



Environmental Commission

July 15, 2014

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:52 pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, July 15, 2014 at Borough Hall.

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Oaths of Office

◇ Associate Member (1-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2014): Sivert Hagen

◇ Associate Member (1-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2014): Arthur Goldberg, MD

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Attendance

Present

- Paul MacDonald- Chairman
- Keith Scholz- Full Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)
- Robert Di Dio- Full Member (Planning Board Liaison)
- John Kashwick- Full Member (Council Liaison)
- Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2 (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)
- Sivert Hagen- Associate Member
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member

Absent

- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
 - Brenda Cummings- Full Member
 - Thomas Colwell- Full Member
 - Jaewook Jun- Associate Member
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Miscellaneous

The Commission agreed to postpone a vote on minutes for the June 17, 2014 meeting due to a lack of quorum for those present on said date. Mr. Hagen clarified his remarks made at said meeting about the Green Team being awarded \$300.00 in grants from Bergen County for each of the past 4 years in recognition of organizing the Borough's annual cleaning/recycling event; he said there is not \$1,200.00 in reserve because \$900.00 has already been expended and \$300.00 now remains. Chairman MacDonald noted the purchase order received from the County for signature in order for the Borough to be paid \$300.00 for 2014 must be regenerated to reflect the Borough's, not Mr. Hagen's, name and mailing address.

Dr. Goldberg mentioned he has not been receiving the Commission's minutes via email nor does he have accurate contact information for Commission members; Chairman MacDonald promised to correct the matter with the Borough Clerk.

Mr. Hagen reiterated that Mr. Jun, who would soon be resigning from the Commission, should be recognized for his efforts with the Green Team. Chairman MacDonald replied Ms. Cummings' draft of her letter acknowledging Mr. Jun's accomplishments has been forwarded to the Governing Body, which is scheduled to make a presentation at its August 13th meeting.

Chairman MacDonald read correspondence received by the Commission into the record, specifically, a memo from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) that announced nominations for the 2014 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards are being accepted.

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments.

Eli Nachmany, 32 King Place, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself and expressed hope of soon becoming a member of the Commission and replace Mr. Jun; he noted Mr. Di Dio urged him to attend the meeting this evening. He stated he was accepted into a collegial community service and leadership program between August 19th and August 24th, before attending New York University in September to study sports management and law.



Old Business

Trails

In light of Mr. Isaacson's absence, information was not available.

Green Team

On behalf of his absent wife, Ms. Cummings, Mr. Hagen stated there were no new matters to discuss.

Mac Bain Farm

Chairman MacDonald announced the 2 signs approved recently by the Commission to replace the existing dilapidated and ineffective signage at the Farm's entrance have been made by a vendor located in Pearl River, New York, at a cost of \$55.00 and \$135.00. He said the sign maker suggested metal be used on the back of the sign to be attached to fencing, along with bolts, as opposed to using wire. Chairman MacDonald confirmed the signs' wording was approved by the Farm's volunteers. Dr. Goldberg reminded that the new signs must be installed securely to prevent damage/theft, a task he felt was the responsibility of the Borough's Department of Public Works (DPW), not Farm volunteers or Commission members; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg suggested the decision on who installs the signage should be left to the Farm's volunteer coordinator and former Commission member, Mary Mayer, and John Mc Caffrey, its resident and caretaker. She noted the sign to be placed underneath the existing ground sign reading "Mac Bain Farm" at the Farm's entrance should be removed during the winter months; Mr. Di Dio reiterated said supplemental sign should be bolted, not simply hung, to the ground sign. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the new fence sign by the Farm's kiosk will now read: "Only Closter Residents May Pick Produce Wednesday, Saturday And Sunday 9:00AM To 6:00PM. All Visitors Must Sign In Before Entering Through Gate. Proof Of Residency May Be Requested. No Pets. No Picking Of Flowers. Only 1 Bucket Per Family Per Day. No Bags. Stay On Paths. Do Not Step On Plants. Use Only Sharp Knife Or Scissors.

