

# Environmental Commission

## Thursday, August 13, 2020

### Regular Meeting

### Minutes

**\*THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC\***

#### Call to Order

7:34pm

#### Attendance

##### **PRESENT-**

Nancy Pergament- Chairwoman  
 Thomas Colwell- Full Member  
 Steven Isaacson- Full Member  
 Miriam Lockhart- Full Member  
 Councilman Scott Devlin- Full Member  
 Sophie Heymann- Full Member  
 Krishna Rege- Alternate #1  
 Mordechai Feibish- Alternate #2  
 Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Associate Member

##### **ABSENT-**

Grace Whitney- Full Member  
 Ethel Abrams- Associate Member

#### Open to Public

- John Mc Caffrey (caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm);

#### Minutes

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Ms. Heymann to approve minutes for June 11, 2020 Meeting (motion passed unanimously);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to approve minutes for July 9, 2020 Meeting with noted amendments (motion passed unanimously);

#### Treasurer's Report

- 2020 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meetings/Dues (~\$225.00); Miscellaneous (\$750.00); Secretarial Support (\$840.00); Mac Bain Farm (~\$475.00); Harvest/Fall Festival (\$1,500.00); Cleanup Day (\$400.00 including customary \$300.00 Bergen County grant);

## Committee Reports

#### Executive

(\*Leader\*- Colwell; w/ Pergament & Devlin)

- ad hoc committee organized by Mayor John Glidden to advise Governing Body on Mac Bain Farm caretaker's lease drafting convenes again on August 14, 2020;
- Governing Body tabled vote on Resolution authorizing Borough to initiate request for proposals (RFP) relating to Mac Bain Farm's caretaker until its August 26, 2020 Meeting as accommodation to hear all public comments;
- existing 10-year lease with Mr. Mc Caffrey) expired on July 31, 2020 with Governing Body extending lease additional 60 days to allow for continued renegotiations;

- ad hoc committee is calculating true cost of operating Farm (utilizing previous 2 seasons as benchmark) to validate estimate by Mr. Mc Caffrey that his most recent 10-year stint as Farm caretaker equates to \$610,000.00 in labor costs taking into account his invoices are likely somewhat inflated and include charges not directly related to Farm operations (all invoices received by Mr. Mc Caffrey to date are indicated as paid in full);
- Commission should lobby Governing Body to place Mac Bain Farm on its Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) in its entirety to protect it from being sold and/or future development (small area on-site located near Anderson Avenue contains wetlands and is protected by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)-administered Green Acres program);
- rezoning Mac Bain Farm from District 1 (Residential A) to District 7 (Conservation) is more complicated approach to protecting it from sale/development as opposed to placing site on ROSI;
- Farm must quantify income in order for site to be considered for farmland protection (process was followed by previous owner of 119 Hickory Lane when selling private farmland to Metropolitan Farm, LLC resulting in windfall provided by State of New Jersey);
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will research which aspects of NJDEP's Green Acres program and Borough's ROSI overlap in terms of funding ramifications and how such impacts utilization of land;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will provide Commission's feedback on both Mac Bain Farm's protection and its caretaker's lease to ad hoc committee;

### **Mac Bain Farm Operations**

(\*Leader\*- Lockhart; w/ Heymann, Rege & Bouton-Goldberg)

- 320 households are registered with Farm;
- certain crops have been turned over and double-cropping is being undertaken to ensure plenty of lettuces, pumpkins, sunflowers, okra, beets and squash (seeds come up twice as quick based on soil conditions);
- crops are being watered adequately but vegetable and weed seeds are growing at same rate;
- recent purchase of plastic mulch layer by Mr. Mc Caffrey will greatly reduce time spent on manual weeding, simplify alternating crop row layouts, facilitate more robust plants, prevent produce falling onto ground from spoiling (adding time in which Farm visitors can pick) and allow Farm to continue with organic methods without introducing herbicides, etc.;
- Mr. Mc Caffrey is establishing new private farm in Borough of Alpine (870 Closter Dock Road);
- temporary on- and off-street parking arrangements established by Police Department to ensure social distancing of Farm visitors and volunteers have been acclimated to;
- Food Pantry is not accepting food donations in wake of Pandemic (Farm continues to donate produce to food banks located in Boroughs of Norwood and Northvale as well as City of Englewood);
- spreadsheet(s) have been created to track Farm statistics such as food donations, household registrants, daily picking rates and volunteer scheduling;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will spearhead organizing Farm event involving photography/art classes and/or contest;

### **Mac Bain Farm Property**

(\*Leader\*- Pergament; w/ Colwell & Feibish)

- tarp for providing shade and cover from inclement weather under pergola was ordered on July 1, 2020 but likely would not be received before September 1, 2020;
- \$3,200.00 quote to install bars along bottom of fencing to hinder deer access was received from Dimick Fence Co. in early spring (estimate does not include tree-damaged fencing);
- \$500.00 in open space funds allocated to Farm fencing rehabilitation has been spent (\$1,500.00 remains);
- \$3,800.00 in open space funds allocated for installation of irrigation system would not cover cost for spigot and electrical outlet at kiosk providing source for Farm visitors and volunteers to wash themselves/produce, charge cellular phones, etc.;
- full-scale irrigation system to replace current system (series of garden hoses connected to water well on-site and water line previously installed by Mr. Mc Caffrey) would cost ~\$100,000.00 and could negatively-impact Farm's topography;

