

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

November 10, 2022

Meeting Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:31pm;

ATTENDANCE

Present

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

Absent

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

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Yarin to approve minutes for September 8, 2022 Meeting with 1 amendment (motion passed unanimously);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Cole to approve minutes for October 13, 2022 Meeting without amendments (motion passed unanimously);

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- Sarah Glowacki, 56 Julia Street, Closter, New Jersey, introduced herself as Girl Scout Leader of 3rd grade troop which wants to be more engaged with community on environmental causes in collaboration with Commission;
- Rachel Suter, 28 Bowers Lane, Closter, New Jersey, introduced herself as recent college graduate with degree in computer science who volunteered to assist Commission on enhancing its promotions via graphic design;

EXECUTIVE

- this evening's robust meeting agenda reflects Commission's continuing effort to be proactive in its initiatives;

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2022 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (-\$375.00); Secretarial Support (\$360.00); Cleanup Day (-\$100.00); Passive Parks (\$742.63); 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, \$1,080.00 for

minutes preparation for January 13, 2022, February 10, 2022, March 10, 2022, April 14, 2022, May 12, 2022, June 9, 2022, July 14, 2022, September 8, 2022 and October 13, 2022 Meetings, \$100.00 for advertisements relating to 2022 Cleanup Day, \$531.75 and \$235.62 for native grasses/groundcover and brick pavers, respectively, for establishment of demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm and \$20.00 for soil analysis relating to Buzzoni Farm Park's pollinator garden (available balance is \$4,157.63);

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Healthy Yards Working Group Report

- demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm is responding to absence of dry/hot conditions experienced during summer and native grasses/groundcover will be in full bloom by April;
- striated violet plantings in demonstration garden will be discontinued due to damage caused by rabbits and replaced with species to be determined;
- Group is considering public campaign through social media and in-person vendor presentations (with possible kick-off being 2023 Cleanup Day event) encouraging residents and landscaping contractors to switch from gas-fired lawn equipment (leaf blowers, etc.) to electric models to curtail noise and other related pollution;
- challenge will be to convince public to see past initial capital expense and somewhat less powerful output/battery life of electric-powered lawn equipment which ultimately is less expensive than gas to operate and maintain (alternative could be to incentivize use of electric rather than punishing for using gas via rebates through bulk purchasing, easing time restrictions on performing lawn maintenance, etc.);
- there is not enough political will currently to impose Borough-wide ban on gas-fired lawn equipment though Department of Public Works (DPW) could include such equipment into its repertoire;
- Group will consider for next year how to partake in Leave the Leaves international campaign which involves providing shelter to insects throughout winter and enriching soil by refraining from removing leaves from flower beds, etc.;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will contact unnamed landscaping contractor who expressed interest in switching company's equipment from gas to electric so long as upfront cost is not insurmountable, thereby, becoming face of public campaign by being first in Borough to do so;
- **ACTION**- Commission members will research municipalities' ordinances regulating lawn equipment for Borough to utilize as model;

Sustainable Jersey Working Group Report

- Green Team continues to gather data on Borough's fleet inventory to calculate its emissions output and strategize how to mitigate such as part of obtaining Sustainable Jersey certification;
- Borough Administrator (James Winters) provided robust inventory, less mileage records, of Police Department and DPW vehicles/equipment including leaf machines/vacuum mulchers, hedge trimmers, dethatchers, dump trucks, pick-ups, generators, salt spreaders and digital mobile signs;

Buzzoni Farm Park Pollinator Garden

- upgrade of pollinator garden continues with pea gravel spread over landscape cloth for future pathways within and recent completion of fence installation (status report was submitted to ANJEC which is condition of \$1,500.00 grant it awarded for project);
- Borough resident/landscaping contractor (Susan Boudet) is assisting with planting design which includes 70, 2-gallon plants to fill pollinator garden as well as situate some outside fence;
- mulch and stepping stones still need to be acquired as well as plant identification signage (2022 open space trust funds were previously appropriated for both fence and 1 bench);
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Chairwoman Lockhart and seconded by Councilman Devlin to authorize purchase of plantings for pollinator garden at cost not to exceed \$1,400.00 in remaining ANJEC grant (motion passed unanimously);

Buzzoni Farm Park Pond

- revitalization of vernal pond being performed by local high school student and Eagle Scout candidate (James Song) continues with 3 benches already on-site and table constructed and its staining underway (Mr. Song is awaiting Commission's preference where to situate table);

