

# Environmental Commission

## Thursday, March 11, 2021

### Regular Meeting

### Minutes

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

#### CALL TO ORDER

- 7:33pm

#### 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

##### **Absent**

- VACANT- Alternate #1
- VACANT- Alternate #2
- Sophia Suarez- Associate Member

#### OPEN TO PUBLIC

- public questions and/or comments were not presented;

#### MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to approve minutes for February 11, 2021 Meeting with 6 noted amendments (motion passed unanimously);
- January 14, 2021 Meeting was cancelled;

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2021 \*TEMPORARY\* Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Subscriptions/Books (\$0.00); Meetings/Dues (\$0.00); Miscellaneous (\$1,360.00); Secretarial Support (\$0.00); Mac Bain Farm (\$0.00); Harvest/Fall Festival (\$0.00); Earth Day (\$0.00); Cleanup Day (\$0.00);
- Finance and Technology Committee received Commission's 2021 Operating Budget proposal, which includes both \$2,000.00 increase in Miscellaneous subaccount from last year to purchase material (lumber, etc.) for trail maintenance excluding labor costs and reallocation of \$3,000.00 (previously reserved for Mac Bain Farm operations and events) to different/undetermined Commission subaccount, and it will refine them to fit within overall municipal budget;
- subscription for annual Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) membership cost \$400.00 (\$100.00 less than anticipated);

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

## Executive

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

- Governing Body authorized Borough Engineer's firm (Boswell Engineering, Inc.) to review Borough's storm water management ordinance(s) to ensure they comply with updated regulations as per New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) which took effect March 2<sup>nd</sup> (Borough received extension of time in which to meet compliance without penalty);
- land use board applications, such as redevelopment of 231 & 239 Herbert Avenue from several existing residential and non-residential buildings to congregate care facility, would not be required to meet new NJDEP regulations if they were deemed complete prior to March 2<sup>nd</sup>;
- Borough Attorney (Edward Rogan, Esq.) should clarify consequences of Borough seeking further protection of Mac Bain Farm from being sold for future development such as re-zoning parcel to District 7 (Conservation) or designating it as passive park;
- Planning Board endorses additional protection for Mac Bain Farm but tabled taking action in form of recommendations to Governing Body until Mr. Rogan clarifies ramifications;
- Borough must select lowest bidder in public bid for Mac Bain Farm caretaker if farmland's designation is altered based on current text of contract between Borough and current Farm caretaker (John Mc Caffrey) which would result in substantial loss of Borough control;
- State of New Jersey would have greater input in operation of Mac Bain Farm if site were made part of NJDEP's Green Acres program to gain greater protection from future development;
- Mac Bain Farm was not acquired (encumbered) by Borough via Green Acres funding (land acquisitions not encumbered via Green Acres permits Borough to prohibit general public access);
- current text of Mr. Mc Caffrey's 1-year contract with Borough, which expires on December 31<sup>st</sup> with option for 5-year extension, relates to his services provided and farmland working in tandem;
- inquiry with Commission about ground marker located in ground at 596 High Street, which labeled with poison warning, was forwarded to Borough Engineer and Building Department for response;
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will follow up on amending 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**- Chairman Colwell will respond to Borough of Cresskill's Environmental Commission about Closter's experience with installing electric vehicle charging stations (2 stations are located in Closter Plaza shopping center);

## Events

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

- Borough's Cleanup Day is slated for some time this spring with hope that poison ivy/oak growth would not be of concern and greater public participation is anticipated given last year's cancellation due to Pandemic and possible collaboration with Improvement Commission on downtown area;
- Bergen County will provide gloves, bags, etc. for Cleanup Day and Department of Public Works (DPW) will dispose of collected garbage after it has been placed in front yard of Borough Hall to gain public awareness;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will contact chairperson of Improvement Commission (Yuval Tal) to set date for Cleanup Day and collaborate efforts between both Commissions;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Lockhart will assist Ms. Rege on organizing Cleanup Day once files on event's planning history are retrieved from former Commission Members (Nancy Pergament and Grace Whitney);

## Trails & Passive Parks

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

- Committee is brainstorming ideas with Improvement Commission, and assistance from local college student (Alec Gerzberg) and local landscape architects (Eric and Denise Mattes), to enhance Lone Horseman Park, Pollack Square and Pfeiffer Park, which converge at intersection of Closter Dock Road and Piermont Road with nearby bus stop, by power washing monument sign, enhancing landscaping, installing dog park and providing food truck in nearby commuter parking lot on weekends (area could be utilized as part of annual bike event/race);
- Committee is attempting obtain approval for installing walking/bicycling path along eastern side of defunct railway operated by CSX Transportation Co. which dissects downtown area (path would extend from Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) to Blanch Avenue);
- Closter and Borough of Norwood are sharing grant to finance repairs to culvert bridge on Blanch

