



Environmental Commission

September 17, 2013

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Councilman Kashwick called to order, at 8:00pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, September 17, 2013 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
- Brenda Cummings- Full Member
- Keith Scholz- Full Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)
- Robert Di Dio- Full Member (Planning Board Liaison)
- John Kashwick- Full Member (Council Liaison)
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Associate Member (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)
- Jaewook Jun- Associate Member

Absent

- Paul MacDonald- Chairman
- Thomas Colwell- Full Member
- Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
- VACANT- Alternate #2
- VACANT- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

In lieu of the absent Chairman MacDonald, Councilman Kashwick chaired the meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Scholz, to approve the minutes for the July 16, 2013 meeting; the motion passed by acclamation with Mr. Di Dio abstaining.

Councilman Kashwick opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments. A group of students attending Northern Valley Regional High School at Demarest introduced themselves (*inaudible*) and informed they were in attendance as part of a classroom assignment.

Councilman Kashwick stated there was no correspondence to read into the record.



Old Business

Trails

Mr. Isaacson indicated he has yet to confirm participation by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in developing the “Northern Valley Trail System”.

Councilman Kashwick stated Michael Kafer, a former Councilman and current member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, suggested that a parcel near Parsells Lane be utilized to install a

trail segment. Councilman Kashwick noted he has not visited the site (he indicated it could be located near former site of a quarry), but confirmed it is Borough land and thus any trail segment would not encroach upon private property. Mr. Isaacson agreed to visit the site and give his thoughts on Mr. Kafer's suggestion.

Mr. Isaacson reminded that the Commission had contemplated installing a plaque on a stone placed at Scholz Bridge, which would be quite expensive; he further noted, logistically speaking, how the large rock would be transported once engraved had not been resolved. Councilman Kashwick felt it appropriate, in the alternative, to install a brass plaque onto the bridge itself. Mr. Isaacson noted the establishment, Written In Stone (84 Herbert Avenue), not only performs laser engraving but casting as well; he said he would obtain an estimate. Mr. Scholz suggested custom street signage (aluminum with cut lettering) previously mentioned by Mr. Isaacson as being available through the City of New York. Mr. Isaacson said he has 1 adorned at his residence.

Councilman Kashwick proposed an additional trail segment, measuring approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, to spur off the main trail; referring to a sketch he distributed to the Commission, Councilman Kashwick indicated the blue portion refers to the existing "Northern Valley Trail System" that travels from the Borough of Norwood to the Borough of Demarest via Closter while the red portion (mostly east of Tenakill Street) is in existence as well. He suggested the trail be continued through Oak Street (paper street) to Pearle Road and connect both Mollicone Park and Schauble Park (allowing for access to trails existing in and around Brook Street). Councilman Kashwick noted his lone concern with the proposal is the objection by the property owner(s) of 14 Oak Street, despite the trail link being on Borough land. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg hailed the suggestion.

Mac Bain Farm

Councilman Kashwick indicated further complaints have been filed regarding the use of motorized vehicles on-site; he explained such activity is forbidden at the Farm. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg believed Farm volunteer and former Commission member, Mary Mayer, has already or will be confronting John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, on the matter. She said Ms. Mayer wished for the Commission to be aware of Brigitha Tray, a Norwood resident who coordinates the Farm volunteers alongside Ms. Mayer. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Ms. Mayer believed those volunteers not residing in Closter should be granted certain privileges in light of their community service. She informed that the Farm has been providing food donations to the Closter Food Pantry, which makes monitoring of excessive picking by Farm visitors all the more important. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said a committee will be formed in January 2014 to determine what new signage is needed on-site; she noted an additional picnic table and bench are being considered. She said it is hoped a water spigot will be forthcoming in conjunction with the larger irrigation project being contemplated. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported the Farm has partaken in various joint projects with both the Nature Center and Girl Scouts in recent months. She stated it is presumed Ms. Mayer would continue her major role with the Farm's volunteers, noting several recruited of late have been of Asian descent.

Councilman Kashwick informed that Ms. Cummings, Mr. Di Dio and Ms. Bouton-Goldberg agreed to serve on the Mac Bain Farm committee for the coming year; he said the body serves as a means of communication between Farm volunteers and the Commission.

Brochure/Flier

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that progress on the Borough's official brochure/flier on sustainability has been on hold due to miscommunication with the Mayor's office on the Borough's current recycling practices; she said the confusion stemmed from the Borough calendar issued to residents relaying that Closter only recycles #'s 1 and 2 of the Society of the Plastic Industry (SPI) resin identification coding system, which is identified on packaging inside a 3-chasing-arrow recycling symbol. She said in reality, the Borough collects much more (as indicated on the Borough website), including the recent additional paper pick-up agreed to by the Borough's recycling vendor (Miele Sanitation Co.). Ms. Bouton-Goldberg noted that the recently-adjourned committee charged with evaluating the pros and cons of privatizing the Borough's garbage collection was also taking up much the Mayor's office attention, which hindered its efforts in designing the brochure/flier. Mr. Isaacson, who served on said committee, stated that if the cost of garbage collection is determined largely by its weight, the way to cost reduction is to lessen the weight via the Borough's recycling and, in addition, receiving payment for recycled items. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg agreed, saying the Borough has not advertised the monetary benefits of increasing recycling efforts; she hoped designing of the brochure/flier would receive greater attention in the near future.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Kashwick said the Borough's 2014 budget is being produced, and he asked the Commission to provide proposals for its operating budget by the deadline, which falls sometime around Thanksgiving.

