



# Environmental Commission

July 19, 2016

*(Minutes)*

Prepared by:

**Paul Demarest**

Ms. Heymann called to order, at 7:39pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, July 19, 2016 at Borough Hall.



**Attendance**

*Present*

Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison  
Brian Stabile- Full Member/Council Liaison  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

*Absent*

Paul MacDonald- Full Member  
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
Sivert Hagen- Full Member  
VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison  
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member



**Miscellaneous**

In light of Chairman MacDonald’s absence, Ms. Heymann chaired the meeting for this evening.

A motion was made by Ms. Abrams and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to approve the minutes for both the March 15, 2016 and April 19, 2016 meetings; the motion passed by acclamation.

The Commission postponed votes to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2016 and June 21, 2016 meetings until the August 16, 2016 meeting.

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



**Old Business**

*Trails*

Ms. Heymann said she and Frank Rossi, LSRP, who is the Director of Environmental Science at Boswell Mc Clave Engineering, Inc., walked earlier today throughout those trails installed/improved upon by Kevin Riley as part of improvements relating to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014; she stated he was quite impressed with Mr. Riley’s work. She noted Mr. Rossi would soon file an application to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for the issuance of a General Permit

#17 (GP 17) for anticipated trail improvements near wetlands surrounding Buzzoni Farm Park. Councilman Stabile estimated that the associated engineering services and NJDEP permitting would cost \$7,000.00 and \$4,000.00 respectively. Ms. Heymann reported Mr. Rossi believed such costs would be significantly less than \$11,000.00 as a result of the preparatory work done by Mr. Riley through his inclusive Global Positioning System (GPS)-based mapping. She stated Mr. Rossi suggested the Borough apply for grant monies to provide handicap accessible routes for certain trails; Councilman Stabile interjected, saying he thought the Borough's vision of its trail system was to have a narrow footprint to keep it as close to its natural state as possible. Ms. Heymann agreed, but felt the vision did not have to be universal and that some trails could be made accessible; she clarified that the concerned populations would not only be the disabled but the elderly, parents with baby strollers, etc. Councilman Stabile cautioned providing accessibility could have major impact on nearby wetlands. Ms. Heymann pointed out there are already accessible trails in both Mollicone Park and Schauble Park. She mentioned that her late husband, Leopold, was an avid walker and in his later years had difficulty using those trails in and around Blanch Avenue and Buzzoni Farm Park, noting there was not even a bench to rest on. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg believed there must be a comprehensive trail map prepared in order to evaluate where accessible routes should be installed; Ms. Heymann disagreed, saying only when Mr. Riley completes his trail work in the southern portion of Buzzoni Farm Park by the conservation easement (resulting in a direct connection with main routes of the Borough's trail system as well as the Nature Center's trail system) should a finalized trail map be compiled and signage designed/installed. She confirmed portions of the Borough's trail system dissect and/or utilize thoroughfares as part of their route. Ms. Heymann further commented that there is also a trail linking Anderson Avenue and Hickory Lane near Mac Bain Farm and the Alpine Scout Camp that has not been highlighted in the Commission's discussions as of late.

Prior to commencing his trail project, Ms. Heymann said Mr. Riley was approved by the Governing Body for 300 hours of compensation, 234 of which he has already worked.

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Councilman Stabile, to approve Mr. Riley's compensation for the remaining 66 hours in his contract with the Borough at an hourly rate of \$25.00, to complete trail improvements relating to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014. The motion passed by acclamation.

#### *Signage Prohibiting Dumping on Public Land*

In response to Chairman MacDonald's suggestion to mail postcards to owners of properties abutting Borough land that indicate the prohibition of dumping, Councilman Stabile felt such would not be wise to do. Both he and Ms. Heymann believed, since the design of the permanent signage to be installed in areas susceptible to dumping of grass clipping, yard debris, etc. was previously agreed upon by the Commission, including that the citation of the relevant ordinance (Chapter 169-8 of Borough Code) being indicated, that this item should be removed from the Commission's agenda.

#### *Mac Bain Farm*

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reiterated that John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, was pleased with the fence rehabilitation performed by Dimick Fence Co., which installed 4, not 3, rows of wire at the top of certain fencing on-site at no additional cost beyond its initial \$6,000.00 price. She noted, however, that Mr. Mc Caffrey reported deer had entered the Farm recently via its northeast corner; in response, she said a 4<sup>th</sup> row of wire would be installed in that section. She and Mr. Mc Caffrey believed it was more likely that the deer accessed the Farm at other locations where there are large spaces between the top of the 6' high fence and the 1<sup>st</sup> row

of wire above. She said Mr. Mc Caffrey's laborers have since used rope to create latticework in said voids. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she could utilize the remaining \$80.00 (from the \$100.00 she had been previously authorized by the Commission to purchase landscape material for a border along the pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park) to buy either heavy duty rope or high gauge wire, and she would along with her husband install the remaining latticework; she stated the temporary fix would let the Farm be protected from deer infiltration until another phase of fence rehabilitation is done next year. Councilman Stabile inquired about a prior suggestion by Mr. Mc Caffrey about fencing for farms being subsidized by the county government (the supposed only requirement was that the site be registered with the relevant County Agriculture Development Board under auspices of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture). Ms. Heymann revealed that Mac Bain Farm did not qualify, noting such offering was geared towards nature centers.

