



# **Environmental Commission**

**May 10, 2018  
Meeting**

**Minutes**

Prepared by:

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## **Opening Remarks**

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:51pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Thursday, May 10, 2018 at Borough Hall.

## **Attendance**

### **Present**

Paul MacDonald- Chairman  
Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
Keren Kuperman- Full Member  
Scott Devlin- Full Member/Council Liaison  
Nancy Pergament- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison

### **Absent**

Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison  
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1  
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison  
Steven Lopez- Associate Member  
Shucaï Zhu- Associate Member

## **Miscellaneous**

A motion was made by Councilman Devlin and seconded by Mr. Isaacson, to approve the minutes for the December 19, 2017, January 11, 2018, February 8, 2018 and April 12, 2018 meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman MacDonald reminded that the proceedings for the March 8, 2018 meeting were not digitally recorded, therefore, minutes could not be prepared.

Chairman MacDonald stated he would review the Commission's By-Laws for the protocol relating to eligibility of Commission members to vote on minutes for meetings at which they were not present. Mr. Colwell informed that according to Robert's Rules of Order, a widely-used manual of parliamentary procedure in the United States, absent members may correct and vote on minutes.

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

## **Old Business**

### **2018 Northern Valley Earth Fair**

Mr. Isaacson stated the Fair was a tremendous success with approximately 2,500 people in attendance. He emphasized that Northern Valley Regional High School at Demarest was a prime location, noting there was a parking issue due to the large turnout; Mr. Colwell said all the parking lots on school grounds were filled to capacity and a large stretch along the eastern side of Knickerbocker Road was used for additional parking. Mr. Isaacson revealed the Fair's organizing committee is gathering on May 21<sup>st</sup> to critique the 2018 Fair as well as begin

preparation for 2019. He commended Closter's use of Tenakill Middle School when the Borough hosted the event in 2017, but cautioned that with up to 8 municipalities now involved, he opined Northern Valley Regional High School (both Demarest and Old Tappan campuses) should alternate as sites in the future to simplify coordination efforts each year. He reiterated that as of this year, the Fair is now registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization and, thus, tax-exempt.

### **Trails**

Mr. Isaacson said he recently traveled the trail link from Demarest Baptist Church on Piermont Road through the Borough of Demarest's Department of Public Works (DPW) site north along CSX Transportation Co.'s Northern Branch rail line and into Closter's trails; aside from a fallen tree blocking the path near the rail line, he reported the trails to be in fair condition. He noted there is an unusually large volume of insects in the damp conditions by Scholz Bridge which warrants attention.

### **2018 Open Space Funding**

With respect to the Commission's pending request to the Governing Body, Mr. Isaacson said a quote for 3 trail map signs and 5 associated pedestals/stanchions was obtained from Fossil Industries, Inc., a sign manufacturer which provided signage for the Commission last year. Councilman Devlin explained none of the Commission's requests would involve public bidding, an exhaustive legal undertaking required for products/services individually costing at least \$17,500.00; he noted 3 competitive quotes for each proposed project would be required of the Commission. Chairman MacDonald noted the 5 signs purchased by the Commission last year are still being housed with the Police Department after being stored at his residence for 5 months. He stated the Borough Administrator must assign the DPW or others to install them where the Commission wishes; he reminded that Kevin Riley, a Board member and Grounds Manager of the Demarest Nature Center who was trained by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and last year provided trail improvements for the Commission, would be available to do such at a \$25.00 hourly rate. Chairman MacDonald reiterated that the existing signs located in front of the Closter Public Library and along Durie Avenue near Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park are in terrible condition while a 3<sup>rd</sup> sign situated in Memorial Park is in fair condition. Mr. Isaacson agreed, noting once funds are appropriated, 3 of the 5 signs in storage will be mounted over the 3 existing signs assuming their complete removal from atop the pedestals/stanchions is not feasible; he opined the 2 additional signs could be installed at trailheads near the Nature Center, Buzzoni Farm Park, behind the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) and/or along Haring Street by Schauble Park. Reminding there had been no trails existing within Schauble Park until he supervised their installation by volunteers of the high school senior student service program 2 years ago, Chairman MacDonald believed 4x4 lumber could serve as pedestals/stanchions for the 2 new locations earmarked for signage; Mr. Isaacson deferred to the DPW noting, ultimately, such could be a Boy Scout project. Mr. Isaacson said, as a temporary measure until professional pedestals/stanchions are bought, slots could be routed into 2 pieces of 4x4 lumber, which would require footings, and the signs can be mounted between/atop them with bolts. Councilman Devlin explained that aside from the 5 signs purchased last year and now in storage, the Commission is now requesting monies to buy 3 more. Mr. Colwell summated that Ms. Heymann's open space funding requests would result in a total of 8 signs and pedestals/stanchions being situated throughout the Borough's trail system. The Commission agreed the replacement of the 3 existing sign locations is top priority followed by others once 5 new locations are selected. Mr. Isaacson interjected, saying the 5 signs in storage are customized (site-specific) in that each indicates "YOU ARE HERE" on the map with an "X" corresponding to a particular section of the trail system.