Select Only Ripe, Fully Grown Vegetables. General Public Is Welcome On Marked Trails. Enjoy Your Visit. John Mc Caffrey And Family, Director And Curator And Closter Environmental Commission.”

Dr. Goldberg inquired about the Commission being provided a plan by the Borough for the proposed road reconstruction of Hickory Lane. Councilman Kashwick replied, typically, the Commission would not review such a project. He further commented that curb installation has not been decided upon, noting some of the public who attended recent Governing Body meetings have opined the trees along the Borough’s right-of-way be preserved, which would make curbs impossible. Chairman MacDonald questioned if asphalt, concrete, Belgian block, etc. would be used for curbing; he noted that a curb, especially 1 made of concrete given its depth, could be quite detrimental to a tree. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg hoped, given the public turnout at the Governing Body’s July 9th meeting, that the Borough would be convinced not to widen Hickory Lane as much as initially-planned; she noted the Historic Preservation Commission will be nominating the actual thoroughfare to become historic in the near future. Chairman MacDonald noted that while not desirable, asphalt curbing would have no negative impact on trees and would stabilize the roadway from deteriorating due to drainage; Councilman Kashwick replied that based on residents’ feedback, the decision will likely be to either install Belgian block or nothing. Dr. Goldberg reiterated his opposition to the road project, and said Hickory Lane is 1 of the earliest thoroughfares in the Borough; he said he was pleased the public persuaded the Mayor and Council to direct the Borough Engineer to reevaluate the proposal without altering the character of the lane. He also clarified a “lane” differs from a “road”, “avenue”, etc., warning there was talk of removing Hickory Lane’s curves to speed up traffic. He felt the Borough’s various bodies should collaborate with each other, form a committee, organize collective thoughts and guide the Governing Body on the issue. Councilman Kashwick said the discussion on how to proceed will continue at the Mayor and Council’s July 23rd meeting. He said he was uncertain he agreed with the Borough Engineer’s statement that asphalt curbs break down easily. Chairman MacDonald asked if speed humps were being considered; Councilman Kashwick responded the Borough’s emergency services are not in favor of their installation. Mr. Nachmany questioned if there is documentation of speeding problems on Hickory Lane to justify using traffic calming devices. Chairman MacDonald believed Hickory Lane, if improved, would be used by drivers as a shortcut to travel north from the traffic light at the intersection of Closter Dock Road and Anderson Avenue, which allows a turn on red, to Piermont Road.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reminded that the HPC is considering the installation of signage to commemorate the historical significance of Blanch Avenue at its intersection with Piermont Road.

Chairman MacDonald reminded the Commission to make note of any flagstone available to go towards installing a walkway in the pollinator garden recently planted at Buzzoni Farm Park. Councilman Kashwick revealed that a portion of sidewalk along Harrington Avenue (consisting of wide bluestone) was replaced recently; Chairman MacDonald believed such pieces would be too large for the garden.

Councilman Kashwick reminded that the subdivision proposal involving the property on which the Harold Hess Lustron House sits (421 Durie Avenue) is continuing before the Zoning Board of Adjustment.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Kashwick said the Governing Body is concerned lightning detectors recently installed atop new restroom/storage buildings at both Mollicone and Schauble Parks are not functioning properly, noting a recent incident whereby an umpire called a game for rain before the detector was activated. Mr. Hagen questioned their dependability, saying the detector at Mollicone Park lit up and flashed recently during a storm, but without sound.

Planning Board

Mr. Di Dio said there was no Board activity to discuss.

Green Team

In light of Ms. Cummings' absence, information on Team activity was not available.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

Mr. Scholz said there was no STC activity to discuss.



