

Environmental Commission

September 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes

**Prepared by:
Paul Demarest**

Opening Remarks

Ms. Pergament called to order, at 7:41pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Thursday, September 12, 2019 in the Council Chamber of Borough Hall.

Attendance

Present

Steven Isaacson- Full Member
Miriam Lockhart- Full Member
Scott Devlin- Full Member/Council Liaison
Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
Nancy Pergament- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

Thomas Colwell- Chairman
Grace Whitney- Full Member
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1

In light of Chairman Colwell's absence, Ms. Pergament served as Acting Chairwoman for this evening.

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Lockhart, to approve the minutes for the April 11, 2019 Meeting with 1 noted correction. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Pergament, to approve the minutes for the June 13, 2019 Meeting with noted corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Mr. Isaacson, to approve the minutes for the July 11, 2019 Meeting with 1 noted correction. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Ms. Heymann, to approve the minutes for the *July 23, 2019 Special Meeting*. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Pergament, to approve the minutes for the August 8, 2019 Meeting with noted corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Councilman Devlin, to approve the minutes for the *August 22, 2019 Special Meeting*. The motion passed unanimously.

Open to Public

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

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Pergament provided a summary of the Commission's expenditures to date from its 2019 operating budget ([see appended account report](#)).

Ms. Pergament said \$687.23 was expended from the Mac Bain Farm subaccount for the purchase of gravel to be utilized for roadway reinforcement at the Farm; she said there is also a pending \$15.00 charge to buy extra keys for the front gate at the Farm. She informed that the Farm's subaccount is now overspent by almost \$100.00 beyond its \$1,000.00 allocation. Ms. Heymann reminded that while the gravel should have been paid for via open spaces monies, the process to do so involves the adoption of an ordinance to draw from a trust fund; she reminded that the Commission must compile its open space funding requests in advance to ensure its needs are addressed and overspending of its operating budget is avoided.

Ms. Pergament announced that as a result of the residence situated at Mac Bain Farm recently being designated as a Historic Landmark, the building will now be overseen by the Historic Preservation Commission in all aspects while the farmland will continue to be administered by the Environmental Commission.

Ms. Pergament stated there has been a delay in the purchase of materials to construct a picnic table supplementing the newly-constructed pergola and benches at Mac Bain Farm; she said the Commission previously agreed to cobble items from quotes obtained from Kuiken Brothers, Inc. (\$402.55) and Dykes Lumber, Inc. (\$289.16) resulting in a total revised cost of \$323.56. She said that amount will be charged to the Commission's Miscellaneous subaccount, which still has its total budgeted amount of \$750.00 available. Ms. Heymann suggested the Commission delay a vote to approve the lumber purchase until next year being the table cannot be built before October 19th, the date of the Harvest Festival and, thus, there would be additional money available for unexpected purchases through the end of 2019; Ms. Lockhart reminded that there is an Eagle Scout, Tyler Pendleton, who offered to construct the picnic table this autumn and the Commission should make every effort to accommodate his schedule. Ms. Heymann opined the budgeted \$1,050.00 in the Fall Festival (Harvest Festival) subaccount would likely not cover all expenses for this year's event. Councilman Devlin stated transferring monies between all subaccounts, other than Secretarial Support, is acceptable.

A motion was made by Councilman Devlin to approve the purchase of lumber from both Kuiken Brothers, Inc. and Dykes Lumber, Inc. for a total of \$323.56 in order to construct a picnic table at Mac Bain Farm. The motion was not seconded upon the suggestion by Ms. Lockhart to discuss the anticipated cost for the upcoming Harvest Festival.

In response to Mr. Isaacson, Ms. Lockhart said open space funding requests can be made throughout the year, noting it is at least a 3 month process.

Ms. Pergament reminded the Commission it already approved a vote for the purchase of lumber at its August 8, 2019 Meeting, therefore, it agreed the request would be forwarded to the Borough for processing.

Old Business

2019 Harvest Festival

Ms. Pergament said \$58.92 would be spent on paint and associated supplies for the Festival in addition to \$407.00 in refreshments from the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue); she said the remaining balance from the allocated \$1,050.00 in the related subaccount can be used towards buying 3"- to 6"-diameter pumpkins, for which the Borough already obtained quotes from 2 suppliers: 1.) Greener Touch Landscaping (GTL) Co. for \$562.50; 2.) Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. for \$656.25. Despite not submitting the cheaper estimate, Mr. Isaacson felt Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. should be given the opportunity to lower its original offer to that of its competitor taking into account the plethora of ways in which the Lupardi family volunteers for the Borough. Ms. Heymann replied protocol would be for the Borough to reject both offers and allow for new quotes. Ms. Pergament stated the same number of pumpkins last year should be bought this year, noting neither quotes states how many pumpkins are in each order; Ms. Heymann pointed out there were approximately 30 pumpkins left over post-Festival in 2018. In response to Ms. Pergament, Mr. Isaacson acknowledged that municipal bidding requires the lowest bid be chosen, but he emphasized that the Harvest Festival has no admission fee to residents and, thus, running out of supplies during the event should not be of concern to the Commission. Ms. Lockhart replied the Commission should expect a greater public turnout for the Festival given the exponential increase in Farm visitors this year over prior years; Mr. Isaacson agreed, saying the increase in public use of the Farm must be reflected in the Commission's request for budget increases in 2020. Councilman Devlin opposed delaying a vote on purchasing pumpkins this evening because the prices received are likely pre-order prices and they probably will rise the closer it gets to Halloween.

A motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Ms. Heymann, to postpone a vote to approve the purchasing of pumpkins for the 2019 Harvest Festival to allow time for Mr. Isaacson to contact Lupardi Nursery, Inc. about reducing its price to the lower of the 2 bids received (\$562.50). The motion passed with Councilman Devlin abstaining.

Mr. Isaacson expressed disappointment about there being no funds made available for live entertainment (music, storytelling and/or demonstrations), which has been provided at every Festival since its inception 11 years ago; he noted John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm, could hopefully perform wood milling during the event to which Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Mr. Mc Caffrey has not confirmed he can do so. Mr. Isaacson said he had arranged for the same musician who provided entertainment at this year's Northern Valley Earth Fair to play the Festival, but for \$150.00. He reminded that the Recreation Commission spends tens of thousands of dollars on its annual Memorial Day and Labor Day festivities; Ms. Pergament noted the Festival's subaccount budget was increased by \$250.00 for 2019. She said 18 gallons of apple cider and 5 gallons of water are slated to be purchased, to which the Commission felt the former was much more than necessary; Ms. Lockhart said paper cups, not plastic bottles, should be used during the event. Ms. Heymann recalled having 4 to 5 gallons of apple cider left over from last year's event while running short on water.

The Commission agreed the Harvest Festival would be from 3:00pm (not 2:00pm) to 5:00pm on October 19th given the Annual Borough-wide Garage/Yard Sale sponsored by the Food Pantry takes place the same day. Mr. Isaacson offered to order a banner for the event to display at the Nature Center, but asked what information it should relay. The Commission agreed it should

include the rain date would be October 20th, noting waiting an entire week if inclement weather becomes an issue, could cause pumpkins to spoil if left in the field for too long. It also decided the banner should say the Festival is for Borough residents only, though the rule will not actually be enforced. Lastly, it noted the word “s’mores” is misspelled and asked that a better quality image/picture should be printed on the banner.

The Commission decided to forgo producing postcards, via Mr. Isaacson, that are customarily distributed to the local public school system; Mr. Isaacson noted in years past many non-public schools were not made aware of the event. Instead, the Commission asked Mr. Isaacson to provide the artwork for the Festival advertisement to be posted on social media.

Given his disappointment with the overall planning of the Harvest Festival, Mr. Isaacson dismissed himself early from the meeting; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg understood his frustration, in part, due to the Borough’s very strict purchasing procedures imposed upon its volunteers. Ms. Heymann believed the \$407.00 slated for Festival purchases at the Stop & Shop supermarket should remain given the tremendous rise in Mac Bain Farm’s popularity this year.

With respect to live entertainment, Ms. Heymann agreed to seek out free talent for the Festival in hopes of the Commission spending any money that would have gone towards a musician elsewhere.

In light of Mr. Isaacson’s early departure, Ms. Lockhart agreed to finalize the design of the banner, with Ms. Pergament stating the dates/times should be revised but mentioning of live entertainment should be omitted.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Lockhart said a quote was obtained recently from Dimick Fence Co. in the amount of \$540.00 to install 2 extra wire coil pieces for 3, 20’ sections of fencing at Mac Bain Farm; Ms. Pergament noted none of the \$2,000 in open space funding approved in 2019 for fence repairs at the Farm has been spent. Ms. Lockhart said she asked the fencing contractor about going into contract with the Borough whereby annual maintenance is provided at the Farm, but she was told it does not offer such to its customers. Councilman Devlin agreed to finalize the \$540.00 expenditure with the Borough since keeping the Farm from being inundated with deer is a top priority.

