



Environmental Commission

July 13, 2023 7:30pm via Zoom

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Chair Yarin opened the meeting at 7:43 pm with the Open Public Meetings Act announcement.

2. Attendance

Present: Krishna Rege, Scott Devlin (Council Liaison), Conway Wong (Planning Board Liaison), Paul Yarin (Chair)

Absent: Modi Feibish, Jim Oettinger

3. Approval of Minutes (May only; June meeting canceled) Ms. Rege moved to approve, second Councilman Devlin. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus Avenue) commended Mr. Wong for bringing comments and concerns to the Planning Board. He also related that he had asked at the Mayor and Council meeting why Councilman Devlin had not been appointed to the Farm Committee. He voiced concern that the farm and John McCaffrey would disappear and suggested that the EC write a resolution in favor of John McCaffrey.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

EV's - Chair Yarin reviewed a list of the Commission's goals and shared that an EV show will be held this Saturday at the Closter Commons. He stated that switching to electric vehicles is the most consequential action (for direct CO2 reductions) that residents of Closter can take.

ANJEC - The EC has to pay a \$400 membership fee per year for ANJEC. Councilman Devlin stated that the fee is paid every year. Everyone spoke in favor of paying the dues. Councilman Devlin reminded everyone that ANJEC awarded Closter a \$1500 grant.

Insignia - Chair Yarin suggested that the EC have an insignia identifying them as members and asked for suggestions. This would be good for conferences and when going on site visits. Ms. Rege suggested neck badges. Councilman Devlin displayed what the Council uses.



Treasurer's Report - The state of all accounts was displayed.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Healthy Yards / Native grasses and groundcovers garden report

Chair Yarin stated that the native grasses garden is in a somewhat remote location at MacBain Farm and hidden by tall weeds. He suggested creating signs to help the visitors and that members figure out times to help maintain the garden. Question to the group: Should this garden be combined with the garden at Buzzoni? Councilman Devlin volunteered to help weed every other weekend.

b. Buzzoni and pollinator garden report

Ms. Rege reported on the Buzzoni pollinator garden. Many plants have been purchased and planted. Signs have been installed. Two large rocks have been placed. Many people have helped purchase, create, and plant/place items. In May there was a gardening lesson with the Brownie troop. Slides were shown. The Working Group visited Overpeck Park in Leonia, learned about pollinator gardens and received gifts such as the insect home. Ms. Rege also spoke about the trials with a groundhog. Stones have been placed along the fence to try to stop him. A longer-term solution may be a chicken wire fence. The sprinkler system needs to be discussed.

d. Sustainable Jersey report

There are two more actions required before Bronze certification may be achieved.

e. Open Space Trust Fund application

Older agenda item - no discussion needed.

f. ANJEC Grant status

Older agenda item - no discussion needed.

g. "Trees for Schools" grant program

This is an opportunity to receive state funding for trees in the neighborhood of the schools. Chair Yarin wrote a letter endorsing the application prepared by the Shade Tree Commission.



7. New Business

a. Buzzoni Park Environmental Monitor

In response to the Canadian wildfires, Chair Yarin paid for and built a solar-powered system to track local air quality at the park. It uses a solar panel and battery for power, and a cellular modem for Internet access. The data can be viewed on the national EPA map at fire.airnow.gov.

b. Light pollution

He attended a NJ Sierra Club “Dark Skies” working group meeting and learned several possible avenues to address growing light pollution, which affects many forms of life as well as the ability to observe stars.

c. Spotted Lanternfly

This has been a big topic of conversation. Some residents have many in their yard. Residents are within their rights to do a spot treatment in their yards—on their own or through a professional. There is funding available. Perhaps the EC should review the passive parks in the area and assess the severity of the Lanternfly and the tree of heaven. Some people are creating their own pesticides. This is not necessarily the recommended approach. Councilman Devlin stated that the \$1500 in funding has been applied for. The Borough has not definitively decided who will be in charge of trafficking requests. Chair Yarin suggested that the EC take leadership in the process. Ms. Rege suggested that residents use the website for reporting lanternflies.

8. Plan Review and Comment

PB July: **25 Halsey Lane** (application deemed complete); (Mr. Conway asked that one of the trees planned for removal be saved and that another tree’s roots not be paved over; otherwise, complete); Closter Commons D1 (the old Mande’s store; application not deemed complete).

PB August to be discussed: **19 Wilson Place** (9 trees are slated to be removed); **614 Closter Dock Road** (a retaining wall is planned; some trees will be affected), **77 Venus Drive** (7 trees to be removed).

PB September to be discussed: **147 Hickory Drive** (8 trees are slated to be removed, but 1 was refused); **10 Railroad Avenue** (a parking structure was built without any approvals).



9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body

Councilman Devlin spoke about the lanternflies and the trees for school application, which was filed. He gave a brief recap of the Village School history. The EV ordinance can most likely be passed after the developer for the Village School has been secured.

b. Shade Tree Commission

11 dead trees will be removed; trees will be pruned, and others will be treated for the lanternflies.

c. Planning Board

All subjects already discussed above.

10. Adjournment Councilman Devlin moved to adjourn, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary