



# **Environmental Commission**

October 18, 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, October 18, 2016 at Borough Hall.

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**Attendance**

*Present*

Paul MacDonald- Full Member  
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Sivert Hagen- Full Member  
Brian Stabile- Full Member/Council Liaison  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

*Absent*

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

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**Miscellaneous**

The Commission postponed votes to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2016, June 21, 2016, August 16, 2016 and September 20, 2016 meetings until the November 15, 2016 meeting.

Councilman Stabile pointed out that as part of the Best Practices Inventory required by the New Jersey Division of Local Government Services, the Borough must improve upon 4 items, 1 of which is to post approved board/commission minutes on its website regularly by year end. Chairman MacDonald agreed, noting the Commission's minutes are generated in a timely fashion but their approval is not.

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

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**Old Business**

*Trails*

Chairman MacDonald said it is still premature to prepare a final revision of the Borough's trail map being Kevin Riley has yet to complete trail improvements related to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014; he noted Mr. Riley has not mapped out trails located in Mollicone Park. Mr. Isaacson reiterated said map should consist of illustrations giving an overall view of the entire trail system with a more detailed close-up of the area where

the map is situated upon 4 existing pedestal signs at different trailheads. Councilman Stabile said the top portion of the pedestal sign is at an angle to prevent water/snow from settling and causing damage to the maps. Mr. Isaacson said the tentatively-chosen sign manufacturer, Fossil Industries, Inc., offers signs that are pressure-treated on thick board and guaranteed for 10 years. Mr. Isaacson said the existing maps on the pedestal signs consist of vinyl with laminate which has disintegrated over time. Councilman Stabile reported the deadline for completing stipulations of the awarded Grant has been extended to November 30<sup>th</sup>. He stated the Governing Body recently approved an additional 100 hours of compensation for Mr. Riley to complete the trail project. He said while the Borough is still awaiting the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to issue a General Permit #17 (GP 17) relating to anticipated trail improvements near wetlands surrounding Buzzoni Farm Park, Mr. Riley is moving ahead with such. In response to Chairman MacDonald, he said no permitting was required for the maintenance of existing trails in wetland areas behind the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue). Mr. Isaacson reminded that Closter and the Borough of Demarest must coordinate the color of their trail blazes. Mr. Isaacson said that the existing trail map was designed by a local artist, Timothy Blunk, and suggested revising them would be the cheapest approach. He said the actual mapping of Closter and Demarest's trails has been provided by Mr. Riley and David Emerson, both affiliated with the Demarest Nature Center. Councilman Stabile said the Governing Body supports reopening new/updated trails to the public whereby it could mirror Demarest's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Dog Walk held on September 17<sup>th</sup>, which promoted leashed pets and their owners utilizing the municipality's trail system. Mr. Isaacson suggested Councilman Robert Di Dio, who is employed with Stop and Shop, be contacted to have the supermarket possibly provide refreshments in its parking lot during such an event.

Mr. Isaacson said there will be a reception at the Nature Center on October 23<sup>rd</sup> to honor the volunteerism of Gay and Mary Mayer (12 Mc Cain Court), who are moving out of Closter. He opined the Borough should dedicate a trail in their names; Councilman Stabile said an official declaration would be required by the Mayor and Council. He clarified there apparently was the intention to name the trail system located within the Center after the Mayers. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated both have done tremendous work at Mac Bain Farm and felt the trail on-site should be dedicated in their names as well.

Mr. Isaacson said during the Borough-Wide Garage/Yard Sale held on October 14<sup>th</sup> through October 16<sup>th</sup> to benefit the Closter Food Pantry, he noticed garbage being removed from 70 Anderson Avenue, the former residence of Malcolm Mac Bain. He said the property is for sale and that the Commission should demarcate the location of a nearby trail so there is no unintentional encroachment by the new owner onto Borough land. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg revealed Mr. Mac Bain's widow, Ophelia, vacated the home some time ago and their son, Keith, and his family have resided there since.

#### Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported she recently saw 4 deer on-site, which are apparently still infiltrating the fields by pushing underneath the fencing located at the Farm's western end where the chain link is curling upward. She noted the problem is due, in part, to the fence posts being located too far apart. Chairman MacDonald said such is the result of the Commission not being provided proper specifications prior to the selection of a contractor. Mr. Isaacson questioned if the Department of Public Works (DPW) could install additional posts; Councilman Stabile replied such is possible, but that concrete will be required to ensure the posts are secured in the ground.