- use of water well on-site as source of drinking water for visiting public requires rigorous testing by NJDEP beforehand;
- rehabilitation of dollhouse (Eagle Scout candidate project) will include reinforcement of foundation to prevent woodchuck and other rodent infiltration and is slated to be completed in few days once started (construction should not interfere with visitors when Farm is open);
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will ask Borough Administrator (Edward Hynes) if Borough's insurance policy covers repairs to tree-damaged fencing at Farm;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell and Councilman Devlin will inquire about timeframe in which Commission must submit its next open space funding request to Governing Body;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will ask Department of Public Works (DPW) about feasibility of installing seasonal water utility meter in Farm residence to accommodate installation of irrigation system for farmland;

### **Events & Publicity**

(\*Leader\*- Whitney; w/ Isaacson, Lockhart & Bouton-Goldberg)

- Call to Action Day (scaled-back version of annual Borough-wide Cleaning Effort in light of Pandemic) could be 2-day event (weekend), not 1 day, in late September/early October to avoid humid weather with scheduled time intervals for limited group of attendees and distribution of pre-package snacks;
- Governing Body must be informed well in advance of Call to Action Day occurring to coordinate placing collected trash in front of Borough Hall for public awareness (residents will select where they concentrate cleaning while maintaining social distance);
- moving forward with scaled-back version of Harvest Festival is preferable so long as enough activities/features intended for children (music playing, storytelling, etc.) are retained while adhering to social distancing measures (making s'mores and decorating pumpkins would invite congregating of attendees);
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will spearhead planning scaled-back version of Festival including purchase of small pumpkins;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will discuss safety measures for Festival with Office of Emergency Management;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Mc Caffrey will handle flower, hay and large pumpkin displays for Festival;

### **Trails & Passive Parks**

(\*Leader\*- Isaacson; w/ Heymann, Rege & Bouton-Goldberg)

- many trails throughout Closter and Borough of Demarest are blocked with fallen trees/limbs due to recent storms;
- trail signage with message "Keep Pets Under Voice Control" has been corrected to stop confusion about unleashed pets;
- trail signage must cite relevant ordinance(s) in order for violations to be upheld in Municipal Court;
- trail located in Buzzoni Farm Park should be named in honor of late Commission member Arthur Goldberg;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will take inventory as to where DPW could address tree blockages throughout trail system;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will clean surfaces of trail map pedestal signs in near future;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will write memo to Governing Body for guidance on issues raised by nearby residents of Schauble Park pertaining to unauthorized dirt bike obstacle courses and jumps on-site;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will refer Boy Scouts installing/repairing boardwalks for Borough of Demarest to Mr. Colwell to potentially do same for Closter's trail system;

### **Education & Advocacy**

(\*Leader\*- Heymann; w/ Lockhart, Whitney & Abrams)

- no progress has been made on designing and printing brochure educating public on recycling and sustainability either through Commission or as Girl Scout project;
- education program is warranted to enlighten public on importance of trees to counter negative online comments about Borough's perceived harsh tree removal regulations in aftermath of recent storms and subsequent utility power outages;

- utility companies are given much leeway when pruning/removing trees in Borough's right-of-way that impact their above-ground and underground power lines;
- tree health is often compromised on construction sites because of placement of foundations and storage of equipment, etc. within driplines;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Heymann will discuss recycling practices and proactive programs offered by Borough's vendor (Interstate Waste Services Co.) with Recycling Coordinator (Carol Dacey) as part of crafting brochure;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will discuss ways to celebrate/promote Borough's 20-year Tree City USA program membership with Shade Tree Commission;

### **Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites**

(\*Leader\*- Colwell; w/ Isaacson & Feibish)

- inquiry received from property owner of 15 Gwynne Court about safety hazard caused from bank erosion of nearby NJDEP-designated Category 1 waterway (Charlie's Creek) resulted in Borough Engineer (Nick De Nicola, PE) suggesting embankment consisting of boulders as preventative measure instead of installing fence which would likely succumb to collapsing bank;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will ask Mr. De Nicola and Borough's Tree Expert (William Fuchs) to participate in potential online lecture series to educate public on drainage and tree preservation respectively;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will contact high school student (Sophia Suarez) interested in joining Commission;

---

### **New Business**

- no new matters were discussed;

---

### **Liaison Reports**

#### **Governing Body**

(\*Liaison\*- Devlin)

- report was not given;

#### **Planning Board**

(\*Liaison\*- Heymann)

- Board is cognizant of tree preservation when reviewing development applications;
- construction activity remains high in spite of Pandemic;

#### **Shade Tree Commission**

(\*Liaison\*- Pergament)

- report was not given;

#### **Historic Preservation Commission**

(\*Liaison\*- Bouton-Goldberg)

- report was not given;

---

### **Adjournment**

9:44pm