



Environmental Commission

February 21, 2017

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:40pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Paul MacDonald- Full Member
- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
- Thomas Colwell- Full Member
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
- Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

- Keren Kuperman- Full Member
- VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
- David Barad, MD- Full Member/Council Liaison
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Colwell, to approve the minutes for the January 17, 2017 meeting. The motion passed by acclamation.

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



Old Business

Trails

Ms. Heymann revealed that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) had yet to issue a General Permit #17 (GP 17), as previously thought, for the trail improvements near wetlands surrounding Buzzoni Farm Park; she reminded the project was already commenced by Kevin Riley as part of the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded to the Borough in 2014. She stated the approval process by the Borough Engineer's firm (Boswell Mc Clave Engineering, Inc.) cost \$7,000.00 and while the cause of inaction is unknown, Ms. Heymann was assured the Permit would be obtained within 2 months. She explained that of the \$24,000 received from said grant (not including the Borough's \$6,000.00 match), Closter has expended approximately \$15,000.00 thus far, noting invoices for additional trail work have not been generated being it is wintertime and the Borough has balanced its accounts for 2016. She said all trail signage expenses should be paid through the Grant, clarifying that while the forthcoming artwork from Timothy Blunk, a graphic artist retained to update the Borough's trail

map, came at a very reasonable price of \$1,000.00, only half would be covered by the grant due to it since expiring; she further commented that other lesser costs like rehabilitating the stanchions of the weather-beaten trail map pedestal signs would not be covered. Ms. Heymann stressed, however, that the Commission took great advantage of the monies awarded by completing a majority of trail improvement it strived to accomplish.

Discussing potential volunteers for the 2017 high school student senior service program, Ms. Heymann believed more supervision is required by Commission members to optimize their performance of tasks. Chairman MacDonald reminded that he went to great lengths in guiding the volunteers the previous 2 years. Ms. Heymann informed that Mr. Riley would not be performing his normal duties this year in his capacity as a member of Nature Center in the Borough of Demarest, and he offered to lead a team of 4 female student volunteers originally assigned to the Center to instead do trail maintenance in Closter on the condition he be paid the same \$25.00 hourly rate he is receiving for the Grant-related trail project. The Commission believed such to be a worthy proposal. Ms. Heymann promised to discuss such with the Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, who recently discovered old bonds set aside that were never utilized by the Commission. She reminded that monetary issues pertaining to Mac Bain Farm do not impact the Commission's budget. In response to Mr. Isaacson, Ms. Heymann did not know if Mr. Riley's stipend could be covered through open space funds. Ms. Heymann said Chairman MacDonald could also supervise a group of student volunteers.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson, to assign 4 students to Kevin Riley in performing trail work under his supervision as part of the 2017 volunteer program offered by the Northern Valley Regional High School District pending Borough approval of a \$25.00 hourly stipend paid to Mr. Riley. The motion passed by acclamation.

Ms. Heymann reiterated the trail system between the Nature Center and Buzzoni Farm Park is a pleasure to travel, noting she did not use the same path twice during a recent a 2-hour excursion. She mentioned that there are several boardwalks located in dry areas while several wet locations are not covered with planks and those that are require better anchoring, particularly in the Center; she acknowledged the Nature Center is not part of the Commission's jurisdiction. She informed of a boardwalk that is misdirected in the nearby conservation easement. She questioned if some of the Borough's overabundance supply of mulch could be placed on those trails in uplands. Ms. Heymann commented the practice of delineating trails with tree limbs/logs helps in keeping them dry. She noted Mr. Riley agreed to remove a fallen tree blocking a path at the junction of the Center's blue-blazed trail and the Commission's white.

Speaking of the committee that recently reviewed Mr. Blunk's artwork, Mr. Colwell said it decided to divide the Borough's trail system into 2 regions (eastern and western), not 3, for purposes of updating the trail map. Ms. Heymann said the trail located within Mac Bain Farm is geographically separate from both the proposed eastern section, which includes the Nature Center, Buzzoni Farm Park and Ruckman Park trails and western. Mr. Isaacson inquired if the trail system should be divided into northern and southern sections depending on how Mr. Blunk's design is revised after receiving the committee's feedback. Mr. Colwell said the artwork will include depiction of the pedestrian bridge and nearby routes within the unimproved portion of Brook Street. Chairman MacDonald hoped the new map would emphasize the vast trails located in Schauble Park. Ms. Heymann said a new pedestal sign is warranted at the northern trailhead of Ruckman Park; she explained said trail continues to Blanch Avenue and veers west towards the Nature Center, allowing for a roundtrip with use of the blue- and red-blazed trails. She believed there should also be a link between the cabin at the Nature Center and the parking

lot at Ruckman Park. Chairman MacDonald concurred, noting a pedestal sign is more advantageous at the popular Ruckman Park as opposed to the less-frequented Buzzoni Farm Park.

Chairman MacDonald said that former Councilman/Commission member John Kashwick was slated to return as Shade Tree Commission Liaison in 2017, but his schedule prevented such; Regardless, Chairman MacDonald hoped Mr. Kashwick could still be consulted about trails in Mollicone and Schauble Parks, which he previously spearheaded when serving on the Commission. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg suggested Closter revisit negotiations with the Borough of Norwood about linking trail systems, noting most of its Environmental Commission members have changed and hopefully they would be receptive to the idea.

