

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

May 12, 2022

Meeting Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:30pm;

ATTENDANCE

Present

- Miriam Lockhart- Chairwoman;
- Steven Isaacson- Full Member;
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member;
- Mordechai Feibish- Full Member;
- Cynthia Cole- Full Member;
- Councilman Scott Devlin- Full Member;
- Paul Yarin- Alternate #1;

Absent

- Krishna Rege- Full Member;
- VACANT- Alternate #2;

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Isaacson to approve minutes for April 14, 2022 Meeting with 1 noted amendment (motion passed unanimously);

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- public questions and/or comments were not presented;

EXECUTIVE

- Mayor John Glidden is hosting virtual meeting on improving interaction between board/commission volunteers and Borough employees to be held on May 14th at 10:00am;
- Mr. Yarin will make presentation to Governing Body, at either its May 25th or June 8th meeting, with respect to Borough reactivating its affiliation with Sustainable Jersey municipal certification program whereby tangible results and measureable deliverables involving sustainability are rewarded via point system (Commission already endorsed such pursuit at its April 14th meeting);
- Commission recently formed Working Group, which consists of Chairwoman Lockhart, Councilman Devlin and Mr. Yarin, to handle Borough's pursuit to obtain Sustainable Jersey certification;
- local high school student (Yuna Shin) volunteered to provide assistance with graphic design to enhance Commission's presence on Borough website and social media overall;

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2022 *TEMPORARY* Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (\$0.00) Miscellaneous (\$1,165.00); 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, \$360.00 for minutes preparation for January 13, 2022, February 10, 2022 and March 10, 2022 Meetings and \$100.00 for advertisements relating to 2022 Cleanup Day;

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commission's Webpage Update

- Ms. Cole continues to enhance Commission's inadequate presence on Borough website with emphasis on: 1.) providing link to past Commission events; 2.) explaining difference between active and passive open space as well their names and locations; 3.) providing link to Sustainable Jersey certification program resources; 4.) editing overall grammar and style of Commission's website presence;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will assist Ms. Cole in detailing Commission's prior event history to post on Borough website including photographs to highlight public's engagement (caution should be taken on posting photographs depicting minors);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Councilman Devlin to approve initial enhancements of Commission's presence on Borough website as spearheaded by Ms. Cole (motion passed unanimously);

Grants

- application for ANJEC grant, which would fund Buzzoni Farm Park improvements including protection of pollinator garden from deer infiltration via fence installation, was recently completed (selected winners will be announced on May 20th);
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will provide Chairwoman Lockhart his suggestions for utilizing grant towards Buzzoni Farm Park improvements;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will ensure newly-appointed Mr. Yarin is provided ANJEC membership;

Healthy Yards Working Group Report

- Group is pursuing 1.) establishment of low-impact demonstration garden which includes 3 native grasses and 3 native groundcovers to highlight alternatives to manicured/golf course-like landscaping on private parcels (Group is identifying species and preparing budget ahead of selecting location and starting growth by this summer and documenting progress over 1-year period); 2.) participation in nation-wide campaign (No Mow May) whereby property owners forgo lawn mowing 1 month, resulting in dandelions, etc., to assist hibernating bees and other insects with pollination (8 residences are partaking this year with intention of expanding next year to include Borough-owned parcels); 3.) conversion from gas-powered landscaping equipment to electric-powered (project is on hold with initial step to be uploading literature to Borough website); 4.) investigation of vines, mainly English ivy, on tree canopy (inquiry made by Ms. Rege as private citizen was transferred to Shade Tree Commission for feedback);
- Borough's participation in No Mow May campaign would garner Sustainable Jersey points being certification program rewards efficient landscape design, green grounds/maintenance and water conservation;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Shin will assist in irrigating demonstration garden keeping in mind water conservation is cornerstone of sustainability (watering garden will become less frequent after vegetation is established);
- **ACTION**- Group and Ms. Shin will brainstorm ideas for design of uniform signage to provide to property owners participating in No Mow May next year which would inform public of reasoning for portions of parcels not being maintained as well as curtail concerns about impact on real estate values;

