

Environmental Commission

Thursday, October 8, 2020

Regular Meeting

Minutes

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

Call to Order

7:32pm

Attendance

PRESENT-

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

ABSENT-

Grace Whitney- Full Member
 Councilman Scott Devlin- Full Member
 Ethel Abrams- Associate Member

Open to Public

- no one from public spoke;

Minutes

- **ACTION-** preparer of Commission's minutes (Paul Demarest) will distribute them 1 week in advance of subsequent meeting dates contingent upon recordings being received from Borough's Information Technology Coordinator (Kevin Whitney) in timely fashion;
- **VOTE-** motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to approve minutes for August 27, 2020 Meeting (motion passed unanimously);
- **VOTE-** motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Mr. Colwell to approve minutes for September 10, 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 (\$360.00); 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 has not convened for several weeks;
- 2nd 10-year lease between Borough and existing caretaker/resident of Mac Bain Farm (John Mc Caffrey) expired on July 31, 2020 with both parties agreeing to 60-day extension which expired on September 30, 2020;

- offer by Governing Body to extend Mr. Mc Caffrey's lease to December 31, 2021 has yet to be accepted;
- **ACTION**- Commission will adhere to 9:30pm meeting adjournment time;
- **ACTION**- Committees will strive to provide reports of no more than 5 minutes each during Commission meetings excluding time reserved for follow-up discussion;
- **ACTION**- order in which Committee Reports are listed on Commission's agendas will rotate each meeting to discourage preference except for Executive Committee which will remain first;

Mac Bain Farm Operations

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

- 380 households are registered with Farm;
- autumn hours in which Farm is open to public are regularly adjusted due to less daylight and cooler temperatures (last day to pick crops this season is November 1, 2020);
- lettuce and beet crops remain plentiful;
- Food Pantry will accept food donations this evening for 1st time since Pandemic began;
- Farm should be rebranded as farmland located within Borough park to encourage its use before and after picking season by public regardless of residency;
- **ACTION**- Committee will reconsider both its ban on strollers within Farm which is intended to prevent concealing of excessive picking by visitors and limited accessibility on-site to those with handicaps;

Mac Bain Farm Property

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

- makeshift repairs to fencing were made by Mr. Feibish in lieu of paying contractor;
- new breach of fencing at its northern portion in front yard recently appeared;
- 2 pending estimates provided by Dimick Fence Co. for both substantial reinforcement with installation of bars on top and bottom of fencing throughout and repair to tree-damage section totals \$5,000.00 (~\$1,400.00 remains in open space funding allocated for Farm fencing);
- Superintendent of Department of Public Works (DPW/William Dahle) is acquiring estimates for electrical and plumbing work to install outlet and spigot at kiosk providing source for Farm visitors and volunteers to wash themselves/produce, charge cellular phones, etc. (\$3,800.00 remains in open space funding allocated for Farm irrigation system);
- future Commission open space funding requests to Governing Body should be worded more broadly to allow for flexibility in spending and ability to address unforeseen expenses;
- rehabilitation of dollhouse (Eagle Scout candidate project) is completed;
- obtaining quotes for maintenance tasks such as fence repairs should be handled by Borough to allow Commission to dedicate more effort towards neglected open space/passive parks (3 quotes are required for purchases exceeding \$3,000.00);
- **ACTION**- Committee will discuss potential installation of seasonal water utility meter at Farm with Borough Administrator (Edward Hynes) for purposes of irrigating crops;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will ask brother of Eagle Scout candidate who did dollhouse rehabilitation if he is interested in building/installing birdhouses, insect hotels, etc. throughout trail system;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will write letter of recognition to Eagle Scout candidate who rehabilitated dollhouse;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Chairwoman Pergament and seconded by Mr. Colwell to utilize remaining open space funds allocated to Mac Bain Farm for fence rehabilitation on-site to be completed by December 31, 2020 (motion passed with Mr. Isaacson opposing);

Events & Publicity

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

- Commission opted not to host traditional Harvest Festival in light of Pandemic and might delay it altogether with event celebrating planting season occurring in Spring 2021 as possible alternative;
- Call to Action Day (scaled-back version of annual Borough-wide Cleaning Effort) might be rescheduled from October 24, 2020 to Spring 2021;

Trails & Passive Parks

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

- Borough should both rezone Mac Bain Farm from District 1 (Residential A) to District 7 (Conservation) to have additional protection from future development and deem it passive park to expand site for uses beyond farmland (Commission vote on requesting Governing Body to rezone Farm was tabled to November 12, 2020 Meeting);
- Buzzoni Farm Park has been neglected with prior proposals to install butterfly garden and beehive sculptures on-site falling to wayside;
- trail located in Buzzoni Farm Park should be named in honor of late Commission member Arthur Goldberg;
- Pollack Square (open space located at southeastern corner of Closter Dock Road and Piermont Road) is underutilized field with adjacent commuter parking lot and should be enhanced with plantings, walking path, benches, gazebo, etc.;
- Borough can place Mac Bain Farm on Borough's Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) which equates to site being recognized as open space by State of New Jersey;
- inclusion of Mac Bain Farm into New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)-administered Green Acres program would provide superior protection but Farm is not eligible because site has not been funded by NJDEP (Farm was acquired through land swap rather than monetary exchange);
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will confirm with NJDEP its requirements and implications of Mac Bain Farm being included in Green Acres program;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will follow-up on obtaining signage in anticipation of trail being dedicated to Mr. Goldberg (\$4,000.00 and \$6,000.00 remains in open space funding allocated for 3 trail map pedestal signs and trail maintenance respectively);

Education & Advocacy

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

- Committee will not participate in Girl Scout poster project relating to public awareness on recycling being Governing Body initiated it (project has since revealed discrepancy between which recyclables DPW accepts and what Borough's contract with recycling vendor dictates);
- 5 students and 2 teachers partook in 3 plein air painting sessions over 3 days;
- **ACTION**- Commission will write letter of thanks to teachers who partook in plein air painting sessions;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Colwell will contact Nicholas Shapiro (3rd grade teacher employed with Hillside Elementary School) about setting up online lecture series including Mr. Dahle speaking on storm water management issues, Raymond Cywinski (former Mayor of Borough of Demarest and former Tree Expert for Closter) discussing trees, etc.;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson and Mr. Feibish will prepare environmental education offerings for local student body in collaboration with Mr. Shapiro;

Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites

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

- Commission has not been forwarded plans regarding tree removal permit applications for 26 Arnold Avenue, 9 Laurence Court and 675 Closter Dock Road (each involves dozens of proposed removals);
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Pergament will contact Building Department to inquire about protocol for Commission receiving plan review requests in lieu of hard copies since Pandemic began;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will solicit Governing Body to adopt ordinance mandating Building Department, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment to require both digital and hard copies of all received applications and plans irrespective of Pandemic;

New Business

- **ACTION**- Committees will brainstorm goals for 2021 with focus on achievable tasks;
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Liaison Reports

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- report was not given;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- report was not given;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Pergament)

- report was not given;

Historic Preservation Commission

(*Liaison*- Bouton-Goldberg)

- signage recognizing designation of Blanch Avenue as Historic Landmark is forthcoming and will mention contributions of Mr. Goldberg;

Adjournment

9:20pm

