

# ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

## March 10, 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;
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member;
- Krishna Rege- Full Member;
- Mordechai Feibish- Full Member;
- Cynthia Cole- Full Member;
- Councilman Scott Devlin- Full Member;

##### Absent

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

#### OPEN TO PUBLIC

- Mayor John Glidden introduced himself, congratulated Ms. Lockhart on her recent appointment as Commission's Chairperson, informed that last week was Borough's first since February 2020 that it did not report new COVID-19 infections and revealed that virtual meeting would be held on May 14<sup>th</sup> for purposes of improving interaction between Borough volunteers and employees;
- Paul Yarin, 58 Cedar Court, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself, indicated his professional background in electrical/mechanical engineering and suggested owner of Closter Plaza shopping center be approached to install solar panels on-site;
- high school student (Elaine Kim) introduced herself as new volunteer for Commission;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart and Mr. Yarin will further discuss his suggestion about solar panel installation at Closter Plaza shopping center via phone and/or email;

#### MINUTES

- **VOTE**- Chairwoman Lockhart assumed motion and obtained unanimous consent to approve minutes for February 10, 2022 Meeting without amendments;

#### EXECUTIVE

##### Treasurer's Report

- 2022 \*TEMPORARY\* Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (\$0.00) Miscellaneous (\$1,285.00); Secretarial Support (\$0.00); Fall Festival (\$0.00); Earth Day (\$0.00); Cleanup Day (\$0.00); Passive Parks (\$0.00);
- expenditures and encumbrances for 2022 thus far are \$375.00 for annual subscription to

Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) membership, \$240.00 for minutes preparation for January 13, 2022 and February 10, 2022 Meetings and \$100.00 for advertisements relating to 2022 Cleanup Day;

- Commission's 2022 operating budget proposal is \$9,040.00 which is 38% increase from last year's adopted amount;

### **Reorganization**

- Commission will conduct itself in collaborative, positive and high-functioning manner to allow for its collective thoughts to be respected by and influential with Borough officials, residents and businesses;
- Commission's goals for this year are two-fold: 1.) garner stronger voice in how Borough grows via community-driven strategy which consists of participating and influencing Borough officials and land use boards' decisions; 2.) determine if there is appetite for nature-based solutions to certain Borough challenges and, if not, how to increase interest;
- Commission will conduct its meetings moving forward utilizing parliamentary procedures manual known as Robert's Rules of Order to function better and be more productive while allowing for passionate discussion but ensuring civil disagreement;
- Commission's meetings are intended not to exceed 90 minutes;
- Commission's organizational structure is in process of being reorganized with 2 working groups already created (Plan Review & Comment and Healthy Yards led by Chairwoman Lockhart and Ms. Cole respectively);
- Commission's goals for this year are: 1.) promote native plantings for private and public lands; 2.) ween landscaping contractors and residents off gas-powered equipment, specifically leaf blowers, and replace them with electric-powered alternatives; 3.) pursue grants; 4.) influence decision-making of both Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment; 5.) enhance natural and man-made appurtenances located in Buzzoni Farm Park; 6.) improve Commission's presence on Borough website;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will introduce additional working groups and goals for Commission at its April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting (Mr. Isaacson expressed disappointment regarding elimination of Trails & Passive Parks committee on which he served several years);

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **Cleanup Day**

- Commission opted not to purchase 2, 6'-long folding tables as it previously voted to do because their cost was \$175.00 each instead of \$40.00 each as estimated;
- 2022 Cleanup Day is confirmed for April 2<sup>nd</sup> (rain date is April 3<sup>rd</sup>) from 10:00am to 2:00pm with gathering points for organizers and volunteers being parking lots of Nature Center and Senior Citizens Center;
- Department of Public Works confirmed it would relocate trash collected during Cleanup Day to front yard of Borough Hall for display;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will provide access code to Senior Citizens Center for Ms. Rege to borrow folding tables to be utilized during Cleanup Day;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Rege will ask Police Department to have presence during Cleanup Day to ensure pedestrian safety;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will provide Ms. Rege their suggestions for items and literature to serve as table displays during Cleanup Day;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will display her electric-powered lawn mower (or photographs of same) during Cleanup Day;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will advise Ms. Rege of their availability to join Mr. Feibish and herself as volunteers during Cleanup Day (2 volunteers each are needed at both gathering points);
- **ACTION**- Ms. Rege will coordinate acquiring trash collection supplies from Bergen County for Cleanup Day;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart and Ms. Rege will discuss best use of allocated funds for

refreshments to provide during Cleanup Day;