2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Mr. Isaacson stated the event has never experienced as much bureaucratic challenges as it is experiencing with Closter as the hosting municipality; he emphasized many vendors are frustrated about having to include the Borough as additionally-insured on their liability coverage policies. He hoped vendor participation would increase as Earth Day approaches. He said permission has apparently been given by Saint Mary's School, Convent and Church (300 High Street) to use its parking lot, and the musical acts have been scheduled. Mr. Isaacson said the Board of Education approved the use of the gymnasium and field at Tenakill Middle School, and the Public Library is making its community room available (he hoped there would be a book sale on April 22nd to increase Fair participation). He said a map/survey of the school grounds would be beneficial in organizing vendors on-site in terms of utility locations, etc. Ms. Heymann said the Board of Education or Recreation Commission should have such.

Chairman MacDonald said he received a Resolution adopted by the Governing Body permitting the installation of 1 sign (not specified) to promote the Fair; he said his original request to hang a temporary banner across Ver Valen Street was deemed too costly.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Mr. Dolson agreed to handle all financial matters relating to the Farm; as such, Ms. Heymann said essentially the Borough would be paying for the installation of an irrigation system on-site. However, she said specifications are necessary to budge for the project. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, has yet to contact Mr. Dolson to discuss the matter. Ms. Heymann noted the 2 have differing visions as to what would be involved in such an undertaking and who would install the system. She said the irrigation sprinklers throughout the Borough's active parks were installed by the contracting subsidiary of Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. (75 Blanch Avenue). Mr. Colwell believed the irrigation system for a farm differs from that of a ballfield. Mr. Isaacson suggested the Borough's former Certified Tree Expert and Demarest Mayor Raymond Cywinski be consulted on the issue given he is employed with the water utility, Suez North America.



New Business

Chairman MacDonald said the Mayor's office forwarded a complaint to him from Andre Demarest on behalf of his mother, Barbara (260 Durie Avenue). He said it speaks of the need for ordinance(s) to regulate outdoor fire pits, specifically the odors and by-products they emit.

Ms. Heymann said the State of New Jersey already prohibits the burning of brush/yard debris, but outdoor fire pits, fireplaces and barbecues are popular and legal. She believed the Governing Body should not adopt an ordinance that cannot be enforced. Mr. Isaacson agreed, saying indoor fireplaces create smoke and smell. With respect to the complaint, Ms. Heymann said a theory was investigated that the odors affecting Ms. Demarest were originating from the improper maintenance of the Borough of Demarest's compost pile; she said such has since been ruled out. Chairman MacDonald stated if a fire pit were burning wet logs, it would smolder and become noxious.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to have the Commission request, in lieu of a new regulation, that the topic of fire pits be discussed in Mayor John Glidden's monthly newsletter whereby guidelines are given. The motion passed by acclamation.

Ms. Heymann said it appears the redevelopment of the abandoned Village Middle School (511 Durie Avenue) into market-rate condominiums is at a standstill due to affordable housing negotiations between the developer, Borough and Bergen County.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg found that the best approach to lessening the use of plastic bags is a grassroots effort beginning from the local level up, not the county level down; she noted Bergen County government entities stopped using *Styrofoam*-type products. Ms. Heymann said that through her work with the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, she discovered plastic bags are but a very small part of the overall enormous plastic dilemma impacting the environment. She stated political representatives of New Jersey's 37th Legislative District have had a bill regulating plastic bags lagging in committee for several years now. Mr. Isaacson said many people recycle plastic bags and opined plastic bottles are a far more pressing issue, especially given the recent bottled water craze. Chairman MacDonald noted bottles are often strewn across the grounds in the Borough's parks following sporting events. He said parents/coaches should emphasize bottle recycling to the youth. Ms. Heymann said the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, of which she is a member, provides paper cups only at its events. She volunteered to draft a memo about starting a Borough campaign to have local merchants limit *Styrofoam*-type products at their establishments. Mr. Isaacson said there are corn starch-based products available that degrade faster.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Due to Councilman Barad's absence, there was no discussion.

Planning Board

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

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

In light of there still being no Liaison from the STC to serve on the Commission, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg recommended Theodora Sirota (247 Demarest Avenue) to serve in such a capacity; Chairman MacDonald agreed to contact her.

Green Team

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said former Commission/Team members, Sivert Hagen and Brenda Cummings, are relocating to Tacoma, Washington. Mr. Colwell agreed to incorporate both into his draft recognizing Gary and Mary Mayer, who are moving out of Closter as well, for their service to the Commission and Mac Bain Farm. The Commission agreed the Governing Body should formally honor all 4 individuals.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated the nomination report designating Mac Bain Farm as a historic landmark has been completed and will be voted on at the HPC's next meeting on February 27th before being forwarded to the Governing Body for consideration.



Plan Review

Planning Board

248 Anderson Avenue: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the new construction of a 1-family house. The Commission made the following comment: 1.) provide tree mitigation as required.

76 Hickory Lane: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the new construction of a 1-family house and in-ground swimming pool. The Commission made the following comments: 1.) provide proposed tree removal and plantings; 2.) reconsider location of swimming pool near wetlands.

202 Alpine Drive: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the new construction of a 1-family house and in-ground swimming pool. The Commission made the following comment: 1.) provide tree mitigation as required.

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 comment: 1.) proposed storm water management system appears too close/underneath nearby waterway.



Adjournment

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to adjourn the meeting at 9:22pm. The motion passed by acclamation.