



Environmental Commission

February 18, 2014

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:35pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at Borough Hall.



2014 Reorganization

Oaths of Office

◇ Alternate #2 (2-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2015): Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg
Historic Preservation Commission Liaison



Attendance

Present

Paul MacDonald- Chairman
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- Alternate #2 (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)

Absent

Thomas Colwell- Full Member
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
Jaewook Jun- Associate Member
VACANT- Associate Member
VACANT- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. Scholz, to approve the minutes for the November 19, 2013 meeting; the motion passed by acclamation with both Councilman Kashwick and Ms. Cummings abstaining.

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

Chairman MacDonald informed that there was no correspondence to be read into the record.



Old Business

Trails

Being in the midst of the winter season, Mr. Isaacson said there was nothing to report.

Green Team

Ms. Cummings said the high school student Team members inquired about the progress made to have recycling bins placed throughout the downtown area, a request they made several months ago to the Governing Body. Councilman Kashwick promised to follow-up on the matter; Mr. Isaacson stressed that the students need to be persistent, referring to the slow-moving political process. Councilman Kashwick noted the Mayor and Council would be convening a Special Meeting on March 6th to discuss the recommendations of an ad hoc committee it appointed, which was tasked with evaluating the pros and cons of privatizing the Borough's garbage collection; due to the subject matter, he urged Team members attend and reiterate the need for the bins.

Mac Bain Farm

Chairman MacDonald stressed that John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, should supply the Commission with a planting plan for the upcoming 2014 season, especially since he is rarely available on-site to Farm volunteers for guidance on how to proceed with tasks; the Commission decided to have Mr. Mc Caffrey attend its April 15, 2014 Meeting to present his plan in writing.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated that according to Mary Mayer, co-supervisor of the Farm's volunteers and former Commission member, Mr. Mc Caffrey wishes to have membership cards issued upon payment of a fee to those Borough residents visiting the Farm (verified at the entrance by volunteers via a master list) to prevent crop picking by non-residents. Mr. Di Dio suggested requesting to view a driver's license prior to entry would be an easier approach; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg cautioned many visitors (elderly/youth) do not have such documentation. Mr. Isaacson inquired if buckets for collecting produce could be issued to Borough residents for a \$5.00 fee; Ms. Cummings approved of the suggestion. Mr. Di Dio questioned the legality of assessing a fee to Borough residents for membership to a publically-owned/funded farm. Mr. Isaacson countered, saying a donation could be solicited at the Farm's gate rather than charging a fee. Councilman Kashwick reminded that while crop picking is restricted to Borough residents only, entry to the Farm is not. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg estimated there to be volunteers on-site 85% of the time, to which Chairman MacDonald responded they should be advising visitors when they are picking too early.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported that Ms. Mayer wants Mr. Mc Caffrey to plant less of each crop in 2014 being large portions, especially peppers, rotted and/or went to waste; she noted that Ms. Mayer suggested pumpkins be planted later in the season so they will be available for the annual Harvest Festival. Chairman MacDonald reminded that because there was a shortage for last year's event, the Commission spent \$1,000.00+ purchasing pumpkins from an outside vendor.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that the Farm's signage states it is open to the public daily at 8:00am, however, the reality is volunteers are not on-site until 9:00am, resulting in Ms. Mayer (who resides nearby at 12 Mc Cain Court) having to open the front gate for the usually large gathering of people waiting to enter. She said Ms. Mayer believed a portion of entry fees/donations collected should be used towards hiring a high school student to tend to the front entrance during the morning hours.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Kashwick said the 2014 municipal budget will soon be introduced and that the Borough Administrator, Richard Sheola, is scheduling appointments with individual bodies/departments to discuss particulars; Chairman MacDonald revealed the Commission's is slated for February 20th. He distributed a summary, prepared by Mr. Sheola, of the following capital projects indicating budget amounts and balances respectively: 1.) bank stabilization (\$75,000.00 and \$73,704.00); 2.) Environmental Commission (\$18,000.00 and \$18,000.00) with 3 subcategories (Red Trail/Southwest & Northwest Sections- \$26,050.00, Sustainable Wet Meadow- \$6,000.00 and Bridge @ United Water Trail- \$1,000.00); 3.) Mac Bain Farm house repairs (\$20,000.00 and \$1,589.00); 4.) open space/site investigations (\$10,000.00 and \$7,985.00); 5.) trail repairs (\$12,000.00 and \$12,000.00). Chairman MacDonald pointed out the 3 subcategories mentioned under "Environmental Commission" need clarification as to whether the mentioned dollar amounts have been expended or not. Mr. Isaacson suspected the "Red Trail/Southwest & Northwest Sections" referred to the expense of having the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference install boardwalks at the Nature Center. Chairman MacDonald indicated funding is available to retain the services of the Conference to develop/maintain the proposed "Northern Valley Trail System". Mr. Isaacson disagreed, saying more funds would be necessary and, rather, the Department of Public Works (DPW) should be asked to handles trail projects and that budget item should be transferred from the Commission to the DPW. Councilman Kashwick countered that the DPW is currently overwhelmed with projects and undermanned; he opined the Borough should put a request for trail maintenance out to bid so the Commission is not confined to dealing with the Conference only. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg questioned if monies have been allocated for the installation of water utility service at Mac Bain Farm; Councilman Kashwick responded in the negative. Chairman MacDonald informed that Mr. Mc Caffrey previously installed water service pipe on-site for the residence which is apparently not yet connected to the water main under Hickory Lane. He said Mr. Sheola is concerned about both the cost for both installation and monthly utility bills. Chairman MacDonald said the amount given to the Recreation Commission for irrigation of its active parks is not known, pointing out the inequality between the 2 Commissions' budgets.