### 2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Mr. Isaacson said the subcommittee tasked with planning the Fair convened its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting recently; he said while there were 10 people present, he hoped Closter would be better represented at its next meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Citizens' Center. He said James Oettinger, Chairman of the Recreation Commission, attended so to coordinate the use of Memorial Field on April 22<sup>nd</sup>; he said it was agreed the Recreation Commission would utilize the field while the Environmental Commission would have use of the bandshell, basketball courts, grass areas and concession stand, the latter of which would be operated by the Recreation Commission being it already has Health Department approval. He further commented the green automobile exhibits could set up in the parking lot behind Tenakill Middle School while food trucks and other exhibitors could be situated on the basketball courts and grass areas (depending on weather conditions). Chairman MacDonald said there should be limited access to/from the school gymnasium, possibly the southernmost doorway only for security purposes, as is done for Election Day. Councilman Stabile concurred, stating the School's custodial staff could monitor attendees and clean up afterwards.

Mr. Isaacson said Susan Rowley, Treasurer of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Cresskill, is an accountant and would be assuming much of the administrative duties of the Fair to avoid Closter having to do the tedious work through its Finance Office. Eventually, Mr. Isaacson said the event should become independent from the municipalities and be registered as a tax-exempt 501(c) organization, clearing the way for games of chance, raffles, etc. through the New Jersey Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control. He revealed the official email address for the Fair is nvearthfair@yahoo.com. He pointed out that the former Co-Chairman of Cresskill's Commission, Michael Swan, would continue to operate the website, in exchange for payment, being he owns the domain. Chairman MacDonald said those vendors present at this year's Fair should be contacted about 2017. Mr. Isaacson said there was talk of hiring a progressive rock band that previously played for the Borough of Norwood; he said he was also informed of a country music band named Johnny Paycheck. He suggested the classical music students of the New York Music School located in the Borough of Tenafly be invited to the Fair; he also mentioned the Northern Valley Regional High School at Demarest should have its jazz band made aware of the event. He suggested the students play early on followed by the paid acts. Councilman Stabile agreed, saying getting youth involved is vital with respect to sustainability.

### Harvest Festival

Mr. Isaacson said the event was quite successful, noting 200 to 300 people were in attendance. He stressed, however, the Festival needs to be more organized; for instance, he said lines for s'mores could be formed via barriers/ribbons to prevent a free-for-all by children. He also proposed an admission fee be required or, in the alternative, a suggested donation with all proceeds going towards the operation of Mac Bain Farm; he said such could be justified because there are expenses above and beyond what the municipal budget calls for. He hypothesized a \$5.00 charge would provide admittance, entertainment, food, a pumpkin and a 9 oz. reusable plastic cup having the Commission's logo, the latter being a better option to paper cups which were in short supply (unlike the apple cider). Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the Commission collected \$200.00 in donations at a previous Festival for blueberry bushes, which have yet to be planted by John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm. Chairman MacDonald said it is likely the Farm will not plant pumpkins in the future because they do not last the season or they are compromised when people step on their vines. As a result, he said \$500.00 worth of pumpkins were purchased from nearby Metropolitan Farm (119 Hickory Lane) for the event. Mr. Isaacson believed pumpkins should not be limited to children ages 5 and under, especially

since the Fair is advertised in Hillside Elementary School. He also stressed the use of social media to inform the public of this and other events, issues, etc., noting the Closter Black Book Facebook page has 1,000+ members.



## **Liaison Reports**

### *Governing Body*

Councilman Stabile stated there is a \$24,999.00 award available through the NJDEP's Historic Preservation Certified Local Government Grant, for which the application is due January 20<sup>th</sup>; he believed Mac Bain Farm would be a good candidate for either a preservation plan or action. He commended Ms. Bouton-Goldberg for her work in documenting the history of the site. She revealed that William Mac Bain and his daughter, Marjorie, were aboard the SS Athenia when it was struck by a German torpedo at the beginning of World War II, noting they escaped before the passenger ship sank. Speaking of the Borough-Wide Garage/Yard Sale, Mr. Isaacson said he acquired a framed/hand-drawn announcement from the Farm's residence that advertised a conservation exhibit by the now-defunct Closter Garden Club and Nature Center circa 1940's. Councilman Stabile said Closter is unique throughout northern New Jersey in that has a municipally-operated farm. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the nomination report to designate the Farm as a historic landmark is complete except for photographs depicting all sides of the residence, which will be taken once leaves have fallen from the trees. Councilman Stabile pointed out Mr. Mc Caffrey would be required to follow an approved plan if the Borough won the grant. He promised to confirm the grant would not be available to Closter unless the site has been given historic landmark status. The Commission agreed to pursue the grant.

