

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

July 14, 2022

Meeting Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:33pm;

ATTENDANCE

Present

- Miriam Lockhart- Chairwoman;
- Steven Isaacson- Full Member;
- Krishna Rege- Full Member;
- Cynthia Cole- Full Member;
- Paul Yarin- Alternate #1;

Absent

- Sophie Heymann- Full Member;
- Mordechai Feibish- Full Member;
- Councilman Scott Devlin- Full Member;
- VACANT- Alternate #2;

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Rege and seconded by Ms. Cole to approve minutes for June 9, 2022 Meeting with 1 noted amendment (motion passed unanimously);

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- public questions and/or comments were not presented;

EXECUTIVE

- Commission was established by ordinance on June 23, 1976 and has evolved from semi-dormant to proactive/result-oriented body especially with current roster and its impact on public encouraging both residents and businesses alike to be forward-looking;

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2022 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (-\$375.00); Secretarial Support (\$840.00); Cleanup Day (-\$100.00); Passive Parks (\$762.63); Events (\$3,530.00);
- expenditures and encumbrances for 2022 thus far are \$375.00 for annual subscription to Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) membership, \$600.00 for minutes preparation for January 13, 2022, February 10, 2022, March 10, 2022, April 14, 2022 and May 12, 2022 Meetings, \$100.00 for advertisements relating to 2022 Cleanup Day and \$531.75 and \$235.62 for native grasses/groundcover and brick pavers, respectively, for establishment of demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm;
- Governing Body adopted 2022 municipal budget at its July 13th meeting (Commission's operating budget is \$6,500.00 this year as opposed to \$6,540.00 in 2021);

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Healthy Yards Working Group Report

- Group will provide brief write-ups for August edition of Mayor John Glidden's monthly newsletter discussing both No Mow May campaign and establishment of demonstration garden, consisting of 6 beds showcasing native grasses/groundcover, at Mac Bain Farm with consent of Governing Body's committee overseeing Farm (garden will be situated where there is substantial foot traffic and is intended to exist and be monitored for 2 to 3 years);
- Group is consulting with owner of Toadshade Wildflower Farm (Randi Eckel), based in Borough of Frenchtown, on native plant selections for demonstration garden;
- Department of Public Works (DPW) provided mulch, Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. provided top soil and Extech Building Materials Corp. provided brick pavers for establishing demonstration garden with DPW recently excavating trenches for layout of associated walkways and Group is regularly watering new plantings (with finesse to prevent soil erosion) given recent heatwave;
- local resident (Jean Stella) will create smaller-sized identification cards for demonstration garden (possible sign options include custom high-pressure laminated (museum-style), poster inside acrylic and corrugated plastic with grommets along with quick response (QR) codes via Borough website);
- ribbon-cutting ceremony for demonstration garden is anticipated for promotion including convincing local nurseries to carry native species and eventual ordinance codifying requirement of such plantings throughout Borough;
- **ACTION**- available Commission members will volunteer to lay brick pavers, compact soil between joints and place mulch for demonstration garden on July 16th at 9:00am;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Cole and seconded by Mr. Yarin to have Commission authorize purchase of signage for demonstration garden, which would identify common/latin names of 9 grass/groundcover species, moisture/sunlight requirements as well as purpose of and contributors to garden's establishment, in amount not to exceed \$400.00 (motion passed with Mr. Isaacson abstaining);

Sustainable Jersey

- Governing Body recently endorsed Commission's request to reactivate Green Team and pursue certification in Sustainable Jersey program to prevent Borough from becoming more urban and experiencing heat island effect (actions previously completed by Team are administrative in nature only and would only garner bronze-level certification);
- sustainability summit recently held in Township of Holmdel included seminars on electric vehicles (EV), ride-on lawnmowers, hydroponic growth systems, crowdsourcing of rainwater date and community energy plans;
- \$10,000+ grants, via non-profits, private sector and utilities, are available for municipalities to view greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure and logistics in investments to reduce them (community energy plans);
- program provides online resource to view New Jersey municipalities' energy output historically;
- actions beyond bronze-level certification include measuring size of municipal vehicle fleet, amending land use code to be more environmentally-friendly, encouraging EV charging installations, training emergency responders on EV rescue, replacing school buses and garbage trucks with EV's;
- New Jersey is 1st state in nation to make climate change part of school curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade with \$5,000,000 included its 2022 budget;
- Green Team provided written proposal of its goals to Mayor Glidden and is awaiting response;
- EV charging station installations are especially cost-beneficial to homeowners, costing only \$200.00+, while proprietary technology from Tesla, Inc. designed to handle long road trips and recharge quickly away from home will hopefully be offered to other suppliers with use of adaptor (approximately 2% of all vehicles in United States are EV's excluding hybrids);
- Borough's 2 lone EV charging stations are located in Closter Plaza shopping center and cannot handle demand;

