

Environmental Commission

Thursday, August 12, 2021

Regular Meeting

Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:37pm

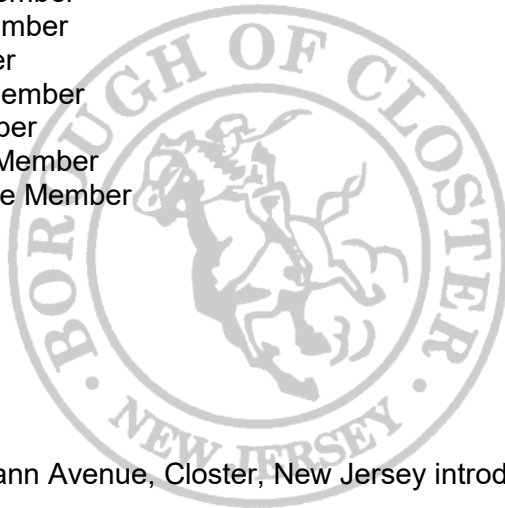
ATTENDANCE

Present

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



OPEN TO PUBLIC

- Bryce Barnes, 3 Lindemann Avenue, Closter, New Jersey introduced himself;

MINUTES

- **VOTE** - motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to approve minutes for July 8, 2021 Meeting with 3 noted amendments (motion passed unanimously);

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2021 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (\$300.00); Miscellaneous (\$625.26); Secretarial Support (\$960.00); Fall Festival (\$1,500.00); Earth Day (\$250.00); Cleanup Day (\$300.00); Passive Parks (\$1,500.00);
- Governing Body adopted municipal budget with Commission's Operating Budget unchanged from last year (\$6,540.00) but with caveats that line item previously dedicated to Mac Bain Farm will be reallocated/renamed Passive Parks as result of Farm's jurisdiction being shifted from Commission to committee organized by Governing Body as well as inclusion of \$2,000.00 in open space funds for trail maintenance performed by Department of Public Works (DPW) which must be encumbered by December 31st;
- Borough recently applied for grant from New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on behalf of Shade Tree Commission as well as another offered by private bank for Improvement Commission to enhance alleyway located between 217 Closter Dock Road and 219 Closter Dock Road which links said thoroughfare and North Lot (no grants have been applied for on behalf of Environmental Commission in 2021);

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive

(*Leader*- Vacant; w/ Devlin)

- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will email Commission his compilation of which Borough-owned parcels are classified as active or passive parks and how jurisdiction of each should be distributed between Environmental Commission, Recreation Commission or Improvement Commission;

Events

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

- recent dedication of Arthur Goldberg Trail and birdhouse exhibit at Buzzoni Farm Park was well-received;
- insect hotel gifted to Commission requires installation at Buzzoni Farm Park;
- Commission may be empowered with disbursing funds to Governing Body-appointed committee now in control of Mac Bain Farm being committee is prohibited from being assigned budget;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to request that Governing Body approve scaled-back version of Borough's 2021 Cleanup Day, due to Pandemic and remaining foliage, to be held on October 2nd from 10:00am to 12:00pm whereby volunteers from Improvement Commission, Pacific American Volunteer Association (PAVA), etc. would clean along Ver Valen Street and rail line in downtown area (motion passed unanimously);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Lockhart to request that Governing Body approve inaugural Fall Festival (in place of Harvest Festival) whereby painting activities, birdhouse exhibit, etc. would occur at Buzzoni Farm Park nearby pond on-site (speaking engagement by former Director/Naturalist of Greenbrook Sanctuary (Nancy Slowik) on birds is under consideration as well) to be held on October 2nd from 3:00am to 5:00pm (motion passed unanimously);

Trails & Passive Parks

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

- installation of meditation area on 1+ acre Borough-owned parcel located near southeastern corner of Hillside Elementary School, which would be roughly ¼ acre in size and remain in its natural state, is being considered (land in question is not currently deemed active or passive park);
- site of potential meditation area is accessible via either trail located at O'Shaughnessy Lane or footbridge near Anderson Brook (approval from Board of Education relating to security concerns is likely required given proximity to school building);
- yellow-blazed trail stretching from behind Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) in southerly direction has impassable portions while others need brush cleared along with removal of unruly vine growth at David Scholz Bridge;
- red-blazed trail stretching from Durie Avenue to east bank of Dwars Kill near David Scholz Bridge requires vegetation removal;
- local landscaping contractor and Shade Tree Commission member (Todd Bradbury) provided \$2,000.00 quote to create 6'- to 8'-wide path (including clear brush and trim growth less tree removal) along trail system between Demarest Avenue and David Scholz Bridge (public bid is not required for such expense but 2 additional quotes are);
- **ACTION**- Commission members will visit site of potential meditation area to analyze feasibility of Improvement Commission spearheading project and conduct vote to endorse at its September 9, 2021 Meeting;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson, Ms. Lockhart and Mr. Barnes (member of public present this evening) will inspect yellow- and red-blazed trails requiring maintenance and determine what aspects can be handled by PAVA volunteers, etc. and what necessitates hired professionals;

Education/Advocacy & Publicity

(*Leader*- Heymann; w/ Lockhart)

- campaign should be waged to compel Borough's residents adhere to its recycling standards in conjunction with strict enforcement measures such as Borough's recycling vendor (Interstate

Waste Services Co.) refusing to collect improperly-gathered items at curbside which should correct residents' behavior swiftly;

Plan Review, Environmental Notification & Contaminated Sites

(*Leader*- Feibish; w/ Isaacson)

- environmental master plan under consideration by Planning Board is geared towards protecting Borough from negative impact of large development projects (Zoning Board of Adjustment is considering applications for 624 Piermont Road and 231 and 239 Herbert Avenue which relate to construction of new child care/daycare center and congregate care facility respectively);
- traffic study submitted by applicant for 624 Piermont Road is lacking in that it reflects solely 1 day in June 2021 when vehicle activity was drastically reduced in wake of Pandemic (Board retained its own planner and traffic consultant for said application);
- proposed tree removal in connection with new 1-family house at 154 Alpine Drive should be limited and robust mitigation plan should be required by Planning Board;
- large and native species (less arborvitae) should be required for mitigation, payment in lieu of mitigation should be limited to maximize replanting, existing living fence consisting of pines along rear yard line should be retained and confirmation that proposed infiltration trench would not be overwhelmed and cause flooding should be required by Planning Board in connection with new 1-family house at 63 Harvard Street;
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will provide Commission members email reminders and links to upcoming virtual Zoning Board of Adjustment meetings when 624 Piermont Road and 231 and 239 Herbert Avenue applications are scheduled to present;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Feibish will draft letter on behalf of Commission to be transmitted to Zoning Board of Adjustment regarding its concern about traffic impact associated with 624 Piermont Road application;

Mac Bain Farm

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

- 106 additional volunteers are registered with Farm;
- yellow squash, green squash, zucchini and cucumber crops are plentiful on-site;

NEW BUSINESS

- new business was not discussed;
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LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- Governing Body is revising proposed amendments to Chapter 134 of Borough Code which regulate construction noise by exempting snowplowing from time restrictions for safety reasons;
- ordinance authorizing Building Department to penalize tree service providers in addition to property owners for violating Borough's tree preservation and removal regulations remains under review;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- report was not given;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- notice of violations have begun to be generated for illegal topping (harsh pruning) of shade trees which results in their gradual demise;

Historic Preservation Commission

(*Liaison*- VACANT)

- report was not given;

ADJOURNMENT

- 9:26pm

