



Environmental Commission

January 17, 2017

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Mr. MacDonald called to order, at 7:35pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, January 17, 2017 at Borough Hall.



2017 Reorganization

Oaths of Office

Full Member:

(Existing 3-Year Term Expires December 31, 2018)

Appointed

Keren Kuperman

Full Member/Council Liaison:

(Existing 3-Year Term Expires December 31, 2017)

Appointed

David Barad

Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison:

(New 2-Year Term Expires December 31, 2018)

Reappointed

Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg

Associate Member:

(New 1-Year Term Expires December 31, 2017)

Reappointed

Arthur Goldberg

Attendance

<Present>

Paul MacDonald- Full Member

Steven Isaacson- Full Member

Thomas Colwell- Full Member

Keren Kuperman- Full Member

Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison

David Barad, MD- Full Member/Council 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

Election of Officer

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Councilman Barad, to nominate Mr. MacDonald as Chairperson of the Commission for the calendar year 2017. The motion passed by acclamation.



Miscellaneous

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson, to approve the minutes for the December 20, 2016 meeting. The motion passed (7-0-2):

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

NO- n/a;

ABSTAIN- Kuperman/Barad;

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

Speaking of the usually low turnout by the public, the Commission agreed the Borough's website could be more effective in drawing people to its meetings by enhancing links, etc.; Councilman Barad clarified the Borough Clerk provides notice to the public of meeting schedules for all Borough government bodies at the beginning of each calendar year. Chairman MacDonald said the number of visits to the website is unknown because it is not equipped with a hit counter. Ms. Kuperman said she could post a notice advertising the Commission at the Closter Public Library. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg thought the local school system, especially high school students, should be approached to revamp the Commission's fledgling Green Team; she reminded a high school senior student, Jaewook Jun, previously served on the Team and was also an Associate Member of the Commission. Ms. Heymann agreed to pen an article on the Commission for the upcoming monthly newsletter issued by the Mayor's office. Mr. Isaacson believed the Commission should have access to the Nature Center's email address book and continue to compile its database.

Dr. Goldberg reminded that several years ago, the Commission voted to have a fence removed that was illegally installed across Hartford Boulevard, a 50'-wide paper street, during the construction of Temple Emanu-El of Closter (180 Piermont Road). He clarified that when the Temple was built, its property was divided into 2 pieces (a 7 acre parcel in the front of the site which was deemed a conservation easement never to be developed and a 1 acre parcel in the rear reserved for the Temple). He explained the southern border of 180 Piermont Road contains Hartford Boulevard while the northern border included another paper street (Albany Boulevard). Dr. Goldberg said the Temple took Hartford Boulevard as its own, an error not realized during the planning and/or construction of the Temple. Subsequently, he said he along with the Green Acres program administrated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), made note of the encroachment, with the latter penning a memo to both the Temple and Borough enlightening them of the illegal condition. He said the metes and bounds of the area in question were corrected and the paper street was removed from the conservation easement and indicated as Borough land once again. He mentioned that Bergen County required, as part of the Temple's construction, a sidewalk to be installed along Piermont Road, a county road, which elevated the area by 5'; prior to such, he said the public could walk directly to Hartford Boulevard from Piermont Road.

Dr. Goldberg stated the owner of a parcel fronting on Hartford Boulevard, which is the subject of an application to be reviewed by the Commission later this evening, has been restricted access to his land because of the illegal fence; he explained only recently, after a decade of litigation, the property owner received confirmation that he owned the property through inheritance. Dr. Goldberg continued to explain that the Borough Attorney recently wrote twice to the Temple informing that the fence must be removed and it has not responded. Dr. Goldberg reminded that a decade ago, the Commission recognized the encroachment and asked the Governing Body to have the fencing removed from the paper street while proposing to re-grade the area by the

County-mandated sidewalk along Piermont Road and install steps to regain access to Hartford Boulevard; he estimated that along with some landscaping to beautify the entrance, the cost would have been \$1,200.00. Dr. Goldberg stressed the importance of Hartford Boulevard in that it links the Nature Center, Ruckman Park and Buzzoni Farm Park. Dr. Goldberg stated the Superior Court of New Jersey (Law Division) determined the fence is illegal and could be removed at any time. Dr. Goldberg said a ground sign reading “Closter Conservation Parkland” cost \$1,500.00 to manufacture and instead of it being installed at the entrance to Hartford Boulevard, it has been in storage for 10 years.

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Old Business

Trails

Ms. Heymann stated the anticipated artwork from Timothy Blunk, a graphic artist retained to update the Borough’s trail map, has yet to be finalized. She stressed, however, the requirements of the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014, which has financed various trail improvements, must be completed no later than January 31st to avoid forfeiting remaining grant monies. Ms. Heymann reiterated a revised map containing illustrations giving an overall view of the entire trail system with a more detailed close-up of 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 Borough of Demarest’s trails) and western region (Mollicone Park/Schauble Park) would be incorporated into 4 existing weather-beaten pedestal signs that need to be replaced. She noted, if feasible, a 5th and 6th pedestal sign would be installed along Demarest Avenue and Blanch Avenue. She explained the revised map artwork would include trails located in the Nature Center and those in Demarest that adjoin Closter. Mr. Isaacson said Mr. Blunk underestimated the time to prepare said artwork, but promised it would be ready for Commission review in 1 week. Being the Commission’s next meeting is after January 31st, Chairman MacDonald, Mr. Isaacson, Mr. Colwell, Ms. Heymann and Dr. Goldberg agreed to gather as an ad hoc committee to review Mr. Blunk’s artwork so Fossil Industries, Inc. can generate an invoice for manufacturing the signage.

