

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

September 8, 2022

Meeting Minutes

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

CALL TO ORDER

- 7:32pm;

ATTENDANCE

Present

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

Absent

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

MINUTES

- **VOTE**- motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Rege to approve minutes for July 14, 2022 Meeting without amendments (motion passed unanimously);
- August 11, 2022 Meeting was cancelled;

OPEN TO PUBLIC

- Andrew and Leslie Correa, 5 Jays Court, Closter, New Jersey, introduced themselves, with latter being Cub Master of Cub Scout Pack #20 consisting of 49 boys and girls (kindergarten through 5th grade) and informed of proposal for scouts to plant native milkweed seeds to assist endangered monarch butterfly and control spotted lanternfly's local infestation while furthering Commission's initiative to promote native grasses/groundcover via demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm;
- milkweed seeds, which should be planted in autumn and cold stratified, would be purchased from nonprofit organization located in Georgia (Live Monarch Foundation) which would advise on types and amounts, then pre-packaged and potentially include quick response (QR) code to access information of species' care and distributed to residents for planting;
- scouts may opt to plant milkweed garden at its charter (Saint Mary's Church), Alfred Baffa Memorial Garden (Hillside Elementary School) and pollinator garden (Buzzoni Farm Park);
- **ACTION**- Chairwoman Lockhart and Mrs. Correa will be in contact to finalize milkweed proposal and discuss potential collaboration on future endeavors;

EXECUTIVE

- Commission continues to spawn new initiatives that impact and benefit residents and businesses alike while also researching and making recommendations to Borough as mandated in Chapter 16

of Borough Code;

TREASURER'S REPORT

- 2022 Operating Budget Subaccount Balances: Meeting/Dues (-\$375.00); Secretarial Support (\$600.00); 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, \$840.00 for minutes preparation for January 13, 2022, February 10, 2022, March 10, 2022, April 14, 2022, May 12, 2022, June 9, 2022 and July 14, 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 with associated pea gravel, priced at \$693.00, being donated by Extech Building Materials, Inc. (100 Bogert Street);
- landscape paper for pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park cost \$101.99 and was paid utilizing recently-awarded \$1,500.00 ANJEC grant;

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Healthy Yards Working Group Report

- fact sheet for demonstration garden at Mac Bain Farm, created by Group with assistance from Mr. Yarin, is informative, well-designed and has garnered much public praise;
- demonstration garden is being watered regularly, with Farm volunteers monitoring progress, and species are thriving though rabbit(s) have been feeding on striated violets;
- **ACTION**- Group will inform local nurseries about demonstration and pollinator gardens at Mac Bain Farm and Buzzoni Farm Park respectively, inquire about which species they will be stocking for upcoming spring and persuade them to include natives;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will investigate means by which to curtail rabbit infiltration of demonstration garden;
- **ACTION**- Group will design similar fact sheet for pollinator garden once planted;

Sustainable Jersey Working Group Report

- Governing Body adopted Resolution reactivating Green Team in order to pursue certification in Sustainable Jersey program and upon its appointments officially being made, Team will contact Borough Administrator (James Winters) to address program's action items involving tabulation of municipal records and commuting emission levels as baseline to determine how to reduce them (Borough has already addressed several action items required by program but will only receive credit for them once documented);
- presumptive Team met informally with Planning Board Chairman (Mark Maddaloni) and Board member (David Barad) to discuss topics such as heat pumps, solar energy and water management of which there are several federal and state incentives to make use of new green technologies but none at local level as of yet;

Open Space Trust Fund Requests & Grants

- upgrade of Buzzoni Farm Park's pollinator garden is being funded by both ANJEC grant and 2022 open space funds;
- pollinator garden overgrowth was recently removed, Department of Public Work (DPW) transported donated pea gravel on-site and it will soon excavate ground for future pathways to be followed by Commission members dispersing gravel for pathways, fence installation and planting;
- Master Gardeners of Bergen County was contacted and will provide representative specializing in community gardening to assist with planting of pollinator garden;
- ANJEC is owed interim report in October on how its awarded grant is being utilized to upgrade pollinator garden which should include photographs to depict progress;
- milkweed can be incorporated into pollinator garden by seeds being planted in October and blooming in April though they often take 2 years to show;

