



Environmental Commission

**November 21, 2017
Meeting**

Minutes

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:42pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, November 21, 2017 at Borough Hall.

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Attendance

Present

Paul MacDonald- Chairman
Steven Isaacson- Full Member
Thomas Colwell- Full Member
David Barad, MD- Full Member/Council Liaison
Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

Keren Kuperman- Full Member
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
Steven Lopez- Associate Member

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Miscellaneous

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson, to approve the minutes for the September 19, 2017 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

With respect to the October 17, 2017 meeting, Chairman MacDonald reminded that the Commission did not gather in the Council Chamber due to a Municipal Court session being in progress beyond 7:30pm. As a result, he said the meeting was not electronically recorded since it was held in the conference room on the 2nd floor of Borough Hall; he stated unofficial notes, in lieu of minutes, were prepared.

In order to prevent a future scheduling conflict with the Municipal Court, Chairman MacDonald said the Commission can opt to change its regular monthly meeting date (3rd Tuesday of each month) for 2018; he promised to email the Commission those dates in which the Council Chamber is not in use.

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

Borough Hall Parking Lot Project

Ms. Heymann said the parking lot, despite a supposed agreement between the Governing Body and members of the public as the extent to which the layout would be altered, has been directly

replaced. Chairman MacDonald disagreed, saying 3 existing green space peninsulas had been removed. Ms. Heymann said the project would cost \$175,000.00, noting the high amount was due partly to the existing layer of asphalt being too thin to mill thereby requiring additional measures to do so. She stated the initial concern that existing trees in the various islands would be compromised by the construction did not materialize; in fact, she said roots from trees buried on-site years ago were discovered and excavated.

Trails

Chairman MacDonald said he is in possession of the 5 trail map signs, measuring 2'x4', recently purchased by the Commission that will be installed upon pedestals throughout the Borough. He said there is currently 1 pedestal sign located along Durie Avenue by Tenakill Brook, on High Street in front of the Closter Public Library and near the playground in Memorial Park. Mr. Isaacson said 2 additional pedestals/stands must be built or purchased to utilize all 5 trail map signs. Ms. Heymann said additional pedestal signs are warranted along Demarest Avenue in front of the Stop & Shop supermarket, between Bergenline Avenue and Haring Street nearby Schauble Park and on Blanch Avenue. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg inquired about installing a pedestal sign at Mac Bain Farm, especially since visitors often are surprised to learn about the existence of a Borough trail system; Ms. Heymann replied the Farm contains a small section of trails and blue blazing are already posted nearby along Ruckman Road and Anderson Avenue. The Commission agreed a banner made by Mr. Isaacson that advertises the trail system could be hung in lieu of installing a pedestal sign at the Farm. Mr. Isaacson mentioned that situating a pedestal sign at the Nature Center is an option. Chairman MacDonald summarized that based on this evening's recommendations, 4 more trail map signs must be purchased as well as 2 additional pedestals/stands. Ms. Heymann reminded that all previously-acquired grant monies related to trails have been depleted, but Chairman MacDonald hoped open space funds could pay for such items. As for the additional trail map signs, Mr. Isaacson stated the cost would not rise to the price of the initial template design, but shipping costs would be very high; he estimated that the signage is \$500.00 to \$600.00 each and a pedestal/stand costs about \$200.00 each. Ms. Heymann opined that the construction of pedestals/stands, while alone would not serve as a worthy project for Eagle Scouts, could be appropriate if coupled with building a shaded seating area and/or pergola near Buzzoni Farm Park opposite the now-defunct Closter Swim Club site on Blanch Avenue.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Being Councilman Barad arrived late, no report was given.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said 511 Durie Avenue would be acquired by the Borough for the purpose of the existing building, the former Village Middle School, being converted to affordable housing units. She explained the seller must have the asbestos on-site removed prior to the title transfer; she clarified the Borough is essentially paying for the removal, which is being privately-contracted and paid for via the approximately \$4,000,000.00 purchase price.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Being Councilman Barad arrived late, no report was given.