### **National Trails Day**

Mr. Isaacson and Councilman Devlin mentioned public invitations in years past to enjoy the Borough's trail system resulted in very poor turnout and suggested the event, in honor of National Trails Day, be heavily advertised in the newsletter published by the Mayor's office and on the Borough website. Mr. Isaacson reiterated there would be guided tours on June 2<sup>nd</sup> between the trailhead behind the Stop & Shop supermarket and the Nature Center. He expressed disappointment that the new trail map signage would not be installed prior to the event; in the alternative, he suggested the Commission's banner(s) be mounted at Ruckman Park to gain public interest, noting the nearby trail stretches to Buzzoni Farm Park. Mr. Isaacson stated the Borough of Demarest hosts a dog/master walk, trail run as well as a barbecue and suggested geocaching as an activity for Closter's celebration. Councilman Devlin believed scrambling to plan activities within a 3-week period would be fruitless and attendance would likely remain stagnant. He suggested the Commission instead concentrate on planting trees at Mac Bain Farm and other events throughout 2018 to benefit the community and plan for next year's National Trails Day activities early in the year; he reminded that preparations for this year's successful Borough-wide Cleaning/Recycling Effort began 5 months in advance under the supervision of Ms. Kuperman. Chairman MacDonald opined the Effort was held too soon in the year and, thus weather hindered participation despite being delayed 1 week due to the ground being snow covered. Ms. Kuperman replied it is difficult to predict the weather in late March and early April, noting poison ivy starts to take hold at the onset of warming temperatures. Mr. Colwell agreed, saying this year's Effort was also held close to both Easter and Passover. He said he and his sons collected 3 bags of garbage opposite the Nature Center along a gully on Ruckman Road. Also, he said if the Effort were held too late in the year, the vegetation growth would hide the litter.

### **Mac Bain Farm**

Chairman MacDonald explained that John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm for 18 years since the parcel was acquired by the Borough, submits vouchers for reimbursement on a quarterly basis each year. Mr. Isaacson said Mr. Mc Caffrey's contract with Closter limits what services he must provide in exchange for free lodging. Chairman MacDonald stated Mr. Mc Caffrey plants/prepares the farmland.

Ms. Kuperman informed there would be no high school senior students available to volunteer at the Farm this year; she expressed disappointment, noting last year the students were of great assistance in performing physical work in preparation for the planting season (June and July). She said while she can solicit the public on social media for help with strenuous tasks and monitors/assisting visitors, the latter of which is more appropriate for elders, it would be best to have a point person to oversee the volunteers; she noted both residents and non-residents are welcome to volunteer and, in turn, receive crop picking privileges. Mr. Colwell suggested Ms. Heymann and Ms. Bouton-Goldberg spearhead the selection of a supervisor for Farm volunteers.

Councilman Devlin reported a large boat is being stored under a blue tarp in the driveway of the Farm. Chairman MacDonald concurred, adding approximately 7 automobiles are also present on-site, some of which may not be registered and/or operable. He said the Police Department deferred action against such to the Code Enforcement Bureau since the property is Borough-owned; he opined the Commission should not involve itself with such matters.

### **Foam Food & Beverage Container Ban**

Councilman Devlin stated the proposal to ban the use of foam products by food and drink merchants located in the Borough would be considered by the Ordinance Committee in the coming months.

## **New Business**

No new matters were discussed.

## **Liaison Reports**

### **Governing Body**

Councilman Devlin announced the Governing Body recently appropriated roughly \$21,000.00 in the 2018 municipal budget dedicated to open space funding to the Commission, specifically:

- 1.) 3 additional trail map signs and 5 associated stanchions/pedestals <\$4,000.00>;
- 2.) trail maintenance/improvements with additional boardwalks <\$3,000.00>;
- 3.) Mac Bain Farm fence repairs <\$2,500.00>;
- 4.) fence (post and rail) at Buzzoni Farm Park to delineate open space from nearby land along Blanch Avenue <\$3,910.00>;
- 5.) Eagle Scout project (gazebo and storage bench at Mac Bain Farm) <\$1,600.00>;
- 6.) irrigation system with associated water fountain and electrical wiring at Mac Bain Farm <\$6,000.00>.

He further commented the Commission's 2018 operating budget would be \$5,290.00, an increase from last year's \$3,740.00. He stressed money not spent does not carry over the next fiscal year. Chairman MacDonald stated the Commission's operating budget is used to cover expenses relating to the Harvest Festival, Borough-wide Cleaning/Recycling Effort, membership to the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) and minutes preparation of Commission meetings. Chairman MacDonald assured he would confirm all current Commission members are signed up to receive ANJEC publications.

### **Planning Board**

In light of Ms. Heymann's absence, no report was given.

### **Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)**

In light of Ms. Bouton-Goldberg's absence, no report was given.

### **Shade Tree Commission (STC)**

Chairman MacDonald expressed concern that the Borough's official tree planting list recommended to those providing mitigation as part of a tree removal application consists of several fruit species; he wished more larger varieties (shade trees) were endorsed. Councilman Devlin responded that ornamental trees are often chosen to avoid interference with utility pole lines. Ms. Kuperman emphasized the emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle species for which the Nature Center is surveying its trees for infection, is inflicting great damage to the vitality of oaks in the region.

## **Plan Review**

### **Planning Board**

11 WILLIS DRIVE: This is an application for Major Soil Movement Approval involving the construction of a new 1-family house. The Commission made the following comments: 1.) prohibit greater than 2 tree removals; 2.) refrain from relocating existing trees elsewhere on-site due to impact such would have on their health.

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## **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 8:56pm. The motion passed unanimously.