Councilman Kashwick reminded of his concern about inconsistent signage at Borough parks that state the fine imposed for illegal dumping as \$200.00, \$500.00 and \$1,000.00, when the penalty is actually \$2,000.00. He believed any new signage made should also inform the public that motorized vehicles are prohibited, specifically along the trail segment located behind the A&P supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue). He said he would confer with William Dahle, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW) on the matter.

Planning Board

Mr. Di Dio reported the Board continues to hear testimony relating to the application for the redevelopment of "Closter Plaza", with the next meeting taking place on September 19th; he noted the developer is considering the installation of rechargeable stations for electric automobiles; Councilman Kashwick felt the Commission should state its objection to such since power would originate from coal. Mr. Di Dio said during presentation of the proposed landscaping, it was noted some buildings on-site would have vines growing on their facades.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Councilman Kashwick stated the Ruckman Park tree planting project, in response to damage sustained by Hurricane Sandy, will take place this autumn following the replacement of the walking/running path on-site; he confirmed there would be adequate distance between path and trees to prevent damage to either. He said the remaining 2 to 3 pear trees will be removed and Yoshino cherry, Zelkova and 2 additional species will take their place. He noted that the STC attempts to plant species native to the northeast region of the United States; he explained that

pear had been planted throughout the Borough during the 1980's and 1990's because of its attractive flowers (Ruckman Park is non-diverse due to its monoculture of pear), but he said the species is brittle, not beneficial to wildlife and has a life expectancy of only 20 years. Mr. Scholz said signage will be placed at each type of newly-planted tree to educate the public.

Green Team

Ms. Cummings said she is frustrated following the Team's 3rd failed attempt to have the Borough certified by the *Sustainable Jersey* program, which would result in more attractive grant offerings; she blamed the failures, in part, on constantly-changing priority actions required by the program for certification which, in turn, force the Team to submit additional/different documentation with little or no warning. Ms. Cummings revealed that other municipalities have similar grievances with the program.

Councilman Kashwick informed that he, Ms. Cummings and Mr. Jun agreed to serve on the Green Team committee charged with seeing to fruition that the Borough becomes certified by the *Sustainable Jersey* program.

Ms. Cummings said she and Mr. Jun attended a meeting to select a municipality to host the 2014 Green Fair, of which this year's was held in Norwood. She said representatives from the Boroughs of Norwood, Harrington Park, Northvale, Old Tappan and Cresskill were also present; she said vendors are being selected. She revealed that both Harrington Park and Old Tappan are certified by the *Sustainable Jersey* program and Northvale recently formed its own Green Team; she further noted that Cresskill holds its own annual event, which has proven to be very successful. Ms. Cummings expressed hope that the 2014 Green Fair will be better publicized to avoid repeating the dismissal attendance in 2013.

Mr. Jun said that the Team's petition to have recycling bins placed in the downtown area has been revised to include municipal buildings, street corners and the Closter Public Library. He said approximately 130 signatures have been collected with the target being 250 by September 29th. Councilman Kashwick suggested Mr. Jun attend the next meeting of the Mayor and Council (September 25th) to give exposure to the Team's efforts, especially since members of the press attend. He informed that funding for the purchase of said recycling bins would come from the Borough's operating budget. Mr. Jun revealed that the coffeehouse, *Starbucks* (248 Closter Dock Road), has posters on-site advertising how it is reducing their ecological footprint to its maximum potential, yet the establishment does not provide recycling bins. Councilman Kashwick stated the Borough would have to negotiate with Miele Sanitation Co. on obtaining/maintaining additional bins. Mr. Isaacson suggested Mr. Jun contact the Chamber of Commerce for advice on involving local businesses (contact Michael Brown or Linda Albelli to be placed on the agenda of its next meeting) and Miele Sanitation Co. on how increasing its recycling efforts could make its operation more lucrative.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that the HPC's new brochure was recently released to the public.



New Business

Mac Bain Farm Harvest Festival

Mr. Isaacson said Ms. Mayer expected the 6th annual event to take place assuming the Commission provides its usual assistance; he said she estimated additional pumpkins and refreshments would cost approximately \$350.00.

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Di Dio, to authorize the Commission to allocate a maximum of \$400.00 of its annual budget towards funding the 2013 Mac Bain Farm Harvest Festival to be held on October 26th between 3:00pm and 5:00pm (the rain date will be October 27th during the same hours). The motion passed (7-0-0):

YES- Isaacson/Cummings/Scholz/Di Dio/Kashwick/Bouton-Goldberg/Jun;

NO- n/a;

ABSTAIN- n/a;

Mr. Isaacson agreed to produce post cards to advertise the event; he said he would also post the usual banner on the fence at the Farm's entrance.



Plan Review

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



Councilman Kashwick informed of the Borough's bi-annual Joint Meeting convening on October 12th at which land use matters would be discussed; he noted an agenda has yet to be set.

Mr. Scholz questioned if the Commission should respond to the proposal by the Northern Valley Regional High School District to install artificial turf at several of its grounds, specifically how such would affect drainage; Mr. Isaacson said the cost would reportedly cost \$8,000,000.00. Councilman Kashwick said the Board of Education hoped to put the proposal up for referendum in November; he said he did not know if it has made the ballot. He informed that the Governing Bodies of both Closter and Old Tappan adopted Resolutions opposing the proposal.

Councilman Kashwick, in response to Mr. Jun, said test results on water sampling taken in and around the parking lot of the A&P supermarket with respect to a plume investigation, have not been received; he noted there are no plans to expand the monitoring wells at this time.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Di Dio and seconded by Mr. Scholz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49pm. The motion passed by acclamation.