Tree Preservation

- revisions made to Tree Removal Permit application, which are essentially stylistic in nature to garner more public understanding and compliance, are being considered by Building Department;
- mitigation options, which consist of new tree plantings, payment in lieu of planting or combination of both, are being reviewed by Ordinance Committee as result of findings from recent Tree Summits (primary correction within ordinance would be to codify specific species required for private tree mitigation to avoid having legally-removed trees such as oak being replaced with inadequate species such as arborvitae);
- Shade Tree Commission recently updated its shade tree planting recommendation list consisting of larger and ornamental varieties which hopefully will be codified by Governing Body for private tree mitigation;
- Ordinance Committee is reviewing means by which to transfer appeals of tree removal penalties, including replacement values, currently brought before Governing Body, to Municipal Court for adjudication;
- Governing Body recently adopted ordinance amendments whereby Borough Engineer's review is required when greater than 3 tree removals are proposed within 2-year period (previous threshold was greater than 5 tree removals proposed within 2-year period) as well as easing public notification requirements when greater than 3 tree removals are proposed within 2-year period to include adjacent properties only (previous requirement was public notification to all property owners located within 200' radius of subject property);

Eagle Scout Project at Buzzoni Farm Park

- James Song, 175 Piermont Road, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself as high school student and Eagle Scout candidate, proposed to revitalize heart-shaped vernal pond located in Park by clearing vegetation in and around pond, as well as installing woodchip trail around its perimeter and constructing 1 picnic table and 4 chairs to be situated in its vicinity (Andrew Baron, Scout Coordinator, 90 Durie Avenue, Closter, New Jersey assisted in Mr. Song's presentation);
- woodchips for proposed trail would be donated by Department of Public Works (DPW);
- Commission has benefited from several prior Eagle Scout projects including shed, pergola and dollhouse improvements at Mac Bain Farm;
- Governing Body recently heard presentation by Mr. Song to upgrade pond (concern is that such would disrupt pond's rare ecosystem which includes red-spotted newt for which pond is rare mating stock area);
- Nature Center's Director/Naturalist (Marc Gussen) emphasized downed trees and fallen branches around pond help courting frogs and while washed up boardwalk planks should be removed, other natural occurrences should not be touched (area around pond colonized by invasive species such as multiflora rose should be removed and replaced with native species);
- prior attempt by group of parents and students to plant several trees around pond (via seedlings provided by State of New Jersey) failed soon thereafter due to deer consuming edible plantings;
- fence installation around pond is warranted to prevent loss of newly-planted vegetation;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Song and Mr. Baron will consult with Mr. Gussen on approach to revitalizing pond, including if and how to utilize backhoe, rope and canoe to clear trees, shrubs, etc. (equipment slated to be supplied by local contractors);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Cole to endorse Mr. Song's proposal for existing pond at Park contingent upon Chairwoman Lockhart receipt of email by Mr. Song revising scope of work as well as proposal's approval by Governing Body and Mr. Gussen;

NEW BUSINESS

Public Messaging

- public messaging by Commission recently assisted in guiding business owners and patrons on May 4th implementation of statewide plastic bag ban;
- Commission will provide 1 article per month, which highlights 1 passive park under its auspices, to be published in Mayor John Glidden's monthly newsletter (deadline is 25th of each month);

- **ACTION**- Ms. Heymann will complete draft of article showcasing Olaf and Ingeborg Hagen Park to be published in Mayor Glidden's newsletter;

PLAN REVIEW & COMMENT

- *14 Walker Avenue*: administrative report was submitted to Planning Board for proposed new 1-family house requiring Major Soil Movement Approval;
- *411 Piermont Road*: administrative report is being drafted for Zoning Board of Adjustment which is considering proposed patio (on-grade with pergola to accommodate outdoor dining separate from existing rooftop dining) and parking lot modifications to supplement restaurant requiring Use Variance and Site Plan Approvals;

LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- Borough established open space trust fund in 1999 which is funded through real estate tax collection (fund is reserved for acquisition, development and maintenance of lands dedicated for conservation, recreation, farmland and historic preservation);
- possible approach would be to retain most of open space fund balance, currently in excess of \$1,000,000.00, for opportunity to purchase new parcel rather than expensing maintenance and operations of existing parcels;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will brainstorm ideas for 2022 open space fund requests in anticipation of Borough having deadline for requests no later than July 15th (Borough traditionally considers open space fund requests once per year being ordinance is required);

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- Commission will review inquiry by Ms. Rege about vine growth's impact on tree health (methods for removing vines from trees should be offered on Borough website);

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- Board continues to develop ideas for ordinances regarding sustainability at both its committee and board levels (municipal land use law can often present restrictions as to how broad Borough can make its requirements with respect to construction projects);
- **ACTION**- Ms. Heymann will provide formal invitation to Chairwoman Lockhart for direct discussion on sustainability between Board and Commission;

ADJOURNMENT

- 8:45pm;