Mr. Isaacson said the Borough is hoping to install an additional monopole at the now-defunct Closter Swim Club site (Blanch Avenue), noting the 1 situated at Borough Hall is at fully capacity; Councilman Kashwick stated AT&T, Inc. hopes to increase its cellular phone service within the Borough. Chairman MacDonald believed the existing pole should have been placed near the DPW compost area, not in a highly-populated area. He questioned if the vacant swim club facilities would be demolished in the near future; Councilman Kashwick replied such would not occur until the extent of contamination on-site is known.

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated milkweed should be planted at Buzzoni Farm Park to allow for the butterfly population to flourish, noting her outlook for the site to be more people-friendly changed when she recently saw several coyotes roaming the grounds.

Planning Board

Mr. Di Dio reported the Board recently approved the application for the redevelopment of Closter Plaza shopping center and the corresponding Resolution was memorialized on January 30th, noting that the new owner, Closter Marketplace (EBA), LLC, had given unsigned tenants until January 31st to vacate the premises. Councilman Kashwick noted there is a 45-day period

in which any interested party may appeal the Board's decision. Mr. Di Dio stressed that even with a pending lawsuit, construction could proceed. He anticipated the following tenant changes on-site: 1.) "Closter #1 Chinese" will relocate to Closter Commons shopping center in place of outgoing "Artisan Gourmet Deli & Catering"; 2.) "Murphy's Fine Wines & Liquors" will relocate to 230 Closter Dock Road in place of outgoing "Closter Bootery"; 3.) "Rudy's Ristorante & Pizzeria", "Callahan Jewelers" and "Massage Envy" have renewed leases and will remain on-site; 4.) "Dollar Tree" and "Harmon" will remain due to existing leases; 5.) "RadioShack", "Homewares", "Hollywood Tans" and "Closter Hot Bagel" have vacated site.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Mr. Scholz said there was nothing new to report.

