

Environmental Commission Thursday, November 12, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

7:33pm

ATTENDANCE

Present

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

Absent

- Ethel Abrams- Associate Member

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- Sophia Suarez (high school student wishing to join Commission);

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to approve minutes for August 13, 2020 Meeting as reformatted from quasi-transcribed to abridged (motion passed unanimously);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to approve minutes for October 8, 2020 Meeting (motion passed unanimously);

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2020 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meetings/Dues (\$225.00); Miscellaneous (\$750.00); Secretarial Support (\$240.00); Mac Bain Farm (\$474.00); Harvest/Fall Festival (\$1,500.00); Cleanup Day (\$400.00 including customary \$300.00 Bergen County grant);
- whatever remains of Commission's \$6,540.00 Operating Budget for 2020 does not carryover to 2021 if it is not spent by December 31st;
- Commission's 2021 Operating Budget should not see reduction from 2020's adopted amounts due to Pandemic-related cancellations/rescheduling of events resulting in larger than usual end-of-year balances;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will email Subaccount Status Report to Committees to assist in both deciding how to spend remaining 2020 funds (assuming future open space funding requests would allow for

fencing repairs at Mac Bain Farm and installation of picnic table and 2 benches at Buzzoni Farm Park) and preparation of 2021 Operating Budget proposal;

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive

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

- ad hoc committee organized by Mayor John Glidden to advise Governing Body on drafting Mac Bain Farm caretaker's lease has not met in several weeks;
- short-term lease renegotiations between Borough and current Farm caretaker (John Mc Caffrey) remain ongoing but are being hindered by apparent unauthorized shed installation on-site;

Mac Bain Farm Operations

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

- 390 households are registered with Farm;
- Farm closes to public on November 1st coinciding with season's end;
- spreadsheets tracking daily/weekly statistics on visitation, Farm volunteers, etc. will assist in planning for 2021 season;
- deer and groundhog infiltration in early September brought demise of otherwise successful okra crops;
- Mr. Mc Caffrey has not replied to Committee's inquiries in recent months as to why some crops were not watered sufficiently and some seedlings were not transferred from pots;
- **ACTION**- Committee will strive to have better communication in 2021 with whoever is selected to be Farm caretaker;
- **ACTION**- Commission will seek advice from Borough Attorney (Edward Rogan, Esq.) regarding ramifications of implementing/removing restrictions on strollers and wheelchairs;

Mac Bain Farm Property

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

- additional quotes have been obtained from Dimick Fence Co. and purchase order has been generated for fence rehabilitation;
- painting of newly-constructed shed is ongoing and will be completed during warmer weather;
- 2 teachers who participated in recent plein air sessions should be requested for future such events which hopefully will be better attended;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Lockhart will contact Dimick Fence Co. to confirm start date of fence repairs in December;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will further attempt in 2021 to convince Borough Administrator (Edward Hynes) to have seasonal water utility meter installed at front kiosk to accommodate spigot for people to clean themselves and wash produce as well as electrical outlet for power source (shed to house meter could be acquired from Lupardi's Nursery, Inc.);

Events & Publicity

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

- cancelled Cleanup Day, Northern Valley Earth Fair and Harvest Festival will resume in 2021 contingent upon easing of restrictions (planning for Cleanup Day is essentially complete allowing for Spring 2021 date if permitted);
- **ACTION**- Committee will attempt in 2021 to exceed participation/attendance of 2019's events;
- **ACTION**- Commission will organize additional event in 2021 revolved around aspects of planting season at Mac Bain Farm;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Whitney will evaluate if and what website initiatives such as updates, links, etc. should be handled by Committee;

Trails & Passive Parks

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

- Borough received proposal from local mountain biking club to secure and enhance unauthorized bicycle obstacle courses made for racing and stunt riding installed at Schauble Park without expanding them into nearby walking trails identified with blue blaze;

- Commission succeeded in both trash receptacles and signage being installed throughout Schauble Park in response to complaints from nearby property owners about unsightly and hazardous conditions brought on by courses;
- proposal offers 3 options which range in cost from essentially nothing to \$100,000.00 all of which call for removal of dead trees or stumps only;
- enhancements to courses could result in increased usage by bikers not residing in Borough as well as increased vehicular traffic and parking in vicinity of settled neighborhood (courses must be made available to general public regardless of residency if public funds are utilized for improvements);
- Borough of Franklin Lakes is only other municipality in Bergen County with similar bicycling accommodations as situated in Schauble Park according to club;
- proposal is sponsored by Recreation Commission which may cause confusion about whether courses would be regulated by it or Environmental Commission being Schauble Park is passive park;
- it is premature to organize meeting between Environmental Commission, Chairperson of Recreation Commission (James Oettinger) and club representative since proposal may not meet Borough's legal review and insurance requirements;
- signage for Buzzoni Farm Park is being restored by Department of Public Works (DPW);
- **ACTION**- Committee will draft response to course proposal opining whether Schauble Park should remain under control of Environmental Commission as passive park or jurisdiction should be transferred to Recreation Commission being its utilization would become more sports-related;
- **ACTION**- Committee will devise ways in 2021 to enhance trails located in Buzzoni Farm Park such as hanging birdhouses along pathway adorned with pines, revitalizing pond and installing butterfly garden and beehives;
- **ACTION**- Committee will propose ideas in 2021 to improve Pollack Square from empty meadow to park with pathways, gazebo, tables, benches, maze and tree plantings dedicated to Borough volunteers;

Education & Advocacy

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

- State of New Jersey passed comprehensive plastic bag ban to be gradually implemented over 18 months (statewide ban negates Borough action on its own ban proposal);
- Committee is awaiting response from Nicholas Shapiro (3rd grade teacher employed with Hillside Elementary School) about establishing online lecture series;
- project spearheaded by Girl Scout volunteer regarding DPW and Interstate Waste Services Co. (Borough's recycling vendor) validating which recyclables are accepted by Borough is ongoing;
- **ACTION**- Committee will collaborate with Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites Committee to recommend series of green building and sustainability practices (with emphasis on new construction) to Planning Board in 2021 in hopes of incorporating them into ordinances and Master Plan, improving Commission's advocacy efforts as well as interaction with other Borough entities;

Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites

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

- Committee took into account site visit findings and green building/design concepts when drafting administrative report for 231 & 239 Herbert Avenue which are subject properties of application to Zoning Board of Adjustment for Use Variance and Site Plan Approval to construct assisted living, independent living and memory care facility;
- Governing Body may consider ordinance change mandating applicants to digitally submit applications to Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment to streamline plan review process for those Borough entities requested to provide administrative reports;
- **ACTION**- Committee will revise administrative report for 231 & 239 Herbert Avenue to include request that Board prepares its own traffic study taking into account both likely increased emergency vehicle traffic given age of proposed residents and possible redevelopment of 84 Herbert Avenue which is slated to be sold in near future;

NEW BUSINESS

- Recreation Commission is proposing joint effort with Environmental Commission to construct bridge linking Memorial Park and nearby 9/11 memorial site (Remembrance Park) in hopes of it being completed by 25th anniversary of September 11 attacks;
- bridge would require New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection approval because it would span waterway designated as Category-1;
- total cost of bridge project is estimated to be \$270,000.00 and its construction would require many tree removals;
- bridge could connect trail system which stops at north end of Memorial Park and restarts at Closter Public Library;
- appurtenances such as chess tables could be installed to make greater use of Remembrance Park;
- Chapter 181 of Borough Code may require additional amendment(s) to provide adequate oversight of tree removal (40+ tree removals are proposed at 675 Closter Dock Road);
- **ACTION**- Commission will brainstorm ideas/projects to involve Ms. Suarez as quasi-Commission member in 2021;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will contact Borough's Information Technology Coordinator (Kevin Whitney) for status on updating Commission's roster and uploading approved minutes on Borough website;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Heymann to approve Commission's 2021 Meeting Schedule consisting of 12 dates (no Special Meetings) held on 2nd Thursday of each month, starting at 7:30pm and contingent upon there being no conflict with Veterans Day (motion passed unanimously);

LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- Councilman Devlin won reelection and will continue to serve as Commission's Council Liaison;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- report was not given;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Pergament)

- portion of Borough website dedicated to Commission is being updated including uploaded pictures from 2020 Arbor Day poster contest;

Historic Preservation Commission

(*Liaison*- Bouton-Goldberg)

- **ACTION**- Ms. Bouton-Goldberg will email Commission members wording of proposed signage to be installed at Blanch Avenue to commemorate its Historic Landmark designation (signage will mention contribution of late former Environmental Commission member Arthur Goldberg);

ADJOURNMENT

9:15pm