Following a telephone conversation with Mr. Mc Caffrey, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg confirmed he would not be in attendance this evening. Also, she said he approved of her completing the latticework on fencing at Mac Bain Farm begun by his laborers; she said he would ask Dimick Fence Co. to provide wire free of charge. She noted Mr. Mc Caffrey reminded he had yet to be reimbursed by the Borough for tree maintenance by the residence on-site that he paid for 1 year ago. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported he also is awaiting the Department of Public Works (DPW) to repair dilapidated gutters on the residence which have begun to cause water damage. She believed such requests were not related to the Farm and beyond what is required of Mr. Mc Caffrey as per his contract as the Farm's caretaker with the Borough. Ms. Heymann disagreed, saying it is likely he already "billed" the Borough said work performed by his laborers. Councilman Stabile considered such to be outside Mr. Mc Caffrey's responsibilities that the Borough "pays" him via free lodging on-site in exchange for \$25,000.00 worth of annual farm-related labor. Ms. Heymann said Chairman MacDonald would deal with the matter.

2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Ms. Heymann said the Superintendent of Closter Public Schools, Joanne Newberry, approved of the Commission utilizing Tenakill Middle School as a venue for next year's Fair slated to host April 22<sup>nd</sup>. She said apparently only the field was requested but felt the school building is necessary to secure as well in case of inclement weather, especially given there would be no rain date for the Fair. She stated the school's corridor and gymnasium layout is also conducive for such an event. Ms. Abrams emphasized that last year's Fair, involving the Boroughs of Cresskill, Old Tappan, Norwood and Tenafly, drew roughly 100 vendors plus food trucks. Ms. Heymann promised to contact the Recreation Commission to ensure no scheduling conflicts with its sports programs as well as inquire about renting a stage through Bergen County to allow for live music performances. Councilman Stabile assured he would ask the Governing Body to consider such as well as any associated costs with providing security.

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**Liaison Reports**

Governing Body

Councilman Stabile stated the Mayor and Council is considering to provide solar energy facilities on Borough land, 1 of which could be atop the canopy under construction as part of the Police Department's pistol shooting range (233 Blanch Avenue). He explained 32,000 sf of solar panels at said location could reduce the Borough's utility obligations by 30%, with the remaining

70% to continue being paid for the service provided by Rockland Electric Co.; he noted the Borough would be required to purchase the panels through a company that manufactures them at a discounted rate and a 10-year warranty would be provided. He stressed such has not been formalized by the Governing Body and no public bid has gone out the hypothetical project which could cost \$500,000.00.

Councilman Stabile informed that the Police Department is making the safety of pedestrians in crosswalks a top priority, noting Municipal Court charges associated with tickets and vehicle insurance have increased.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said there were no new matters to discuss.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

In light of a Liaison still not being appointed by the Governing Body for the calendar year 2016, Councilman Stabile mentioned a 5K run competition between Closter officials and their counterparts in the Borough of Haworth with the losing team planting a shade tree in the winner's municipality.

Green Team

Ms. Abrams informed that a rally was recently held in the Borough of Dumont to protest having rail cars transport crude oil via the Bakken Formation from parts of North Dakota, Montana and Canada through Bergen County. She also mentioned that the advocacy group, Hackensack Riverkeeper, Inc., took a group of unnamed politicians and representatives from CSX Transportation Co., to evaluate the bridges affected by those trains hauling the crude oil within the surrounding communities.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Concerning the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue), Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported that raccoons recently infiltrated a hole in the roof caused by glass insulators removed during recent electrical service upgrades. She said, in response, the DPW set traps and caught 4 raccoons. Councilman Stabile explained that while the Borough received notification that it was awarded a non-matching federal grant for approximately \$30,000.00 to restore the House, it has not received the money as of yet. He said that while the Borough can prepare a request for proposal (RFP), no formal action can be taken by the Mayor and Council until the funds are secured. Ms. Heymann disagreed, saying the process could take 6 to 12 months and the Borough, in the meantime, could select an architect to design a plan to restore and maintain the historic site. Councilman Stabile interjected, stating Ms. Heymann's suggestion would be an unethical action by a municipal government. Ms. Heymann stressed the site has been deteriorating for 2 years while the Borough secures funding. She noted the Governing Body corrected an error in which an RFP was prepared indicating the need for both an architect and caretaker for the House and grounds; she said the requests have since been separated into 2 RFP's.



**New Business**

The Commission did not discuss any new matters.



**Plan Review**

The Commission did not receive any land use board applications for its consideration.



**Adjournment**

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Councilman Stabile, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46pm. The motion passed by acclamation.