- 4 proposed 30'x60' quadrants of pollinator garden still need to be designed;
- chain link fencing to enclose pollinator garden will consist of black mesh (vegetation could be planted along fencing to enhance its appearance);
- trail maintenance, specifically along yellow-blazed trail in vicinity of Stop & Shop supermarket and New Jersey Harvest Church including David Scholz Bridge through to Ryerson Place and Tenakill Street, was recently performed by Bradbury Landscape, Inc. utilizing 2021 open space funds (remaining funds allow for 7 additional hours of labor according to vendor);
- volunteers recently corrected placement of various trail blazes to eliminate confusion;
- there is ample supply of blue and white trail blazes;
- recent seminar on storm water management hosted by League of Conservation Voters involved municipalities creating storm water utilities/facilities as well as associated fee structures and available grants, along with preserving open space, stream bank protection and preservation/reclamation activities in flood areas;
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protections (NJDEP) is offering grant on feasibility studies of implementing storm water utilities/facilities which requires limited paperwork and has September 23rd filing deadline (NJDEP is also offering grant for actual establishment of such which requires complete application filing);
- **ACTION**- Ms. Rege will follow up with chapter of Rutgers University on assistance with design of pollinator garden;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will forward Commission video link of seminar on storm water utilities/facilities which she attended;
- **ACTION**- Councilman Devlin will provide video link of seminar on storm water utilities/facilities to Borough Engineer (Nick De Nicola, PE) for feedback;
- **VOTE**- motion was made by Councilman Devlin and seconded by Ms. Rege to authorize purchase of additional green and yellow trail blazes at cost not to exceed \$60.00 (motion passed unanimously);

Tree Preservation

- providing welcome packet to new residents, which would include tree removal regulations, has not been seen to fruition by Borough (social media should be utilized as well);
- Borough should not be lenient with tree service providers and developers who are rightfully issued penalties for illegal tree removal;
- Commission's administrative reports in response to land use board applications often reference retaining trees slated for removal (Commission is not enforcement agency and is limited to providing access to source material);
- tree removal applicants could be required to acknowledge receipt of regulations via signature and Borough official could be required to witness authorized tree removals in progress on-site;
- 40+ ash trees, which have brittle crowns to begin with, were recently removed at Farrell Woods, situated behind Closter Public Library, due to infestation by emerald ash borer;
- New Jersey Department of Agriculture strongly advises dead ash trees be recycled and used locally for firewood and woodchips only;
- \$250,000.00 grant is being offered this year by New Jersey Climate Solutions, which is not ideal for Borough, but hopefully program will have opportunities on smaller scale in 2023;
- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will peruse Borough's tree removal regulations and compile summation for potential welcoming packet;

Eagle Scout Project at Buzzoni Farm Park

- revitalization of vernal pond is underway by local high school student and Eagle Scout candidate (James Song) with 4 benches already constructed and picnic table to be built in few weeks (carwash fundraiser will be held on September 10th);

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor's Newsletter

- **ACTION**- Ms. Cole will author brief write-up for October edition of Mayor John Glidden's monthly newsletter mentioning Leave the Leaves international campaign which involves providing shelter to insects throughout winter by refraining from removing leaves from flower beds, etc.;

Closter Nature Center Presentation

- Center will hold discussion on spotted lanternfly hosted by specialist from New Jersey Department of Agriculture on September 21st;

Purchasing Memo

- Mr. Winters distributed memo to assist Borough volunteers on purchasing protocol such as cost thresholds, obtaining quotes, etc.;

PLAN REVIEW & COMMENT

- *472 High Street*: administrative report was submitted to Planning Board for proposed new 1-family house requiring Major Soil Movement Approval;
- longstanding application before Zoning Board of Adjustment for 231 and 239 Herbert Avenue/81 Ruckman Road for new congregate care facility requiring Use Variance and Site Plan Approvals has not included discussion about lack of environmental studies performed on subject properties upon which there are currently industrial uses;
- Governing Body is considering request by DPW to install pole barn, which has a lifespan of 20 years, rather than brick and mortar building, which has lifespan of 50 years, on parcel nearby Nature Center;
- 77 Railroad Avenue, which has long been depot for school buses, appears to be vacated;
- **ACTION**- Mr. Isaacson will draft memo detailing concerns about both proposed congregate care facility and pole barn projects including but not limited to impact on water supply;

LIAISON REPORTS

Governing Body

(*Liaison*- Devlin)

- Labor Day festivities were delayed due to inclement weather and rescheduled for September 10th;
- Governing Body recently adopted 2 ordinances prohibiting parking along entire north side of Hickory Lane, which already has signage on-site but is not enforceable without said ordinance (such will impact visitors to Mac Bain Farm) as well as creating committee comprised of Mr. Winters, Construction Official (Scott Jezequel) and Borough's Tree Expert (William Fuchs) to review appeals of issued tree removal penalties;

Shade Tree Commission

(*Liaison*- Lockhart)

- no report was given;

Planning Board

(*Liaison*- Heymann)

- no report was given;

ADJOURNMENT

- 8:52pm;