



Environmental Commission

November 15, 2016

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:45pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, November 15, 2016 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Paul MacDonald- Full Member
- Steven Isaacson- 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

Absent

- Thomas Colwell- Full Member
- VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

The Commission postponed votes to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2016, June 21, 2016, August 16, 2016, September 20, 2016 and October 18, 2016 meetings until the December 20, 2016 meeting.

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

Keren Kuperman-Nahum, 55 Walker Avenue, Closter, New Jersey, introduced herself and said she has resided in the Borough for 2 years, noting she indicated she is an attorney specializing in labor law. She revealed she is interested in serving her community and recently filed a Citizen Leadership Form with the Borough Clerk to become a Commission member. Chairman MacDonald ensured her said request would be considered by the Governing Body.

Chairman MacDonald noted the Commission's Shade Tree Commission (STC) Liaison position has been vacant for more than 1 year. He explained Councilman Stabile became the Commission's Council Liaison upon being elected to the Governing Body, resulting in him having to vacate his position as STC Liaison. Councilman Stabile noted that upon the end of his term on December 31st, he would not be seeking reelection due to both personal and professional commitments; he commented he was not sure if he could continue to serve on the Commission in 2017.

Chairman MacDonald pointed out, inexplicably, 4 fruit trees were recently planted by the STC beyond the Borough's right-of-way on private property along the western side of Columbus Avenue (in the vicinity of a newly-installed sidewalk) without the consent the landowner. Ms.

Heymann replied the STC should be adhering to guidelines set forth by the State of New Jersey in terms of species selection given a particular location; she surmised the Borough's Certified Tree Expert, William Fuchs, was not consulted beforehand. She explained, at times, trees are planted beyond the Borough's property along thoroughfares (measured as 10' in from the edge of road pavement), and the STC makes an effort to inform the abutting property owner how to maintain the planting.



Old Business

Trails

Mr. Isaacson stated Kevin Riley, who is conducting trail improvements related to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014, recently blazed trees in Mollicone Park, noting map coordinates via the Global Positioning System (GPS) for it and Schauble Park are still outstanding. Ms. Heymann concurred, saying such data is vital to design a revised trail map for the Borough's entire system, including Mr. Riley's work in Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park and Buzzoni Farm Park. She revealed there is a clear trail, actually a roadway, not marked on any Borough map that stretches from behind the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) to Durie Avenue. She said a half fallen large tree is blocking its path that likely cannot be handled by the Department of Public Works (DPW); given its size, she said the trail Mr. Riley is installing should be rerouted around said tree since a professional arborist would be required to remove it. Mr. Hagen believed the tree in question is situated within a sewer easement; he further commented that within Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park, there is another tree impeding upon a circular pathway (formerly a horse training track). Ms. Heymann said she was aware of such, and that Mr. Riley could abate that condition given the tree's manageable size; she noted he has improved upon the existing blazes within the Park, which had been substandard. Chairman MacDonald said Mr. Riley is using his judgment as to the coordination of blaze colors given his vast knowledge of the Borough of Demarest's trail system. Both Chairman MacDonald and Councilman Stabile agreed the Borough should not attempt to rectify either tree hazard discussed being they present a liability. Councilman Stabile said DPW laborers can trim trees but they are not climbers or arborists. Chairman MacDonald said there is a dead tree, 40' tall and having an 8" caliper measurement, located in Mollicone Park near the Girl Scout cabin, though it is still upright.

Ms. Heymann expressed concern about the latest deadline extension on November 30th for the 2014 Recreational Trails Program Grant, given the trail mapping is outstanding. Councilman Stabile said that while another extension is ideal, the Commission could gather its current GPS data and provide it to a graphic artist to design a revised trail map. Ms. Heymann promised to contact the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), which is administering the grant, and noted more than the \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00 in remaining funds would be necessary to complete the mapping and trail signage. Chairman MacDonald suggested the new signs include a Quick Response Code (QR Code) to enable trail users to transfer/store the map onto their mobile devices; he believed such is a better approach than having pamphlets scattered throughout the trail system. The Commission agreed.

