



Environmental Commission

July 17, 2012

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Councilman Kashwick called to order, at 8:05pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, July 17, 2012 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Paul MacDonald- Chairman
- Steven Isaacson
- John Kashwick- Council Liaison
- Mary Mayer- Alternate #1
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Associate Member/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

- Brenda Cummings
- Keith Scholz- Shade Tree Commission Liaison
- Robert Di Dio- Planning Board Liaison
- VACANT- Alternate #2
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member
- VACANT- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

Councilman Kashwick announced that Mr. MacDonald has been appointed the Commission's Chairperson by the Mayor's office.

Oath of Office

◇ Associate Member (1-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2012): Jaewook Jun;

Mr. Jun introduced himself, stating he is a junior at Northern Valley Regional High School (Demarest) and that he recently participated in the Borough-wide garbage/debris cleanup.

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to approve the minutes for the June 19, 2012 meeting with noted corrections; the motion passed by acclamation.

Chairman MacDonald questioned if the Commission would be convening in August; Councilman Kashwick answered it would, but not in December as is custom. Ms. Mayer revealed that the Commission used to not have a meeting in August, but rather December, however, such scheduling was changed to its current format due to consideration of activity and the holiday season.

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments; no one wished to be heard.

Chairman MacDonald read into the record the following correspondence mailed to the Commission: 1.) a letter dated June 13, 2012 from Hubschman Engineering, PA, the firm handling the Major Soil Movement application before the Planning Board, which involves the construction of a new single-family house; Chairman MacDonald explained the memo pertains to soil borings and other environmental investigation occurring on-site as part of satisfying New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulations; 2.) a letter dated June 28, 2012 from the supermarket, A&P, informing relevant agencies of a change the firm monitoring contamination areas apparently found at its 400 Demarest Avenue location; Mr. Isaacson confirmed, via a recent telephone conversation with Stantec Consulting Services Co., that the investigation is at a preliminary stage.



Old Business

Mr. Isaacson said improvement is needed on the marshy area nearby Scholz Bridge, saying the boardwalks have been washed away; he questioned the status of acquiring equipment, such as a chainsaw, to perform clearing. Chairman MacDonald replied he would follow up on such a purchase via grant monies; he noted that a laborer from the Department of Public Works (DPW) assisted volunteers from the high school senior service program this season by operating a chainsaw as part of the trail project at Mollicone Park and Schauble Park. He stated having inexperienced/under aged people operating such dangerous equipment would cause liability concerns; Ms. Mayer concurred, saying such a purchase is not necessary especially since the DPW is willing to assist in such projects. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg mentioned that, in the past, inmates of the Bergen County prison system have worked at Naugle-Auryansen Cemetery; Mr. MacDonald reminded that supervision would be required from the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Isaacson said he recently cleaned the dirty sign by the trail entrance at Durie Avenue; he stated 1 of the nearby trail markers was removed; Mr. Isaacson said he continues to receive positive feedback from surrounding municipalities with respect to the inter-borough trail project. He reiterated that the Commission and its collaborators would need to approach the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference to get a sense of what responsibilities it would assume (blazing, maintenance, etc.). Mr. Isaacson stated confirmation from the Boy Scouts of America (Northern New Jersey Council) to allow access to its campgrounds was still outstanding. He continued saying that while Ruckman Road (paper street section) travels through Bergen County and not the Greater New York Council's parcel, it is still optimal to receive its blessing. Mr. Isaacson reiterated his hope to connect Ruckman Road and the gorgeous trails in the Borough of Rockleigh through the Alpine Scout Camp. Ms. Mayer informed that the Conference's supervisor for the region is Christopher Connolly; she stated Dr. Goldberg had yet to contact her about his wish to have the inter-borough trail system include the Borough's conservation easement.

Mr. MacDonald said the Commission must decide how blazing (including choice of color) would be implemented, specifically, the new trails in both Mollicone Park and Schauble Park. Councilman Kashwick asked how the trail connecting Scholz Bridge to Ryerson Place is marked; Ms. Mayer replied it is indicated with a blue diamond. Mr. Isaacson suggested it coordinate

with the Borough of Demarest so the trails shared by the 2 municipalities can be clearly delineated/uniform; he said such would prevent hindering emergency services from performing their duties in, for example, locating an injured party in a densely-wooded area. Councilman

Kashwick reiterated his hope to have a trail leading from Ryerson Place to Grove Street, Oak Street (via bridge), Schauble Park and terminating at Mollicone Park. Chairman MacDonald responded that such a route would require the trail to go onto roadway to complete the desired link; he noted that although he has been a Borough resident for 25 years, he only discovered the beauty of Schauble Park 2 years ago as well as it being inaccessible in its current state. Mr. Isaacson revealed the Borough would be installing an all-weather running track and bathroom facilities at Schauble Park to make it more of a destination.