Mac Bain Farm

Because the maintenance of the fencing on-site is an ongoing concern, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg recommended the fence contractor, Dimick Fence Co., be hired to inspect and repair the fencing on an annual basis so avoid larger expenses due to negligence; Chairman MacDonald concurred, saying the 2018 budget proposal for the Commission includes \$2,000.00 allotted for such a service.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated a cider press found in the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue) would be brought to the Farm later this season; Ms. Heymann suggested the press be fixed and used to provide refreshments via bruised/fallen apples at the Harvest Festival.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the refurbished pylon sign that is situated at 19 Ver Valen Street, site of the redeveloped Closter Plaza shopping center, was rededicated earlier this evening; she said such was the result of discussions between the HPC and the property owner/developer (Edens, Inc.) as well as public feedback online.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said former HPC member and resident, Irene Stella, would soon become President of the Closter Historical Society. She further commented that local painting contractor, Michael Pisano, who was recently hired as caretaker of the Harold Hess Lustron House, has been doing yard work on-site; she said he has discussed how to improve the grounds with local landscaper, Todd Bradbury. She also said volunteers regularly meet on-site the 1st Saturday of each month to help at improving the site's appearance as well as its historical accuracy as a landmark highlighting post-World War II housing for veterans. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that Mr. Pisano provided a sign-in table for the public who visit the site, upon which he offers a tour. Ms. Heymann commended Mr. Pisano for his efforts, including removal of paint from the exterior metal panels of the prefabricated structure. Chairman MacDonald said a newly-installed gas line must be rerouted, according the architect hired to prepare a preservation plan, due to its proximity to an exterior doorway. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the architect donated a sink commonly found in Lustron housing units to the Borough; Ms. Heymann noted the Closter location was originally-fitted with a dual clothes/dish washer in the kitchen.



New Business

2018 Budget

Chairman MacDonald said he and Ms. Heymann requested of the Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, an increase in the Commission's operating budget from the \$3,740.00 adopted by the Governing Body for 2017; the reasoning for such, in part, he said was to install a split-rail fence delineating Buzzoni Farm Park, the presence of which is not obvious to the public.

Ms. Heymann informed that 70 Anderson Avenue was recently sold by Keith Mac Bain to Thomas Mc Caffrey, a nephew of John Mc Caffrey, the caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm, who has since removed a post-and-rail fence installed along Anderson Avenue by the Commission several years ago to differentiate the Farm's grounds from surrounding private property. She said she was told the fencing would be replaced eventually.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stressed a new shed is required at Mac Bain Farm, noting she wished to stop storing Farm-related items at her own residence. In response, Ms. Heymann revealed there are several large sheds located at 515 Piermont Road, the former site of Trautwein Farm;

she believed if the property owner donated the shed(s) to the Commission, Eagle Scouts could transfer, reassemble and refurbish 1 or more to the Farm, preferably inside the fencing on-site.