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to have the Commission, with the consent of the Governing Body, solicit 3 quotes from graphic artists to prepare artwork for a revised trail map containing a QR Code and 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). Ms. Heymann objected, saying a graphic artist is not necessary given the vast data collected by Mr. Riley. Mr. Isaacson explained a GPS map is merely computer code, which will not indicate the location of roadways, forests, etc., thus, the need for a graphic artist. He reminded that the existing trail maps he improved upon recently to commemorate National Trails Day on June 5th involved a graphic artist. Councilman Stabile suggested a request for proposal (RFP), not a request for quotation (RFQ), be sought by the Commission being it should not prepare the specifications; he noted if the graphic artist is being provided the GPS mapping, its price for services should be well below the \$6,000.00 public bid threshold. Mr. Isaacson said a digitized copy of the Borough's zoning map could be provided as well. The motion passed (7-0-0):

YES- Bouton-Goldberg/Abrams/Heymann/Stabile/Hagen/Isaacson/MacDonald;

NO- n/a;

ABSTAIN- n/a;

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said there are still several areas of fencing on-site that are being infiltrated by deer. She noted John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, said Dimick Fence Co. could complete the unfinished fence rehabilitation for approximately \$4,000.00, which would include limited post installation and gate upgrades; she reminded said contractor's recent work cost \$6,000.00. Councilman Stabile stated such a request would not be feasible this year but could be discussed in 2017. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the portions that would be addressed are where deer enter from both above and beneath fencing. Councilman Stabile said 3 quotes must be solicited by the Commission because the completed and proposed fence work would cost a total of \$10,000.00; Ms. Heymann disagreed being the fiscal year ends December 31st. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to avoid having to go out to public bid, said she would wait until 2017 to ensure Dimick Fence Co. could be selected, avoiding needless delay. Chairman MacDonald stressed proper specifications will be required beforehand.

Ms. Heymann stated the recently-hired Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, is in agreement that Mac Bain Farm's budget is to be separate from the Commission's, with the former derived primarily from open space funds, to avoid impacting the Commission and municipal budgets. For instance, she explained the open space monies cannot be used for the Harvest Festival because the event is organized by the Commission, not the Farm.

Ms. Heymann said the Borough is applying for a potentially broad/nebulous grant sponsored by Whole Foods Market, which recently opened to the public at the Closter Plaza shopping center. She hoped such could fund the Farm's next large project, which is the installation of an irrigation system. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Mr. Mc Caffrey wished to start implementing the main system before the next season planting/plowing and then branch out from it over time. She said he wants the design capable of handling both the water well on-site and water utility service via the existing 2" copper line he installed several years ago; she said Mr. Mc Caffrey understood that he would be responsible for electric utility costs associated with well water. Ms. Heymann clarified the amount of grant money to be offered by the supermarket chain is unknown, as is whether it would be in 1 lump sum or span a period of time. She hoped the irrigation system could be used for educating the public on the importance of water conservation. On behalf of the Farm committee, she stated it also needs a tool that processes layers of plastic (landscape cloth) to contain weeds on-site, noting they can then be composted

directly into the ground; she said such an item would cost \$5,000.00 to \$7,500.00 to purchase. Ms. Heymann stated the committee wishes to have a berry patch planted at the Farm, for which donations once received at a previous Harvest Festival have since evaporated. Lastly, she said the grant could fund a teaching methodology for an afterschool youth program whereby small plots of crops would be planted and maintained throughout an entire season with assistance from an instructor; she noted such was to be an initial objective when the Farm was purchased by the Borough. She said though there are similar offerings at the Closter Public Library and Hillside Elementary School, the Farm's would be offered during the summer. Ms. Heymann mentioned that the Whole Foods Market grant would require the recipient to share the same themes as it as well as advertise its products, so the crops grown by the youths would supply the chain's Closter location. Mr. Isaacson cautioned such an arrangement would make the Farm more a private facility with sponsors and less of a public park. He suggested the Commission have a compost facility at the Farm to handle wasted/spoiled food being discarded by Whole Foods Market and other food establishments in Closter. Councilman Stabile agreed, saying a quant ballfield in the Borough of Cresskill has been renamed Crestron Field after a home electronics company. He pointed out such a youth non-sports related program could be collaborated with the Recreation Commission, along with the Public Library and Nature Center. Councilman Stabile stated the Borough Engineer should review the irrigation system proposal; Ms. Heymann interjected, saying that would create a needless cost given the essential components are already present on-site.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the existing shed at the Farm is rotted and needs replacement; she said such a project is urgent because there is a plethora of items being stored off-site at 12 Mc Cain Court, the residence of Farm volunteer, Mary Mayer, who will soon be moving out of Closter. She said Mr. Mc Caffrey would be contacting the Boy Scouts to potentially take on the project. Ms. Heymann stated a new shed could be a budget item for the Farm. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reminded of a past design for a new barn on-site which went grossly over budget.

