



Environmental Commission
January 12, 2023 7:30 pm via Zoom
Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Environmental Commission Chairperson Miriam Lockhart opened the meeting at 7:30 pm with the standard public announcement, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Attendance

The Roll Call was taken and the following members were present: Cinnie Cole; Scott Devlin, Council Liaison; Modi Feibish; Miriam Lockhart, Chairwoman; Krishna Rege; Conway Wong, Planning Board Liaison; Paul Yarin; Jim Oettinger.

3. Approval of Minutes: December 8, 2022

Ms. Cole motioned to approve the minutes, second Councilman Devlin. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments

The meeting was opened to public comments (limit 5 minutes). No members of the public were present to address the Environmental Commission.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

Chairwoman Lockhart gave the Oath of Office to Paul Yarin for a three-year term as a full member of the Commission. She then introduced and gave the Oath of Office to Jim Oettinger to complete a term as Alternate 2.

The Planning Board will have a new Chair and Attorney. There will also be a new administrative assistant. The Chair has asked for a list of the priorities for the Environmental Commission. Chairwoman Lockhart asked the members of the Commission not to shy away from things simply because they are hard. Ms. Cole asked whether the Commission could see the bullet points before they go out. The Commission will see the list, and Ms. Cole and all members were asked to send their suggestions.

At the end of 2022 it was anticipated that the Commission could spend \$500 on the GreenBooks Library initiative. However, it was not possible to spend or



encumber these funds for this purpose. Thus, the remaining balance in the 2022 budget is \$1155.00.

6. Unfinished Business

- a. **Healthy Yards working group report** (Ms. Cole): The main current project is the ground cover and native grasses display at the MacBain Farm. Another plot will be added in the future. A display will be ready for the public in the spring. The group will meet in the next week and report in February. Chairwoman Lockhart showed a groundcover and native grasses information sheet. The best distribution for this sheet needs to be explored. The group is also encouraging residents to consider sustainable, environmentally friendly landscaping choices.
- b. **Buzzoni pollinator garden working group report** (Ms. Rege): Planning will start in January; the actual work will begin in April. Rutgers Cooperative Extension has sent information on the soil testing. Susan needs to confirm the list of native plants. This should be done by the end of January. Chairwoman Lockhart received an email from a Girl Scout leader asking to be part of pollinator garden.
- c. **Sustainable Jersey working group report** (Mr. Yarin): Sustainable Jersey data shows how the Borough can make decisions to be more sustainable and economical. The actions being undertaken include a Borough fleet inventory (the Borough Administrator has been very helpful in gathering information). Education materials and training are available concerning green building, which would be an area to concentrate on for actions. Some of these SJ actions could be accomplished in the next 6 months. Project Sunroof could be another viable action. To recap actions discussed at the end of last year: Electric vehicle chargers in public spaces (Perhaps there could be one at the Library), making the permitting process solar panels easier, education on heat pumps and on landscaping. Thanks to Councilman Devlin for his help. Discussion of heat pumps and efforts to improve their performance in colder climates. Ms. Rege asked about solar panels and the tree canopy of Closter. Discussion.
- d. **Closter Library: GreenBooks Initiative** (Ms. Cole and Mr. Yarin): Eighteen books were chosen, and all were published from 2020 on. A large exhibit will be designed later in the year. A sticker will show that they were donated by the Environmental Commission. The books are all in the Library already. Many ages and topics were considered in the choices. Many of the books are in the Adult and Junior “new” sections.



- e. **Closter OSTF 2023 request:** Irrigation for Buzzoni Pollinator Garden. There is still time to submit requests for money from the Closter Open Space Trust Fund for 2023. A request needs to be written for irrigation for the pollinator garden. This irrigation system will help the pollinator garden become established and water it in times of draught. Ms. Cole and Chairwoman Lockhart will work together to write the request. Three quotes have been received (thank you to Mr. Feibish for two of them).
- f. **Buzzoni Park:** James Song Eagle Scout project – plaque: Chairwoman Lockhart shared a picture of James Song’s Eagle Scout project and a plaque created by Minuteman Press. There will be a small ceremony in the spring. The project looks great.

Tree Preservation There were 200 tree removal permits in 2022. The canopy and root system of the trees are needed in Closter, for cooling daytime temperatures and absorbing stormwater as the weather gets hotter and wetter. The homes being built and impervious surface are growing. The Shade Tree Commission planted 53 plants along the streetscape this fall. Chairwoman Lockhart asked everyone to talk to people about the importance of tree root systems.

- g. **Collaboration with Closter Girl Scouts:** The Girl Scout leaders will meet soon, and there is great interest in collaborating with the Environmental Commission.

7. **New Business**

- a. **Mayor's newsletter - topic for February 2023:** Mr. Yarin suggested talking about the Inflation Reduction Act—remind homeowners that they can get tax reductions for upgrades. He will write a brief statement. Ms. Cole will look for a state-level organization that is funneling funds. The information is due on the 25th of each month.
- b. **NJDEP Green Acres Acquisition Grants Program 2023:** Councilman Devlin has looked into these grants and feels that they are more appropriate for larger projects and possibly larger municipalities. They don’t seem right at this time.



8. Plan Review and Comment

145 Hickory Lane (PB) The applicant wanted to take down a large tree in order to build a driveway. That was denied. The Environmental Commission's suggestions were that solar panels and pool heater be utilized as well as other methods for reducing the carbon footprint of the project.

279 Demarest Ave (PB) The Environmental Commission had no comments.

38 Wilson Place (PB) The applicant wants to remove 22 trees. Mr. Wong and Chairwoman Lockhart visited the site. Seven of the trees are dead or structurally unsound. A concern is that the trees that were actually marked on the property are different from those marked on the survey. Thus, the Environmental Commission has asked the Planning Board to have the applicant correct the discrepancy. Mr. Feibish suggested that a seepage pit be moved to save a 38-inch tree. Mr. Wong stated that most trees slated for removal are in order to install a pool. In addition, a keystone wall is planned, and the consequences of this are unclear.

209 Schraalenburgh Road (ZBA) is before the Zoning Board. Comments are due this Friday.

9. Liaison Reports

- a. Governing Body: The Reorganization meeting took place recently. Councilman Devlin is no longer on the Finance Committee. He will be going through the Sustainable Jersey actions to see where points can be gleaned.
- b. Shade Tree Commission: See Tree Preservation, above.
- c. Planning Board: Paul Demarest is now the administrative assistant for the Board. Everything else was previously covered.

Adjournment Councilman Devlin moved to adjourn, second everyone. All in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Recording Secretary