- Avenue (project could be delayed due to possible environmental concerns such as construction interfering with breeding season of endangered species, etc.);
- transforming Buzzoni Farm Park into destination will likely become main focus of Commission in light of Mac Bain Farm now being under jurisdiction of Governing Body;
- abandoned concession building/stand at defunct Closter Swim Club site (Blanch Avenue) could be rehabilitated with updated restrooms to enhance experience at Buzzoni Farm Park (contamination on-site is limited to soil rather than structures above);
- application deadline for unnamed grant awarding \$1,500.00 is April 19<sup>th</sup> (monies could pay for pollinator garden and beehive enhancements at Buzzoni Farm Park);
- Eagle Scout candidate (James Song) wishes to spearhead project involving enhancements to Buzzoni Farm Park near which would include installing boardwalks through muddy stretch lined with pines on either side that is littered with exposed roots;
- Health Department confirmed Buzzoni Farm Park is suitable site for installing beehives because it meets minimum area as well as electrical and water source requirements;
- Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO), Inc. and HarBee Beekeeping Co. are potential beehive maintenance vendors;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will approach Norwood to co-fund rebuilding of washed up footbridge at Dwars Kill and clean area in and around Blanch Avenue to establish link with nearby trails in Buzzoni Farm Park;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will continue discussion with Trek Bicycle Corp., which recently opened store location in Closter Plaza shopping center, on assisting to transform passive parks located at corner of Closter Dock Road and Piermont Road into destination;

### **Education/Advocacy & Publicity**

(\*Leader\*- Heymann; w/ Lockhart)

- Girl Scout volunteer (unnamed) should be commended for efforts in collaborating with DPW and Borough's recycling vendor (Interstate Waste Services Co.) to educate public on recycling practices via Borough calendar and mailed brochures;
- Planning Board should initiate preparation of Environmental and Land Use Master Plan (separate from Environmental Resource Inventory), which would concentrate on sustainability ordinance recommendations, to curtail future high-density housing projects;
- **ACTION**- Committee will contact Borough's Qualified Purchasing Agent (Erik Lenander) for guidance on utilizing Borough's Grant Writer to acquire funds for hiring planner to prepare Environmental and Land Use Master Plan;

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

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

- redevelopment of 624 Piermont Road from abandoned restaurant to child care/daycare center requires NJDEP approval for small area on-site which consists of wetlands and abuts Lenapehoking Preserve;

### **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 Mr. Mc Caffrey and Borough is abided by while enhancing Farm's productivity and attractiveness by encouraging on-site community gardens, photography classes, etc.;
- upcoming planting season is being prepared for;
- fallen tree on Hickory Lane was removed by DPW and did not require related fence repairs;
- outstanding fence repairs must be addressed throughout perimeter once snow melts to hinder deer infiltration;
- Borough Administrator (Edward Hynes) continues to engage water utility about installing seasonal meter to allow for irrigation and electrical power source upgrades at front kiosk long sought-after by Commission;

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## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Commission should research 3 available grants, 1 each from American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), ANJEC and NJDEP's Green Acres program, last of which previously awarded \$60,000.00 to Borough for installation of illuminated bollards along walking paths at Ruckman Park;
- Environmental Commission for Borough of Dumont is hosting seminar on March 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss its proposed community nursery;
- **ACTION**- Chairman Colwell will speak with Mr. Hynes about Closter applying for funds to pay for both engineering study and construction of new footbridge at Dwars Kill to link nearby trails;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Lockhart will advise complainant, who questioned excessive outdoor illumination at Closter Public Library and Tenakill Middle School, to contact Mr. Hynes for resolution;
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will keep Commission abreast of proposed electronic signage being proposed at both Hillside Elementary School and Tenakill Middle School;

## LIAISON REPORTS

### Governing Body

(\*Liaison\*- Devlin)

- report was not given;

### Planning Board

(\*Liaison\*- Heymann)

- Board is contemplating sustainability ordinances, with emphasis on new construction, for consideration by Governing Body;

### Shade Tree Commission

(\*Liaison\*- Lockhart)

- Commission is soliciting quotes for irrigation of newly-planted shade trees during warm weather contingent upon high temperatures and length of time without precipitation;
- 6 shade trees, all ash, have yet to be removed (3 ash will be handled by Borough once its municipal budget is adopted and 3 ash will be addressed by both Bergen Co. and Rockland Electric Co.);
- pruning of shade trees located in Election District 4 and downtown area is complete;
- Commission is raising awareness about value to trees by 1.) hosting Arbor Day poster contest for students with winners receiving planted shade trees in front of their residences; 2.) protecting tree canopy by requiring Commission approval for abutting private property owners to prune shade trees (certified mail is sent to offenders); 3.) conducting plan review for substantial construction projects and determining required tree plantings and protection as per Chapter 59-4B of Borough Code;

### Historic Preservation Commission

(\*Liaison\*- VACANT)

- report was not given;

## ADJOURNMENT

- 8:45pm