While attending a recent Garden Club meeting in the Borough of Harrington Park, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg was informed Demarest installed an arboretum having various trees affixed with a Quick Response Code (QR Code) to allow the public to store/transfer scanned information about the arboretum to their mobile devices. Ms. Heymann and Ms. Kuperman felt a QR Code system to make the Borough’s trail system more interactive would be a worthwhile item to seek grant monies for in 2017; Ms. Kuperman agreed to research the topic in preparation for a future grant application. Mr. Isaacson said the technology works by a device having a certain application which sends the user to a webpage to view information scanned on the QR Code. Given the time constraint, the Commission agreed to delay incorporating a bar code system to the revised trail map.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that an estimate provided by Dimick Fence Co. to complete the fencing rehabilitation on-site is awaiting approval from the Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson.

2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Chairman MacDonald thanked Mr. Isaacson for his written request to the Governing Body about hanging a temporary banner across Ver Valen Street to promote the Fair. Ms. Kuperman said the hosting municipality's next subcommittee meeting is January 26th.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Barad stated there were no new matters to discuss.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said a pending Board application for Site Plan and Major Soil Movement Approvals involving the new construction of a consumer/commercial bank (JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA) at 17 Ver Valen Street, as part of the Closter Plaza shopping center redevelopment (19 Ver Valen Street), is being contested by the Centennial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (7 Campbell Avenue). She explained the Church is demanding payment relating to a licensing agreement for use of 14 parking spaces by the developer during the course of construction. Ms. Heymann stressed Chase Bank would provide more than the required number of parking spaces. Mr. Colwell noted there would be direct access between the Plaza and Chase Bank's parking lots.

Green Team

Ms. Heymann said the Team has previously attempted to coordinate its efforts with Sustainable Jersey, the nonprofit organization that provides tools, training and financial incentives to support communities as they pursue sustainability programs; she stressed, however, such a task has proven to be difficult being the certification demands often change and some require the hiring of costly professionals. She said the Team can fulfill its obligations directly through the Commission by focusing on issues such as clean water, transportation, etc.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated the nomination report designating Mac Bain Farm as a historic landmark is being finalized. She revealed that local painting contractor, Michael Pisano, has been awarded the contract for the caretaker position at the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue). She reiterated while there is electrical power on-site, both gas and water services have not been restored. She said a pamphlet is being designed for the House and Mr. Pisano is contemplating holding events mimicking the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) program, Antiques Roadshow, to collect donations to fund upgrading the building and grounds. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the House has not been winterized in many years nor has it been heated. Ms. Heymann said the Borough must now hire a design professional to prepare a plan for improvements and maintenance.



New Business

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg recently read in the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) publication that the Borough of Alpine's Environmental Commission won an achievement award for producing and distributing a field guide/brochure

(and electronic version for its website) relating to its local tree inventory. Ms. Heymann explained Shade Tree Commissions in New Jersey are mandated to have such an inventory, but to combine it with a catalog prepared by the Environmental Commission would be more effective. Councilman Barad said the Shade Tree Commission explored means by which to make its database available to the public, but such means is usually through a paid online service; he noted newly-planted trees are added to the inventory on an annual basis.

Chairman MacDonald said the Commission was still undecided on how to honor Gay and Mary Mayer (12 Mc Cain Court) for their years of service to Mac Bain Farm, noting they plan to move out of Closter by April.

Mr. Isaacson pointed out the Commission has not nominated a tree for landmark status to the Governing Body in several years. The Commission remembered it previously selected the following 11 trees to be given such protection rights: 1.) ginkgo- Piermont Road; 2.) beech- Buzzoni Farm Park; 3.) pine- Durie Avenue; 4.) tulip- Knickerbocker Road <since removed due to storm damage>; 5.) shagbark hickory and black walnut- Hickory Lane; 6.) <2> western catalpas- Cedar Lane; 7.) American sycamore and <2> sugar maples- Whitney Street. Mr. Isaacson said the Commission should be nominating trees yearly at a minimum. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg suggested a sequoia on Giletta Court be slated for designation.



Plan Review

Planning Board

81 Eckerson 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 schedule of proposed tree plantings to ensure sufficient species, size and amount for mitigating those trees to be removed from Borough's right-of-way (Governing Body denied sidewalk waiver request by applicant).

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Hartford Boulevard: This is an application for Bulk Variance and Planning Variance Approvals involving the construction of a new 1-family house upon a parcel unrelated to an improved street. The Commission made the following comments: 1.) require applicant to pay for improving access to Piermont Road; 2.) provide mitigation for proposed tree removal; 3.) provide adequate storm water management system given proximity of wetlands.



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 9:01pm. The motion passed by acclamation.