Chairman MacDonald said Mr. Mc Caffrey previously provided an invoice for work on 2 trees, 1 already fallen which was quarter sawed generating a bill for \$1,100.00 and another removed because it was leaning. He said Mr. Mc Caffrey did not go out for competitive bid nor did he obtain Commission or Governing Body approval beforehand. Chairman MacDonald said Mr. Mc Caffrey has been waiting since spring for the Borough to abate a gutter hanging off the porch on the south side of the Mac Bain Farm residence. He said Mr. Mc Caffrey obtained 1 quote because the cost of work would be \$500.00 only; Councilman Stabile replied, nonetheless, the newly-hired Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, needs to be involved. He stressed all proposals for work on-site must be submitted by Mr. Mc Caffrey to the Commission for oversight. He promised to follow-up with Mr. Dolson on the outstanding invoices.

Councilman Stabile said the Bergen County Clerk, John Hogan, will be visiting Closter on October 25<sup>th</sup> through October 27<sup>th</sup> to establish a temporary satellite office at either the Senior Citizens' Center or Closter Public Library for the purpose of processing passports, notarizing, etc.

Mr. Isaacson reiterated that Mr. Mc Caffrey previously planted bamboo in the vicinity of Mac Bain Farm which has since spread along Anderson Avenue; he stated the Borough of Alpine recently trimmed it back some.

Councilman Stabile revealed the Borough's Open Space Trust Fund account has \$925,000.00 available for purchase of real property or open space improvements; he explained the money is collected as part of property taxes. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg believed such should be utilized to

install an irrigation system at Mac Bain Farm. Councilman Stabile felt the existing water well on-site should be the basis for such a system so long as the water is for farm purposes, not potable water; Chairman MacDonald agreed, noting there would then be no water utility bill associated with the irrigation. Councilman Stabile stated the well should be registered with the NJDEP to confirm it is safe for drinking water despite what Mr. Mc Caffrey says. Mr. Isaacson reminded that Mr. Mc Caffrey previously installed a 2” copper line, which should be utilized to install a spigot as part of any future irrigation system.

Planning Board

In light of Ms. Heymann’s absence, no issues were discussed.

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, a position vacant for several months.

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 there is no service at this time. Councilman Stabile said the request for quotation (RFQ) with respect to a caretaker for the House will be discussed at the Governing Body’s October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.



**New Business**

Councilman Stabile said he recently attended the 2016 Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) Environmental Congress, which focused on climate change, specifically, sea level rise given the State’s sprawling coastline. He explained it is predicted by the year 2100, there will be, at minimum, a 3’ rise in sea level with the worst case scenario being 6’, the latter of which would result in the loss of New Jersey’s barrier islands. He further commented that there will be more rainfall over shorter spans, equating to more intense floods and droughts. He noted there are green infrastructure projects to help capture rainwater rather than have it runoff to surface water systems and eventually back into the ocean. Councilman Stabile further commented that there are air quality issues affecting the elderly, young, etc. which can be collaborated on with local school systems; he explained such is measured through the air quality index for a particular region administered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is accessible by visiting [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov). He said the Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist of Rutgers University established the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS); he stated all that is required to be a participant is internet access, a 4” diameter plastic gauge, ruler and the desire to watch and report weather conditions. Councilman Stabile said participation results in weather models being created throughout New Jersey; he pointed out results are often wildly-variable over short distances. In response to Mr. Isaacson, he said a state-of-the-art weather station could be installed atop Borough Hall by the Office for \$10,000.00 with yearly maintenance costing \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00.

Mr. Hagen reported the Green Team (both adult and student members) has been inactive recently due to the loss of interest, noting the local school administration has not been supportive. Chairman MacDonald said the schools have to authorize funding for Team expenses. Councilman Stabile said there are grants available to Green Teams if they are certified with the Sustainable Jersey program; Mr. Hagen responded that the Team was founded for that purpose but did not know if it had become certified.

Continuing with his visit to the 2016 ANJEC Environmental Congress, Councilman Stabile stated he made contacts with potential participants of the 2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair. He said there are ways to include sustainable initiatives into the Borough's Master Plan via draft ordinances. He also informed that the Police Department was researching the potential installation of solar panels on the rooftop of its newly constructed pistol shooting range (233 Blanch Avenue), a 32,000 sf surface having a southern exposure with no major tree impediments; through reputable and vetted crediting sources/brokers, he said there would be no cost to the Borough for implementing the green initiative and it would save on its utility costs. He also commented Closter could do geothermal initiatives, set up electrical fleets for charging stations and require such by ordinance for certain development projects. He felt the Borough should take advantage of such opportunities before other municipalities realize the potential.



## **Plan Review**

### *Planning Board*

**248 Closter Dock Road:** This is an application for Site Plan Approval involving the expansion of an existing establishment (Wally's Hot Bagels) into additional tenant space. The Commission had no comments.



## **Adjournment**

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm. The motion passed by acclamation.