Chairman MacDonald stated there is discussion about a bridge being installed by the cabin at Mollicone Park, which is under-utilized by the Girl Scouts of the United States of America; he said the Mayor's office hoped such would improve the facility's accessibility from Taillon Terrace.

Due to the absence of Mr. Scholz, no report was given on bicycle racks, though Councilman Kashwick stated 1 was installed by the DPW at Pfeiffer Park; Ms. Mayer stated its use should be monitored to determine if the purchase of additional racks is warranted.

Councilman Kashwick stated the Mayor and Council would be voting on the Commission's request to designate 2 trees at 11 Cedar Lane with landmark status on July 25th. Ms. Mayer suggested a pamphlet be generated to inform the public of beautiful/unusual trees located within the Borough. She revealed there is a sequoia located at 19 Giletta Court, which was planted by the owner-in-fee (Jesse Crump) who is in favor of it being designated as a landmark tree; she suggested the Commission contact him to start the process.

Ms. Mayer said the dredging of the pond at the Nature Center is on schedule, and the Center is posting updates on the Borough's website to respond to inquiries. She stated 6+ weeks has been spent merely shifting piles of soil to allow them to dry and have organic material extracted from them. Ms. Mayer said an additional path is being installed nearby the cabin on-site to allow for large trucks to approach the pond and remove the remaining soil; she noted 1/3 of the sediment has been dredged to date, including the portion nearest to Ruckman Road. Ms. Mayer explained the project's completion is dependent upon the availability of DPW personnel and the condition of equipment; she said the organic material should be excavated by August 1st. She stated some material would remain along the banks to both prevent their collapse and provide areas for turtles, crayfish, etc., to hibernate in. She noted there is concern about the walkway along the Ruckman Road side of the pond now being above the height of its water level, equating to a dangerous 3' drop whereas before the project, the banks dropped by 1' (2' before the sediment build-up). Councilman Kashwick questioned how the pond would be refilled; Ms. Mayer explained it is spring-fed (the connection has not been severed) and the spring's inflow is what has been pumped out of the pond for the past 3 months, thus, it and any rainwater will replenish the pond. She stated 2 to 3 weeks will be needed to stabilize the banks, via the use of glacial till (large, soft sandstone boulders). Mr. Jun asked for the reasoning behind the dredging. Ms. Mayer explained there had been 50 years worth of sediment collecting in the pond, reducing its depth from a range of 2' - 6' to 1' - 4'. She said such resulted in the pond being too hot in the summer and more likely to freeze in the winter, thus, reducing the amount of oxygen and space for organisms; she noted the decision had to be made whether to allow for the man-made pond to revert to a marsh/swamp or retain it for educational purposes.

Councilman Kashwick inquired about a new aeration system being installed for the pond. Ms. Mayer revealed that Denny Wiggers Landscaping and Garden Center offered to install a waterfall, but it was determined not to be in keeping with the pond's intent; she further stated

that such an approach would only produce enough turbulence (followed by oxygen) if the waterfall had an 8+' drop. She indicated the Nature Center's board is inclined to continue its 4 year-old use of compressors and "bubblers", which stretch out in 3 directions covering all portions of the pond. Ms. Mayer informed there is little support on the Center's board for reinstalling the large fountain because, while it did introduce adequate levels of oxygen, it often got clogged with algae, required a lot of maintenance and was noisy. Ultimately, Ms. Mayer believed the sole environmental concern of the dredging project is that more of the hillside was cut into so to maneuver sediment out of the pond and into trucks; she stated more of the Center's parking lot should have remained to prevent much soil from being lost until the area is sufficiently planted.

Mr. Mayer reported that Mac Bain Farm is beautifully planted and busy with public picking; she said the largest task during this time of the season is organizing volunteers to guide visitors on how to experience the Farm properly. She said 1 to 2 hour shifts must be filled on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, noting there is influx of helpers for weeding, which reduces the money and time supplied by the Farm's caretaker and resident, John Mc Caffrey, who uses employees from his landscaping business to provide farm maintenance. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed she suggested to Mr. Mc Caffrey that a spicket be installed to provide a water supply near the front gate, to which he replied that an irrigation system with a hydrant would be optimal. She stated he has been using the residence's water well for supplying the farm (noting the well's pump is not sufficient during heat waves) in lieu of a municipal water service connection. Councilman Kashwick advised the Commission to request funding for an irrigation system at the Farm in time for the Mayor and Council's next round of budget negotiations. Ms. Mayer believed an estimate should be sought and assurances made that there would be compatibility between the underground system chosen and plowing; she stated the closest water service line is at Hickory Lane and Mr. Mc Caffrey has utilized his water well for farm maintenance since he started residing on-site 12 years ago. Mr. Isaacson inquired about installing a hydrant off Hickory Lane and connecting hoses to it; Councilman Kashwick said the Borough Administrator, Richard Sheola, must be consulted on such a proposal but noted hydrants are not intended for irrigation. Ms. Mayer felt "hydrant" is not the correct term but rather something metered with outlets and suggested "spicket" or "hose bib" may be more accurate. She pointed out there could be drinking/restroom facilities in the Farm's future as well. Mr. Isaacson reminded that the Farm's signage indicates it is open to the public from Wednesdays through Sundays since it is a park acting as a farm (although picking is restricted on Thursdays and Fridays). The Commission concurred that the Borough's website must be updated to reflect current information on the Farm.