2020 Environmental Commission Budget Proposal

Ms. Heymann stressed the installation of an irrigation system at Mac Bain Farm should be contemplated for next year’s budget; she noted it would be possible for the Borough Engineer’s firm, Boswell Engineering, Inc., to design the system, believing such would cost at least \$10,000.00. Ms. Lockhart reminded that the contractor suggested by Mr. Mc Caffrey provided a \$21,000.00 quote for both a design and installation. Ms. Pergament pointed out that 2019 open space funding approved for the Commission relating to irrigation at the Farm cannot exceed \$3,800.00; she said Chairman Colwell would find out if the allocated funds can be used for having the design prepared. Ms. Heymann emphasized that a premium system (not including electric) would cost several tens of thousands of dollars, noting the former Borough Administrator, Arthur Dolson, got a quote for \$70,000.00+ last year. She opined that the \$21,000.00 quote obtained by Mr. Mc Caffrey would not be adequate for a layout such as the Farm’s; Ms. Pergament noted that for the supplemental electric work, the cost would rise to about \$35,000.00. Ms. Heymann pointed out that a negative aspect to installing an irrigation system is that the crop paths would become permanent and if the system was so vital, Mr. Mc Caffrey would have lobbied for it much more than he has. As a compromise, she said the available \$3,800.00 could be spent on installing a spigot to allow for Farm volunteers and

visitors to wash off upon exiting the premises as well as to accommodate hand-watering crops where possible. She said she would informally discuss the feasibility of having a spigot at the front gate with the Borough Engineer, Nick De Nicola, PE. In response to Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, the Commission agreed the installation of outlet(s) at the front kiosk to negate the use of extension cords was not warranted given the expected increased cost if it were not to be installed at the same time as an irrigation system (use of same trench, etc.).

Schauble Park Complaints (Tree Maintenance & Illegal Bicycle/Motorcycle Activity)

Ms. Pergament said she is awaiting feedback from Chairman Colwell before issuing a written response to neighbors' complaints about tree maintenance and illegal use of the grounds as bicycle/motorcycle obstacle course(s) based on the Commission's recent tour of Schauble Park; she said the Interim Borough Administrator, Edward Hynes, would contact the Department of Public Works about providing signage at the Park to inform the public that dumping yard debris is illegal.

Ms. Heymann inquired about the Borough placing a compost bin near Haring Street to assist in reducing the amount of yard debris being dumped in Schauble Park while promoting a sustainable practice and eliminating the need for no dumping signage. The Commission determined such an idea would not be endorsed by those residing in the vicinity due to the odors produced; Ms. Pergament said landscaping contractors would still dump illegally in the area despite a compost bin.

New Business

Spotted Lanternfly

Ms. Lockhart said a request was received from the public for the Commission to discuss the nuisance being brought on by the very invasive planthopper; The Commission agreed both it and the Shade Tree Commission should address the matter being the insect impacts trees tremendously.

Liaison Reports

No reports were given.

Plan Review

Zoning Board of Adjustment

162 CLOSTER DOCK ROAD: This is an application for a Use Variance and Site Plan Approval involving the construction of an addition (containing 4 apartments), 2 balconies, canopy and parking lot modifications. The Commission had no comments.

Adjournment

As a recommendation from Shade Tree Commission member, Todd Bradbury, Ms. Pergament distributed an action item template for the Environmental Commission to utilize during its meetings to make it easier to follow who has been given what task to handle.

On behalf of the absent Ms. Abrams, Ms. Bouton-Goldberg asked that a document be created which contained each Commission member's email address and phone number. Ms. Pergament said such information is likely already provided in the Commission's Google Docs

and Google Sheets, web-based programs designed to enhance preparation and organization for events, tasks, etc.; regardless, she promised to follow through with Ms. Abrams' request.

Ms. Pergament said the Borough website still indicates the Commission's meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month instead of the 2nd Thursday; Ms. Heymann reminded its schedule was changed a few years ago so to no longer conflict with the Municipal Court's sessions. Ms. Pergament said the online directory of the Commission is also outdated; Councilman Devlin promised to have the Borough's Information Technology (IT) Coordinator, Kevin Whitney, address the issue. With respect to the email address assigned to the Commission (envcomm@closternj.us), Councilman Devlin informed that all email sent to the address is automatically rerouted to the inbox of Paul Demarest, the Borough employee who prepares the Commission's minutes.

Ms. Pergament informed that the Commission received notification from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection about remediation of a leaking heating oil storage tank located at 63 Harvard Street.

Ms. Heymann said she had not received a response to her submission for nominating Mac Bain Farm for awards presented annually by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), which will take place in October.

Ms. Lockhart questioned how many meeting absences are allowed before a Commission member is removed from serving. Ms. Heymann answered that removal results from 4 unexcused absences based on monthly meetings; Councilman Devlin concurred, noting if a board/commission meets bi-monthly, removal is required after 2 months. The Commission was no certain if the absences had to be consecutive to warrant removal.

The Commission tabled discussions on how to spend its 2019 allocated open space funds relating to new fencing at Buzzoni Farm Park and trail maintenance/improvements; it agreed to also table talking about the Borough's ongoing attempt at becoming certified by the Sustainable Jersey program.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Councilman Devlin, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35pm. The motion passed unanimously.