2022 Remaining Operating Budget

- mere one-third of budget has been spent because Commission: 1.) reset with new mission statement and initiatives; 2.) obtained new chairperson and several new members who needed to learn collaboration to perform at high level and be result-oriented; 3.) no longer has jurisdiction over Mac Bain Farm and associated annual Harvest Festival; 4.) created new working groups;
- expending remaining roughly \$4,000.00 may include: 1.) installation of underground piping system and timer to irrigate pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park negating manual watering (3 quotes would be required in near future for cost of laying about 50' length of water pipe which DPW does not have time or expertise to handle) and/or hydrometer to analyze surrounding soil moisture; 2.) purchase 4 benches to place 1 each in 4 different passive parks; 3.) creation of small environmental reference section in Closter Public Library and/or local school libraries and populate them with adult and children books (New Jersey is lone state in nation with formal climate change curriculum); 4.) purchase trees to replace 40+ ash trees recently removed at Farrell Woods due to infestation by emerald ash borer (each would cost \$850.00);
- irrigation system may not be warranted being frequent watering of native species within pollinator garden will subside once they are established;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Feibish will acquire 3 quotes for irrigation system installation subsequent to reviewing on-site conditions, including existing nearby electrical power sources, at Buzzoni Farm Park with Mr. Isaacson and Ms. Rege;
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will contact Library Director (Ruth Rando) to discuss potential environmental reference section and Ms. Cole and Mr. Yarin will compile book list with assistance from ANJEC;

Tree Preservation

- meeting between representatives from Commission, Shade Tree Commission and Building Department will be held on November 14th to discuss how to further enhance mitigation requirements for permitted tree removal;

NEW BUSINESS

2023 Open Space Trust Fund Requests

- submission deadline for requests to Mr. Winters is technically December 2nd but will be accepted up to December 15th;
- possible request relates to Sustainable Jersey certification action item (Open Space Plans) whereby Borough must complete thorough open space inventory and planning development process for purchasing land to either utilize for recreational purposes or protection via Green Acres program administered by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) which would likely require hiring of professional consultant who would oversee inventory of recreation resources, opportunities, location, use, size of parcels and studying land from geographic information system (GIS) perspective along with public hearings;
- Sustainable Jersey certification request could relate to wildlife, water or farmland conversation objective (solar farms would not be included in request as they are better suited atop roofs or in parking lots);
- expense for hiring professional consultant for such request is approximately \$10,000.00 as per ANJEC (high probability grant could be awarded via NJDEP's Green Acres program in alternative);
- Borough created Zoning District 7 (Conservation) which consists mostly of Nature Center grounds

- and prepared recreation and open space inventory (ROSI) in December 2013 which details all Green Acres-funded properties (funded parkland) as well as all other lands held for conservation and/or recreational use at time Borough last received funding from program (unfunded parkland);
- possible request relates to performing trail maintenance on Arthur Goldberg Trail which links Buzzoni Farm Park and Ruckman Park (maintenance on trails in Olaf & Ingeborg Hagen Park, which was funded via 2021 open space funds, were completed earlier this year);
- possible request relates to installation of electric source at Buzzoni Farm Park to power potential irrigation system for pollinator garden;
- ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will forward ROSI documents to Commission;
- ACTION**- Commission members will any additional ideas for open space funds requests to Chairwoman Lockhart;
- ACTION**- Ms. Glowacki and Chairwoman Lockhart will walk blue trail at Durie Avenue near former's residence which she said is overgrown and includes dilapidated bridge making link impassable;

2023 Meeting Venue & Schedule

- Commission's meeting will continue to convene on 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30pm next year being there are no conflicts with secular/religious holidays;
- Commission prefers to continue virtual proceedings with option to incorporate hybrid setup whereby it and public can attend in-person at Borough Hall while those unable to do so can participate remotely (Borough is awaiting its Information Technology (IT) Coordinator to provide audio and visual technical upgrade options to facilitate such);

Commission Website

- Commission would benefit by having its own website separate from Borough's which has limitations;
- ACTION**- Ms. Suter will assist Commission with its online presence/social media;

Idling Motor Vehicles

- transportation accounts for 29% of all emissions nationwide;
- means by which to reduce emissions include replacing internal combustion engines with electric, reducing personal miles driven, increasing public transit use, expanding electric vehicle charging station infrastructure and reducing municipal vehicle fossil fuel use;
- New Jersey law limits idling to no more than 3 minutes but it is rarely adhered to or enforced;
- ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart will collaborate with Ms. Glowacki and Ms. Suter on public campaign to curtail excessive motor vehicle idling with concentration on parents' habits when picking up and dropping off students at local schools (actions include school-generated email to parents, encouraging students to walk and bike to/from school and involving local news media);

Mayor's Newsletter

- potential topic for brief write-up in December edition of Mayor Glidden's monthly newsletter is reducing motor vehicle idling;

PLAN REVIEW & COMMENT

- 55 Sherman Avenue*: administrative report was not submitted to Planning Board which is considering proposed new 1-family house requiring Major Soil Movement Approval;
- 259 Closter Dock Road*: administrative report was not submitted to Planning Board which is considering proposed addition to detached garage/shed and parking lot modifications to supplement hardware store requiring Site Plan Approval;

LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Deviin)

- Governing Body approved new playground equipment installations at Ruckman Park as well as

planting of row of trees to provide shade (existing equipment was deemed liability by Borough's Risk Management Consultant);

- Governing Body approved additional environmental testing by Borough Engineer's firm (Boswell Engineering, Inc.) of defunct and contaminated Closter Swim Club site (future passive/recreation use on-site is still unknown);

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- Commission has so far planted 35 large and ornamental trees this autumn along Borough's right of way (native species planted include white oak, tupelo, hackberry, Parrotia persica and shadblow);

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- TBD)

- no report was given;

ADJOURNMENT

- 9:00pm;

