/Buzzoni Farm Park/Mac Bain Farm), southeast region (Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park/areas adjacent to and including Demarest's trails) and western region (Mollicone Park/Schauble Park). She continued to explain that once Mr. Blunk completed his task, Fossil Industries, Inc. will manufacture replacements for the existing weather-beaten signage situated upon pedestals and possibly install signs at new locations. She said the sign-related issues would be paid for by the remaining funds of said \$30,000.00 grant. She said the belief was the grant would only go as far as paying for trail upgrades at Olaf &

Ingeborg Hagen Park; however, she said that amount allowed improvements in Mollicone Park, Schauble Park as well as Buzzoni Farm Park and the nearby conversation easement. Ms. Heymann informed that the grant deadline cannot be extended further, noting it was to expire a year ago. In response to Dr. Goldberg, Mr. Isaacson promised the Commission would be able to review Mr. Blunk's artwork prior to the signs being manufactured. Ms. Heymann cautioned the grant deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup> and an invoice from the sign vendor must be submitted in the form of a purchase order by the Finance Office in order to retain the grant. Mr. Isaacson explained the original trail maps were designed a decade ago and Mr. Riley expanded upon them via the Global Positioning System (GPS). Ms. Heymann said, of the \$30,000.00 grant, \$6,000.00 was matched by the Borough through volunteer work as determined by Chairman MacDonald, Mr. Isaacson and herself. She said the \$24,000.00 awarded to Closter paid for Mr. Riley's services and material (including signs); she clarified there would likely be no funds remaining to repair the pedestals themselves. Mr. Isaacson hoped Mr. Blunk's artwork would be completed prior to the Commission's January 17, 2017 meeting.

#### Mac Bain Farm

Following inspection of fencing on-site with Farm volunteers Gay and Mary Mayer (12 Mc Cain Court), John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm and Dimick Fence Co., Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the latter submitted thorough specifications to the Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, as well as an estimate of \$5,700.00; she explained the price included a new double-gate by the Farm's orchards, a new front gate for the residence on-site, new posts at the southwestern corner of the Farm, new 8' high fencing at its north side and reinforcing of the bottom of certain sections. In response to Mr. Isaacson questioning the need for additional monies towards fencing rehabilitation now totally \$20,000.00, Councilman Stabile responded the initial fence work earlier in the year cost roughly \$4,900.00 only; Ms. Heymann concurred, saying the fence project was 2-phased to avoid the \$6,000.00 threshold requiring public bidding. Mr. Isaacson stressed that the Farm is actually a Borough park and the Commission can advise on such, but the Governing Body should be handling such matters. Chairman MacDonald said he and Mr. Dolson agreed that Mr. Mc Caffrey should deal directly with the Borough Administrator regarding Farm matters.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Ms. Heymann recently discussed the Farm's finances with Mr. Dolson and Mr. Mc Caffrey spoke with him regarding the residence's gutters which are in need of repair. She expressed frustration that Mr. Mc Caffrey had yet to supply her with his design for the proposed irrigation system on-site. As per Mr. Dolson, Ms. Heymann explained the Farm's budget will be maintained separately from the Commission's and derive from open space funds in part. She expressed optimism that an irrigation system would be paid for by the Borough. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Mr. Dolson visited the Farm recently and he was made aware that the HPC is finalizing its nomination report to designate the site as a historic landmark, thereby, availing itself to possible grants in the future.

#### 2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Mr. Isaacson said the organizing subcommittee has met 4 to 5 times thus far, but the participation by the Borough has been abysmal, noting few residents have been in attendance despite Closter being the host municipality; he stated its next meeting is January 12<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Citizens' Center and it is likely the subcommittee would subsequently meet bi-monthly until the event.

He said he was researching how the Fair could become a corporation having its own federal employment identification number and be considered a tax-exempt 501(c) organization, though

all government protections would then be forfeited. He noted that other Boroughs that have hosted the Fair in years past were far more casual in its overall regulation and management of monies. Ms. Heymann interjected, saying if the organization hosting the event is not a Borough entity, it would not be covered under Closter's insurance policy, and to attain its own would be extremely costly, if not impossible. Mr. Isaacson said each vendor is being required by Closter to add it as additionally-insured on their policies, which will surely reduce the number participating in the Fair. Ms. Heymann believed that even if the entity were private, the Borough has a right to require such because the event is being held on Closter grounds. Chairman MacDonald revealed that come January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Borough would have access to approximately \$9,000.00 in seed money collected from prior Fairs. Mr. Isaacson commended the volunteers from other municipalities for their assistance thus far; Chairman MacDonald noted Susan Rowley, Treasurer of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Cresskill, has been especially resourceful. He said laborers for the Department of Public Works need to be certified in order to haul a stage rental from Bergen County if the bandshell at Memorial Park is deemed inadequate for live music. He further commented that emergency services would need to be engaged.