2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Chairman MacDonald said the next meeting of the subcommittee tasked with planning the Fair would be November 17th; he stated the receipt of correspondence/mail and establishing a trust fund would topics of discussion. Mr. Isaacson pointed out money handled by Cresskill when it hosted the event went into its general fund because the Commission is a government agency, thereby requiring the generation of requisitions and purchase orders. He hoped the Fair would eventually become a corporation having its own federal employment identification number and considered a tax-exempt 501(c) organization, though all government protections would then be forfeited. Chairman MacDonald said all vendors would be required to provide certificates of liability insurance and hold harmless agreements. Mr. Isaacson kept in mind that being most of the property to be utilized for the 2017 Fair will be the local school system's, the Commission will need to get approval of said documentation from the Board of Education.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

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 will remain to monitor groundwater conditions; he said as part of the cleanup, railway tracks located on the

2 parcels belonging to CSX Transportation Co. were removed to remediate underneath. He promised to gather more information being the railroad officially decommissioned its railway, dissecting the downtown area, a few months ago. He pondered having the railway converted to trails and said the area in question is zoned residential. Ms. Heymann revealed there were recent complaints of odors emanating from Perry Street, but Mr. Dolson confirmed the source was actually Demarest's nearby compost facility. Mr. Isaacson said such is maintained by Miele Sanitation Co., which operates a transfer station in Closter; Ms. Heymann said the smell was due to the compost not being overturned properly.

Councilman Stabile said a generator will be installed at the Closter Public Library since it is designated a community gathering center in the event of disasters/emergencies. Given the nearby waterway, he referenced the literature he previously emailed the Commission about the Coastal Resilience program administered by the Nature Conservancy which spoke of ensuring generators are well-protected. Mr. Isaacson said New Jersey was basically developed on a major flood plain; he suggested the Commission advise the Borough's land use boards to keep such a fact in mind when reviewing applications. He said the land below where the Closter Plaza shopping center used to flood, and although Bergen County recently installed culverts at the intersection of Homans Avenue and Piermont Road, such has resulted in rainwater being diverted into the Nature Center. Mr. Isaacson said he works on Canal Street in Manhattan where underground garages and utilities are prohibited. Councilman Stabile said that, with the exception of some properties along Tenakill Brook and Dwars Kill, most of Closter is not continually flooded unless it is open space or watersheds. He stated New Jersey Transit Corp. is heavily investing to prevent its trains from traveling in flood areas, and 100-year floodplain maps have completely changed in recent years due to climate change. Chairman MacDonald stated such has caused pushback from property owners and governments alike to ease environmental restrictions given the associated costs; Councilman Stabile agreed, saying it is difficult to make the public plan for events 50 to 75 years into the future.

Planning Board

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

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Chairman MacDonald said he would speak with the Mayor's office on the status of appointing a new Commission member/STC Liaison.

Green Team

Mr. Hagen said there were no new matters to discuss.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated a trench for gas utility was recently dug at the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue), but it is likely there will be no service this winter. Councilman Stabile explained the cause is due to the existing boiler's heat exchanger, which is made of cast iron and has holes in it; he said if turned on, carbon monoxide emissions would be a concern.



New Business

Mr. Isaacson said the developer of the Closter Plaza shopping center may wish to trim/remove several trees east of its newly-installed monument sign along Ver Valen Street following the winter months to ensure visibility.

Councilman Stabile said the near insolvency of the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund caused the delay in the milling and paving of Ver Valen Street because it, along with the owner-in-fee of 19 Ver Valen Street (Edens, Inc.), is the source of funding. Given the budgetary dilemma has been resolved, he said a new bidding process will occur next year with no cost to the Borough; he noted, however, Homans Avenue is slated to be redone as well in 2017, which would be funded through taxpayer dollars.

Councilman Stabile said the NJDEP's drought advisory remains in effect despite recent rainfall. He asked the Commission to continue conserving water being it must replenish aquifers and surface water bodies; he noted temperatures are not too high, thus, little will be lost to evaporation. Ms. Heymann said the water utility, Suez North America, has been draining its water tower on Anderson Avenue in the Borough of Alpine for cleaning, which caused muddy conditions in the area; she noted Anderson Brook is at full capacity.



Plan Review

Planning Board

36 Pine Street: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the new construction of a 1-family house. The Commission had no comments.



Adjournment

Chairman MacDonald said the Commission must continue to monitor trees planted along Closter Dock Road as part of the recent site improvements at Heidenberg Plaza; he said the trees, required by the Planning Board as part of its Site Plan Approval, appear to have been heat-stressed when planted and there are concerns about the associated structural soil. Ms. Heymann was frustrated that the owner of the shopping center had wasteful plantings with bad spacing and poor trimming, resulting in a once-attractive row of evergreens in the front yard now resembling a hedge.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Heymann, to adjourn the meeting at 9:28pm. The motion passed by acclamation.