- **ACTION**- Commission members will contact Ms. Rege if they wish to display advertisements for Cleanup Day;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Rege will contact Closter Public Library to utilize its weekly public announcement (via email) to advertise Cleanup Day to library cardholders, etc.
- **ACTION**- Mayor Glidden will discuss Cleanup Day in his next monthly newsletter and have it mentioned on Borough's social media platforms with input on wording from Ms. Rege;

### **Plastic Bag Ban**

- New Jersey's ban on food retailers utilizing plastic bags takes effect May 4th;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will gather information resources to assist local food retailers concerned about abiding by imminent statewide ban on plastic bags;

### **Closter Public Library Initiative**

- miscommunication between 2 Commission members and employee of Closter Public Library about her appearing this evening to discuss collaboration on initiatives was unfortunate;

### **Grants**

- Ms. Cole created spreadsheet to track available grants and their application filing deadlines;
- Commission opted not to apply for this year's grant offered by Bergen County's Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund given its approaching deadline;
- **ACTION**- Commission will pursue open space funding requests locally during summer months;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will forward any discovered grant opportunities to Chairwoman Lockhart and Ms. Cole;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will forward Ms. Cole suggestions on need for pollinator garden installation to include in application for ANJEC-sponsored grant with looming deadline;

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Tree Summit**

- summit attended by Building Department, Police Department, Borough administration, Environmental Commission and Shade Tree Commission representatives was recently held to review and improve tree removal permitting and enforcement as well as reinforce Borough's commitment to protecting trees on construction sites, implementing tree mitigation obligations, etc.;
- there is heighten concern about Borough losing its tree canopy given 240 tree removal permits were issued in 2021 resulting in 550 to 600 trees being cut down legally (amount of said trees deemed to be dead, diseased, hazardous, construction- or landscape-related has not been tallied);
- Shade Tree Commission plants 50 trees at most annually;
- Police Department agreed to stop tree removal in progress on weekends if Building Department-issued green placard indicating tree removal authorization is not conspicuously displayed on-site;
- public must be educated about importance of tree roots with respect to curtailing storm water;
- next summit regarding trees will concentrate on improving tree removal and preservation ordinances to address continuing loss of Borough's tree canopy;
- Borough Code allows for up to 2 trees to be removed in 2-year period with permit but without fee, bond or mitigation;
- trees in hazardous condition, or those with potential for such, is often reason for them being requested for removal (insurance policies assign responsibility for damage/injury caused by tree on owner of property where it falls regardless of where tree was rooted);

### **Healthy Yards Report**

- Healthy Yards working group is comprised of Chairwoman Lockhart, Ms. Cole and Ms. Rege (its

goals for 2022 are centered on replacing gas-powered landscaping equipment with electric versions and native plantings);

- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will continue to research native species present and thriving within Borough, as well as invasive insects and plants such as milkweed, in advance of Cleanup Day at which Healthy Yards working group will kick-start its public education goals;

### **Closter Nature Center**

- Nature Center informed Commission it is in process of removing several ash trees throughout its grounds;

### **Plan Review & Comment Report**

- *500 Piermont Road*: approximately 25 trees are proposed for removal, solely as safety measure and unrelated to construction, most of which are located within protected land or waterways and deemed dead or diseased by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) with property owner agreeing to retain tree stumps to assist in soil erosion and storm water retention;
- *17 Roden Way*: application before Zoning Board of Adjustment involving subdivision includes tree removal, which together with ongoing construction of high-density housing complex on adjacent land located in Borough of Haworth, raises concern about drainage in vicinity;
- Borough Engineer (Nick De Nicola, PE) provided Building Department with map identifying all protected waterways and associated tributaries located in Borough as designated by NJDEP;
- Commission should be informed of any tree removal proposed in vicinity of environmentally-protected land and/or waterways to provide its feedback;
- joint board/commission meeting on land use matters, which Commission is traditionally invited to, was not asked by Mayor Glidden to participate at this year's being held on April 9<sup>th</sup>;

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

### **Governing Body**

(\*Liaison\*- Devlin)

- new Borough Clerk (Stephanie Evans), whose responsibilities will include being custodian of records and providing public notices, was recently hired;

### **Planning Board**

(\*Liaison\*- Heymann)

- most recent Master Plan Reexamination lacks input from Commission because it has not effectively pursued Borough's creation of environmental master plan nor has it updated its environmental resource inventory (ERI)/index of natural resources (INR) in 15 years (such documents are state-mandated but Borough needs to improve implementing sustainability measures beyond community outreach);
- recent ANJEC seminar provided assistance for municipalities to refresh materials they utilize to make land use decisions;

### **Shade Tree Commission**

(\*Liaison\*- Lockhart)

- report was not given;

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- 8:56pm;