Green Team

Ms. Cummings stated the 2014 Green Fair would take place on April 26th in the Borough of Norwood, with a meeting to be held on February 20th to discuss planning; she noted that the Boroughs of Northvale, Harrington Park, Old Tappan and Cresskill would also be participating with Closter and Norwood. She informed that the annual Borough-wide garbage cleanup/recycling event is tentatively-scheduled for May 3rd. Ms. Cummings revealed that high school student Team members have a presence on the website, www.mycharitywater.org, in hopes of raising money for those parts of the world without access to clean water.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated discussions began on nominating both the residential and farm-related structures at Mac Bain Farm as historic landmarks; she informed that the house on-site was constructed in the 1920's. She anticipated the HPC would be preparing nomination reports for both Borough Hall as well as the vacant Village Middle School (511 Durie Avenue); regarding the latter, Councilman Kashwick noted the Borough would be contributing Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)-designated monies towards the creation of 7 affordable housing units as part of the owner's future redevelopment of the site.



New Business

The Commission had no matters to discuss.



Plan Review

The Commission prepared the following administrative report(s):

Zoning Board of Adjustment

515 Piermont Road: This is an application for Use Variance and Site Plan Approval involving the construction of a new building (containing a restaurant and associated retail establishments). Chairman MacDonald said Bergen County did not widen the thoroughfares at the intersection of Homans Avenue and Piermont Road when it recently rehabilitated the existing culverts in the vicinity; in response, Mr. Isaacson questioned if the proposed front yard setback would interfere with any road-widening easement held by Bergen County. The

Commission made the following comments: 1.) commercial buildings are not permitted in District #1 (Residential A); 2.) several trees would be removed; 3.) minimal buffering would be provided in rear yard facing residences along Trautwein Crescent; 4.) impervious coverage would be increased significantly; 5.) insufficient greenery would be planted along front exterior wall of building; 6.) farmland should be protected as open space to prevent its future development; 7.) increased amount of on-site parking could pollute nearby Anderson Brook via catch basins; 8.) exterior lighting should be hooded/shielded to minimize impact on surrounding residences; 9.) lone exit onto Homans Avenue would aggravate emissions due to increased traffic combined with that of nearby Hillside Elementary School; 10.) large amount of exterior doors would lead to energy loss (heating/cooling).

Chairman MacDonald revealed the Commission would be asked to give commentary on a forthcoming application for the subdivision of 437-439 Durie Avenue, which has a 2-family house situated on it; he noted the proposal may involve the adjacent 421 Durie Avenue, upon which the historically-designated Harold Hess Lustron House (a prefabricated enameled steel structure) sits.



Adjournment

Mr. Isaacson inquired about potential use of the existing railway operated by CSX Transportation for freight deliveries to and from Capital Hardware Supply, Inc. (10 Railroad Avenue) and Miele Sanitation Co. (60 Railroad Avenue); Councilman Kashwick replied said establishment and/or possibly Dykes Lumber, Inc. (23 Naugle Street) have rights to do so but none have occurred to this point. Chairman MacDonald expressed frustration that CSX Transportation Co. is not maintaining the railway which dissects the Borough in a northerly-southerly direction. Mr. Isaacson pointed out that if Miele Sanitation Co. were to exercise its right, the railroad track would become a means of hauling garbage throughout the downtown area as is the case with its other operation in Rockland County, New York. Councilman Kashwick stated there have been recent meetings between representatives of Closter, Northvale, Norwood and CSX Transportation Co., which have not produced a positive outcome because the railway operator is not willing to relinquish its rights to what it still considers an active rail. He stated that the late United States Senator, Frank Lautenberg, served on the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, but he does not know if his successor, Cory Booker, had assumed his Senate committee assignments. He also suggested that Congressman Scott Garrett be contacted to help further the Borough's cause. Chairman MacDonald reminded that the Borough of Tenafly rejected having New Jersey Transit's light rail passenger line travel through its territory as part of the Northern Branch Corridor Project, resulting in the northernmost terminus being located in the City of Englewood. Councilman Kashwick reiterated the rail line is in very poor condition. Mr. Isaacson stated the Mayor and Council have in the past attempted to landscape in and around the railway as well as install public parking, only to be rejected by CSX Transportation Co.

Councilman Kashwick reminded he should gather with Chairman MacDonald, the Green Team and Mr. Dahle to work towards the Borough attaining Sustainable Jersey certification.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Councilman Kashwick and seconded by Mr. Di Dio, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40pm. The motion passed by acclamation.