Mr. Isaacson informed that complaints about activities at 119 Hickory Lane, doing business as "Metropolitan Farm" in the future, are now being handled by the Superior Court of New Jersey-Bergen County Law Division, not the Borough. He felt, while the owner-in-fee (Frank Vastano) may not be transforming the site into what the surrounding neighborhood hoped for, he nonetheless seems to be obeying New Jersey's Right to Farm Act. Chairman MacDonald questioned if Hickory Lane is still littered with lawn signs stating opposition to the recent activities at the farm; Mr. Isaacson replied they remain. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) would soon be reviewing an application to repaint the

stonework of the main house on-site, an expensive task which assures there is no plan to demolish the building. She and Ms. Mayer agreed that public reaction to the activities on-site has largely been unfounded (referring to tree removal as well as future traffic flow anticipated); Ms. Mayer believed the latter to be a non-issue since Mac Bain Farm has never received complaints about commercial trucks accessing it via Hickory Lane. Mr. Isaacson stated it would

be several months before temporary greenhouses are situated on-site to grow perennials; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg noted there is concern about a retail operation (farm stand) being established on-site. Councilman Kashwick questioned why 119 Hickory Lane would serve as a retail location when Mr. Vastano already has such operations in the Boroughs of Paramus and Fort Lee. Mr. Isaacson conjured that Mr. Vastano could utilize 119 Hickory Lane for growing seedlings and storage in relation to his retail operation (making it a landscaper's outlet) and, in the future, purchase "The Farm in Closter" (515 Piermont Road), taking advantage of the tumultuous relationship between the tenant (Ted Sollod) and landlord (515 Piermont, LLC); he also informed that Mr. Vastano and the owner-in-fee of 515 Piermont Road retain the same legal counsel (David Watkins, Esq.). Mr. Isaacson reminded that a commercial farm must produce \$25,000.00 in income annually to retain tax exemption. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said there was speculation about residents closing off Hickory Lane to conduct a fundraiser for their legal battle against Mr. Vastano. Councilman Kashwick replied that such an attempt was forbidden by the Governing Body and their only option is to have individual garage sales on private property. Chairman MacDonald inquired about installing speed humps, if not speed bumps, on Hickory Lane; Councilman Kashwick responded the Fire Department frowns upon both, but noted the thoroughfare has deteriorated to the point that it is essentially a gravel road. Mr. Isaacson remembered that the demise of Hickory Lane's conditions started several years ago when utility companies were repairing conduit along Piermont Road and Homans Avenue, causing drivers to "discover" a short cut from Anderson Avenue to Piermont Road via Hickory Lane.



Liaison Reports

Councilman Kashwick stated there was nothing to discuss about the Governing Body.

Due to the absences of Mr. Di Dio, Mr. Scholz and Ms. Cummings, no reports were given on the Planning Board, Shade Tree Commission or Green Team respectively.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated the HPC was questioning the feasibility of designating Hickory Lane as a historic thoroughfare in light of the events taking place at #119, but it decided that such would have no impact being it is already Borough property; she noted, however, both #'s 80 and 119 are considered historic landmarks by the Borough, which could affect what improvements are made to Hickory Lane (curbing, encroachments, etc.), especially the numerous sections of deteriorating asphalt.



New Business

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that the Mayor's office provided a tract map of Buzzoni Farm Park, which she and Dr. Goldberg will utilize during their excursions; Ms. Mayer commended the DPW for maintaining the Park particularly well. Chairman MacDonald questioned if the

obtained map is current in depicting the chipping fields, pond and alley of trees on-site; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she did not know. Councilman Kashwick thought about how to maneuver around the chipping fields on-site and reported several trees, as a part of a former buffer by the parking lot, have apparently been removed. Mr. Isaacson explained a large amount of wood

chips, derived from downed trees during recent storms, have been scattered nearby the now-defunct Closter Swim Club on Blanch Avenue.

Chairman MacDonald posed the possibility of using wood chips at Mollicone Park and Schauble Park; the Commission decided that a more permanent surface is suited (gravel or macadam).

The Commission contemplated how to retain additional volunteers for maintenance of the Borough's open space.

Councilman Kashwick informed that the Borough's next Joint Meeting would convene sometime in October most likely.



Plan Review

Being no land use board applications were forwarded to the Commission for its consideration, plan review was not conducted.



Adjournment

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Councilman Kashwick, to adjourn the meeting at 9:12pm. The motion passed by acclamation.