

Environmental Commission

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Regular Meeting

Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:35pm

ATTENDANCE

Present

- Thomas Colwell- Chairman
- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
- Miriam Lockhart- Full Member
- Scott Devlin- Full Member
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member
- Krishna Rege- Full Member
- Mordechai Feibish- Full Member
- Sophia Suarez- Associate Member

Absent

- VACANT- Alternate #1
- VACANT- Alternate #2

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- public questions and/or comments were not presented;

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to approve minutes for March 11, 2021 Meeting with 3 noted amendments (motion passed unanimously);

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2021 *TEMPORARY* Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Subscriptions/Books (\$0.00); Meetings/Dues (\$0.00); Miscellaneous (\$1,140.00); Secretarial Support (\$0.00); Mac Bain Farm (\$0.00); Harvest/Fall Festival (\$0.00); Earth Day (\$0.00); Cleanup Day (\$0.00);
- approval of municipal budget has been delayed due to Pandemic but federal funds will be provided to Borough via American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 once federal government determines how municipalities must utilize funds (State of New Jersey has granted reprieve to municipalities for late budget submissions);
- acquaintance of Mr. Isaacson offered to assist Commission in applying for substantial grants to be awarded via Bergen County's Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund in 2021 for fee of \$500.00 to \$1,000.00;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Councilman Devlin to amend Commission's proposed 2021 Operating Budget to include additional \$1,500.00 for grant writing services when appropriate given Borough's Grant Writer is compensated \$130.00 hourly rate (motion passed with Ms. Lockhart and Ms. Heymann opposing);

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive

(*Leader*- Colwell; w/ Devlin)

- Commission is awaiting feedback from Ordinance Committee about its request to amend Chapter 16 of Borough Code so that Commission members' terms are staggered every 2 years to limit number of reappointments and/or vacancies in given year (5 Commission members saw their terms expire in 2020);
- **ACTION**- Commission members will make effort to log onto open space and recreation planning webinar hosted by Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) scheduled for April 12th;
- **ACTION**- Chairman Colwell and Paul Demarest will make best efforts to provide Commission with received correspondence and prepared minutes at least 2 days and 7 days respectively prior to next meeting dates;

Events

(*Leader*- Rege; w/ Isaacson & Lockhart)

- date of Borough's Cleanup Day has been moved up to April 24th to curtail concerns about poison ivy/oak growth and scheduling conflict with Nature Center event;
- posters advertising Borough's Cleanup Day are posted online;
- volunteers are needed to man tables at 3 different locations in shifts during Borough's 4-hour Cleanup Day with group leaders being assigned to provide oversight;
- **ACTION**- Chairman Colwell will pick up supplies being provided by Bergen County on April 19th;
- **ACTION**- Commission will decide upon new event by its May 13, 2021 Meeting to replace Harvest Festival which will no longer be organized by Commission given jurisdiction of Mac Bain Farm has shifted to committee created by Governing Body (Commission's proposed 2021 Operating Budget requests reallocation of funds from Mac Bain Farm and Harvest/Fall Festival subaccounts totaling \$3,000.00 for future annual event yet to be determined);

Trails & Passive Parks

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

- linkage of various eastern trails by replacing dilapidated/washed up bridge spanning Dwars Kill requires cooperation from Borough of Norwood which is not forthcoming (alternative would be to reconstitute trail along Dwars Kill which existed for 150 years until fencing was installed by prior property owner of 102 Blanch Avenue (David Watkins) to protect sheep from coyotes when parcel was utilized as farmland);
- resistance remains against repurposing abandoned concession building/stand at defunct Closter Swim Club site (Blanch Avenue) with updated restrooms to enhance experience at Buzzoni Farm Park (contamination on-site is limited to soil rather than structures above);
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) approval is required for cleaning out heart-shaped pond located in Buzzoni Farm Park;
- Committee is implementing ideas to enhance Lone Horseman Park, Pollack Square and Pfeiffer Park, which converge at intersection of Closter Dock Road and Piermont Road, such as monument sign being power washed by local resident (William Barbieri) and potential donated material and/or labor by Extech Building Materials, Inc. to install stone arch over monument sign;
- Trek Bicycle Corp., which recently opened store location in Closter Plaza shopping center, has yet to respond to Committee's request for assistance in transforming passive parks located at corner of Closter Dock Road and Piermont Road into destination;
- dog park installation is proposed in Lone Horseman Park despite fitness equipment (later replaced with playground) being installed in passive park by Recreation Commission 25+ years ago without input from Environmental Commission nor taking into consideration that it is not ideal location for children congregating given proximity to thoroughfare or available parking nearby;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will contact Boy Scout Leader (Andrew Baron) about Committee reconsidering whether to have Boy Scouts install boardwalks in Buzzoni Farm Park through muddy stretch lined with pines on either side that is littered with exposed roots due to safety concerns;

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to have Chairman Colwell and herself draft memo requesting Governing Body to procure approximately 100' long right of way (easement) parallel to Dwars Kill from current property owner of 102 Blanch Avenue (Seth Unger) whose fencing is situated along Kill's bank which would restore trail and negate bridge replacement (motion passed unanimously);

Education/Advocacy & Publicity

(*Leader*- Heymann; w/ Lockhart)

- Commission should co-sign letter prepared by Planning Board urging Governing Body to implement sustainability recommendations written in 2002 Master Plan Reexamination but never acted upon;
- recent graduate of Stevens Institute of Technology (Alex Dubro) is volunteering to assist Commission in formulating sustainability proposals;

Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites

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

- current proposal for redevelopment of 624 Piermont Road from abandoned restaurant to child care/daycare center requires plethora of variances and design waiver but gives no consideration to sustainability (it would be 2nd such facility within short distance already experiencing heavy traffic flow and no traffic light);
- environmental master plan was prepared by Commission and incorporated into 2002 Master Plan Reexamination;
- proposals to incorporate sustainability and green building practices into Borough Code is at committee level of Planning Board;
- Commission received correspondence from NJDEP about leaking fuel tank(s) located at 1 Knickerbocker Road;
- **ACTION**- Chairman Colwell will obtain 2019 Master Plan Reexamination from Planning Board Coordinator (Rose Mitchell);

Mac Bain Farm

(*Leader*- Heymann; w/ non-Commission members only)

- newly-formed committee is tasked, under direction of Ms. Heymann and on behalf of Governing Body, with ensuring contract between Farm's caretaker (John Mc Caffrey) and Borough is abided by while enhancing Farm's productivity and attractiveness by encouraging on-site community gardens, photography classes, etc.;
- bamboo located at northeastern corner of Farm has been essentially cleared by Mr. Mc Caffrey though growth will likely continue on adjacent lots due to bamboo's deep roots;
- repairs to fencing along Hickory Lane were completed by Dimick Fence Co. and shrubbery pushing against westerly fencing has been cleared without need for repair;
- deer infiltration devastated winter vegetable crops this past season;
- training of new Farm volunteers is needed;
- Borough is requiring Mr. Mc Caffrey to obtain approval of as-built barn from Building Department;

NEW BUSINESS

- communities are trending towards mandating landscape maintenance contractors be limited to using battery-operated equipment to curtail noise pollution;
- restricting hours in which landscape maintenance can be performed could adversely affect employed homeowners who maintain their own properties;
- Police Department can be notified to enforce Borough's noise pollution ordinance in real time;
- Commission received correspondence requesting it join effort to ban hydraulic fracturing nationally in spite of New Jersey having strict regulations;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Lockhart and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to have Mr. Feibish draft memo requesting Governing Body to amend Chapter 134-7 of Borough Code, which currently reads construction noise (assumed to include landscape maintenance) may be performed weekdays from 7:00am to 7:00pm and weekends and holidays from 9:00am to 7:00pm, no later than April 14, 2021 when group of residents requesting stricter time parameters are scheduled to speak at Mayor and Council meeting (motion passed unanimously);

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Chairman Colwell and seconded by Ms. Heymann to have Ms. Rege coordinate with Director of Nature Center (Marc Gussen) on selecting date to hold virtual discussion on deer overpopulation in region (motion passed unanimously);
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LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- Commission's approved minutes should be posted onto Borough's website in timely fashion;
- public is encouraged to attend Zoning Board of Adjustment meetings and submit questions/comments during its open to public portion of agendas;
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will confirm which Borough-owned parcels are classified as active or passive parks;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- report was not given;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- report was not given;

Historic Preservation Commission

(*Liaison*- VACANT)

- signage commemorating Historic Landmark designation of Blanch Avenue, which includes mention of late former Environmental Commission member Arthur Goldberg's contribution to trails in nearby Buzzoni Farm Park, is complete with similar signage elsewhere being contemplated;
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ADJOURNMENT

- 9:06 pm