## **Liaison Reports**

### *Governing Body*

Councilman Stabile said the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) apparently was successful in lobbying the New Jersey Legislature to pass a bill mandating monies placed in environmental remediation accounts to stay with the municipality. He stated Closter decided not to endorse such legislation because the Borough benefits when the State pools such funds given there is such little remediation taking place in New Jersey.

Councilman Stabile stated the soil remediation/removal at 48 & 58 Perry Street, where a factory for the Colgate-Palmolive Co. once operated from, has been completed, noting wells are monitoring groundwater conditions. He said the easterly railroad track, not the westerly main track, owned by CSX Transportation Co. impacted the 2 parcels and he is still awaiting a response from the railroad as to its intentions being it recently decommissioned the line that travels through Closter. During her 2 terms as Mayor with the support of Cresskill and the Boroughs of Norwood and Northvale, Ms. Heymann said she tried to have the railway converted to trail(s). She said, however, converting the tracks to trails would further lessen the possibility of light rail transit being installed in Closter as part of the delayed Northern Branch Corridor Project. She explained that despite the Borough of Tenafly preventing the Project from extending north beyond the City of Englewood because of a proposed depot/station that would have centered in its downtown area, it does support light rail transit traveling through its borders. Ms. Heymann said she now feels, from a broad environmental sense, that mass/public transportation in Closter is more beneficial than having additional trails, especially given the amount already in its inventory as well as in surrounding areas such as the Palisades Interstate Park; she agrees the railway track in Closter is an eye sore. Councilman Stabile agreed, but said he supports a trail conversion because it is highly unlikely light rail transit will come as far north as Closter. He explained there is no legitimate support for the Project in the Borough, and the infrastructure required involves catenary lines that would ultimately stop at the New Jersey-New York border. Ms. Heymann replied that an option was given to New Jersey Transit Corp. a few years ago whereby light rail would be brought to Closter, Northvale and into New York via

the Tappan Zee Bridge and return to Grand Central Terminal. Councilman Stabile interjected, saying such would cost at least \$50,000,000.00 if extending from Englewood to the Bridge, and the ridership would be a mere 100 to 200 per day. Ms. Heymann said the railcars that travel between the Borough of Westwood and Nanuet, New York are practically standing-room only; Councilman Stabile agreed, but noted there is a difference in capacity between light rail and full passenger trains. He said the amount of capital that goes into putting a diesel train in the Northern Valley area is much less than having light rail because the former requires only a locomotive and station. He agreed, however, the concept of light rail is popular in the suburbs because residents would prefer a 50' long train as opposed a 200' diesel train and light rail travels at a lesser speed and stops quicker. Mr. Isaacson said the short-term goal should be to repair the sidings (crossings).

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said the Board application (17 Ver Valen Street) to be discussed later this evening relates to having a bus route travel past the Closter Plaza shopping center. Mr. Isaacson said he has spoken to Rockland Coaches, Inc., which stated Closter is attempting to discourage all commercial traffic on Ver Valen Street; he opined that buses should not be considered such. He believed the operator's change in route to include Ver Valen Street is contingent upon the installation of a traffic light at the intersection of Piermont Road and Ver Valen Street. Mr. Isaacson said the Borough would be conducting a traffic study by April 2017; Chairman MacDonald stated there may still be several establishments in the redeveloped Plaza that have not opened by then to truly gauge traffic flow in the area.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Chairman MacDonald said he was hopeful a new Commission member/STC Liaison would be appointed at the Governing Body's 2017 Reorganization in January.

Green Team

Mr. Hagen said there were no new matters to discuss, but noted he would be relinquishing to Chairman MacDonald several Commission items (marquee, banner, etc.) that have been in his possession.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Councilman Stabile stated the 1 bidder to the request for qualifications (RFQ) relating to the caretaker position at the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue) is pending approval from the Governing Body.



**New Business**

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg asked that the Mayers, who would be soon moving out of Closter, be recognized for their years of volunteerism at Mac Bain Farm; the Commission contemplated dedicating trail(s) in their name.

Councilman Stabile said the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), specifically the newly-appointed Director of its Office of Local Government Assistance, wishes to meet with the Commission in 2017.

Mr. Isaacson said David Scholz, former Chairman of the Commission and for whom a bridge that spans Tenakill Brook is named after, is relocating to South Carolina.



## **Plan Review**

### *Planning Board*

**17 Ver Valen Street:** This is an application for Site Plan and Major Soil Movement Approvals involving the new construction of a consumer/commercial bank (JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA). The Commission made the following comments: 1.) confirm proposed impervious coverage calculations (indicated to be 79%); 2.) clarify proposed landscape plan.

### *Zoning Board of Adjustment*

**597 Piermont Road:** This is an application for Use Variance and Site Plan Approvals involving the new construction of a building (containing undetermined retail tenancy). The Commission made the following comments: 1.) reconsider removal of 16 trees; 2.) reconsider placement of parking lot over storm water management system; 3.) ensure storm water management system is not installed below groundwater table; 4.) obtain NJDEP approval given nearby flood hazard area.



## **Adjournment**

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Colwell, to adjourn the meeting at 9:13pm. The motion passed by acclamation.