Open Space Trust Fund Requests & Grants

- Governing Body recently appropriated \$11,700.00 to Commission for fence installation around existing pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park as well as purchase of 8'-long bench to be situated nearby;
- proposed pollinator garden upgrades also include installation of walkways and redesigning and replanting garden;
- contractor for fence installation has not been determined (contractor selection by Borough is based upon lowest bid received unless it has awarded project(s) to particular contractor exceeding certain dollar amount in calendar year);
- Commission is awaiting response from Rutgers University to its request for garden designs via its environmental stewards program which offers adult internships;
- proposed walkways will consist of pea gravel/stone to be donated by Extech Building Materials, Inc. (retail price would have been \$693.00);
- unused 2021 open space appropriations (\$2,000.00) for maintenance, including improved delineation of paths, of yellow-blazed trail located behind Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) will be used to cover lowest quote (\$1,950.00) obtained from Bradbury Landscape, Inc., which will commence work in near future;
- **ACTION**- In light of Mr. Isaacson withdrawing as supervisor of pollinator garden improvements, Councilman Devlin, Chairwoman Lockhart and Ms. Rege will oversee walkway installations, fence installation and redesign/replanting garden respectively (oversight of proposed signage is not yet assigned);

Eagle Scout Project at Buzzoni Farm Park

- local high school student and Eagle Scout candidate (James Song) recently obtained local Scout council approval to revitalize existing vernal pond, including 4 bench installations, located in Park which already has Commission and Governing Body approval;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will brainstorm optimal placement of 4 benches in vicinity of pond;

Tree Preservation

- Shade Tree Commission (STC) was awarded \$30,000.00 grant for inventory of Borough's 2,195 street trees, and Colorado-based vendor (PlanIT Geo) completed imaging of west side with east side underway;
- STC webpage provides several fact sheets and status of Governing Body authorizing welcome packets to new property owners to demystify Borough's tree removal and pruning regulations is unknown;
- 2 ash trees located in Farrell Woods, passive park located behind Closter Public Library, were initially approved by Borough Administrator (James Winters) for removal due to infestation by emerald ash borer;
- 40+ ash trees were subsequently warranted for removal at Farrell Woods and such cost would vastly exceed what is in Commission's operating budget given 8 prior removals there cost approximately \$4,800.00 (expense would likely be handled via open space funds);
- caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm, John Mc Caffrey, offered to handle ash tree removal at Farrell Woods free of charge in exchange for retaining logs for firewood sales (New Jersey Department of Agriculture strongly advises dead ash trees be recycled and used locally for firewood and woodchips only);
- vendor who handles Borough's compost operation (Ken's Tree Care, Inc.) is apparently in violation of its contract by performing wood chipping instead of mulching leaves only (vendor could be compelled to handle ash tree removal at Farrell Woods);
- Governing Body should make practice of equally appropriating open space funds between Commission and Recreation Commission for passive and active parks respectively;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will email Commission members link to access progress of Borough's street tree inventory;

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor's Newsletter

- Commission's previous write-ups on open space under its jurisdiction for Mayor Glidden's monthly newsletter have been Schauble Park and Mollicone Park with Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park slated for upcoming article including its equestrian history;
- Borough recently rejected Recreation Commission's proposed dog park installation at Lone Horseman Park;
- Borough of Demarest hosts annual dog walking event throughout its trail system;

Expenditure Ideas

- suggestions for use of Commission's 2022 operating budget include: 1.) public speaking events on topics such as watersheds and storm water management (contact The Watershed Institute, United States Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension System, Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., Greenbrook Nature Sanctuary, former Commission Chairwoman Elizabeth Ravit at Rutgers University and/or Zoning Board of Adjustment member Leslie Brunell at Stevens Institute of Technology); 2.) banner for Cleanup Day (deemed top priority by Commission); 3.) signage for demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm showcasing native grasses/groundcover; 4.) 2, 6'-long tables (deemed top priority by Commission); 5.) information sources such as library books and online literature; 6.) irrigation system for pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will email Chairwoman Lockhart suggestions for public speaker event slated to occur in October;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will brainstorm how best to distribute 70 reusable bags stored in Borough Hall;

PLAN REVIEW & COMMENT

- *515 Piermont Road*: administrative report submitted to Planning Board for proposed tenancy by plant nursery and parking lot modifications requiring Site Plan Approval was instrumental in Board's decision to deny application given subject property involves riparian zone and was previously contemplated for affordable housing development;

LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- no report was given in light of Councilman Devlin's absence;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- Shade Tree Commission member and landscaping contractor (Todd Bradbury) recently irrigated street trees planted in 2020 during heat wave amounting to 7 hours of labor and 600 gallons of water at no cost;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- no report was given in light of Ms. Heymann's absence;

ADJOURNMENT

- 9:02pm;