Mr. Isaacson strongly believed expenses relating to the improvement of Mac Bain Farm should not derive from the Commission's budget; Ms. Heymann agreed, saying such costs are part of the Borough's capital budget via open space monies. She noted that a request to increase the line item in the budget relating to the Harvest Festival, which was \$850.00 in 2017, did not make the submission deadline. With respect to the Festival, Chairman MacDonald said Mr. Isaacson was reimbursed by the Borough for the purchases he made, however, less approximately \$25.00 in sales tax. He stated the Borough requires a requisition to be generated in order for sales tax to be paid. Mr. Isaacson said that the Commission is comprised of volunteers who make a concerted effort to save taxpayer money, but with the bureaucratic paperwork involved, the task of doing so becomes that more arduous. Chairman MacDonald clarified that the Borough may require merely a list of items necessary for a particular event, item, etc. in advance; he also stated that the Borough would require 3 quotes before it would approve the purchase of pumpkins for future Festivals. Ms. Heymann assured that any purchase amounting to less than \$300.00 does not necessitate quotes. Mr. Isaacson reminded that the 300 pumpkins bought this year cost \$500.00+; he opined the Commission could provide the Borough with the list a few months ahead of time so it, not the Commission, can solicit bids if it wishes. Mr. Colwell informed that he would be updating the Commission's Google Docs and Google Sheets, web-based programs that allow multiple users to simultaneously prepare for events such as the Festival, with notes on its discussion this evening. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated she was completely reimbursed by the Borough for her charges at the downtown area store, Ward's 5&10, because she provided a sales tax exemption form completed by the merchant. Ms. Heymann pointed out she recently purchased space heaters for 421 Durie Avenue at Lowe's noting the reimbursement process was simple because the retail home improvement chain already had an account established with the Borough, as does Benjamin Brothers True Value Hardware located in the Borough of Tenafly. Mr. Colwell promised to acquire the list of vendors recognized by the Borough.



Plan Review

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



Adjournment

In response to Mr. Isaacson's inquiry, Councilman Barad stated that despite losing his bid for reelection to the Council, he said it was possible he would remain on the Commission as a resident with the consent of Mayor John Glidden.

Speaking of possible donations from the Stop & Shop supermarket for future Harvest Festivals if it budgets accordingly, Mr. Isaacson said the Commission may need to revise its By-Laws so it can legally accept them. Councilman Barad replied the ordinance that established the Commission dictates such a provision; Ms. Heymann agreed, saying the ordinance would require amending. Councilman Barad opined Stop & Shop is not prohibited to do so as far as the Borough is concerned. He said the store cannot give the Borough cash for purchasing since there would be no means of documenting such a transaction; Mr. Isaacson inquired about being

given store credit. Councilman Barad said the optimal approach to provide Stop & Shop with a list of requested items that they can donate to the Borough. Mr. Isaacson said he would submit a request to the store ahead of next year's Festival; he noted the Recreation Commission has benefited greatly from the store's generosity.

Ms. Heymann said the Commission should espouse a campaign for a particular sustainability issue and hopefully other municipalities would be inspired to follow suit. She suggested an ordinance be adopted to ban the use of foam containers/utensils by food establishments located in Closter. She stressed foam is far more harmful to the environment than plastic being it does not deteriorate; she said paper products would be preferable. Mr. Isaacson mentioned corn starch is now used in the making of such items. Ms. Heymann said the approach should be 2-pronged (lobby Governing Body to adopt ordinance and enlighten food establishments on alternative products that do not hinder business). Councilman Barad believed such a ban would be legal; he promised to research if/which municipalities have adopted such a regulation for Closter to use as a model for its own ordinance. Ms. Heymann said the City of Teaneck adopted an ordinance banning plastic bags; Chairman MacDonald added plastic has a plethora of uses. Mr. Isaacson said both Stop & Shop and grocery chain, Whole Foods Market, can be asked to collect plastic bags from its customers. Mr. Colwell said while the supermarket chain, ShopRite, is known to collect bags, what it does with them afterwards is unknown.

Mr. Isaacson noticed recently that the Oradell Reservoir appeared to be at an extremely low level. Mr. Colwell said the northern portion is, possibly due to dredging by the water utility, but the southern not so much. Ms. Heymann expressed concern that the water tower located in the Borough of Alpine has been drained 3 times this year into a nearby stream leading to Anderson Brook and, ultimately, Dwars Kill; she said, in 1 instance, the waterway was bypassed and Anderson Avenue was saturated. Mr. Isaacson said the water utility, not Alpine, should be contacted. Councilman Barad said the water tower ensures adequate water pressure to Alpine residents, though some have their own wells. Mr. Colwell said residents in the Borough of Avon-by-the-Sea, where he owns a home, are provided a report as to the water quality of a nearby tower.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Councilman Barad, to adjourn the meeting at 8:41pm. The motion passed unanimously.