New Business

Tree Plantings at 170 & 176 Closter Dock Road (Alpine Valley Service Center)

Chairman MacDonald said the site is being enhanced by the property/business owner, Gaetano De Santis, as part of a Site Plan Approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment; he said the Borough Engineer requested 3 pear, a species Chairman MacDonald thought was being discouraged, to be planted along the Borough's right-of-way. Councilman Kashwick suggested the reason was due to the presence of public utility wires, otherwise, he suggested maple or oak and Chairman MacDonald preferred honey locust. Mr. Scholz explained pear, common throughout the Borough, are fairly brittle and often fall during storms; Councilman Kashwick stated the fallen pear at Ruckman Park were recently replaced with yoshino cherry, zelkova and river birch, all species that do not shed (as requested by the Recreation Commission).

Borough Newsletter

Chairman MacDonald noted that the summer edition of "Currently Closter" was recently dispersed by the Mayor's office via email so to save on paper and postage. He said the 2nd issue was only received by 2 of the Commission members and questioned how it can reach more readers. Mr. Nachmany suggested utilizing social media. Chairman MacDonald informed that Councilman Kashwick penned an article in the newsletter about yard waste and the damage caused by the dumping of such material. Mr. Nachmany suggested having security camera(s) placed at certain locations to curtail dumping, noting that the court convictions the video evidence will lead to could pay for the cost of installation. Councilman Kashwick said cameras have been placed at some Borough playgrounds and said dumping is prevalent along Durie Avenue by Tenakill Street, at the dead end of Brook Street as well as behind the Closter Public Library (280 High Street); Chairman MacDonald and Mr. Hagen added that dumping is common around Schauble Park and along Eckerson Avenue. Mr. Di Dio suggested the purchase of a hunter camera, which costs under \$200.00, is self-contained, motion-sensored and used by outdoorsmen to track game. Councilman Kashwick noted the absurdity of potential fines for the following offenses occurring on Borough land: 1.) dumping (\$50.00); 2.) all-terrain vehicle use

(\$300.00); 3.) smoking (\$2,000.00). Mr. Hagen believed there is a sign by Farrell Woods, which calls for 30-day imprisonment for dumping. Councilman Kashwick said the Governing Body will discuss the issue in the near future, noting any change would 1st be reviewed by its Ordinance Committee. He mentioned that deteriorating signage throughout the Borough's parks and playgrounds needs replacement and they should reflect a uniform message in terms of fines with an explanation that grass clippings cannot be dumped.

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Plan Review

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

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Adjournment

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she recently attended a meeting on controlling the local deer population at the Greenbrook Nature Sanctuary in the Borough of Tenafly. She stated deer are ruining woodlands and eating underbrush, resulting in the loss of birds and small mammals; she further commented deer cause vehicular accidents and Lyme disease. She commented several local nature preserves are considering temporarily closing their grounds to the public to hunt the deer via bow and arrow; Councilman Kashwick expressed concern, saying such is cruel. Mr. Hagen stated an arrow head is very sharp and the deer would bleed out quickly. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg commented that Bergen and Union are the only counties in New Jersey that prohibit hunting as a means of controlling animal populations. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated a speaker at the meeting informed that birth control is not effective because the female must be captured twice and it is quite expensive. Chairman MacDonald mentioned he viewed 2 turkeys and a very gaunt deer recently at a demolition site (390 Homans Avenue). Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stressed that several municipalities would have to join in a hunt in order for it to have an effect; she believed a specialist on the topic should be invited to speak at the Nature Center to get a consensus.

A motion was made by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Mr. Scholz, to make the Governing Body aware of its concern about deer overpopulation in the form of a resolution. Councilman Kashwick said he is in strong opposition to permitting a hunt within the Borough and said there is no evidence that such a method is safe and effective. He informed that the Palisades Interstate Park does not prescribe to such measures, but Ringwood State Park does allow hunting every day except Sunday during autumn. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg informed that hunters would go out for 3 days and the deer meat is given to local food pantries. Dr. Goldberg said New Jersey permits bear hunts; Councilman Kashwick interjected, saying such leads to the killing of the bears in hibernation instead of those eating people's trash. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg questioned if the New Jersey Audubon Society should be contacted; Councilman Kashwick responded the local chapter of the organization prefers clear-cutting to allow for bird habitats so it would likely be in favor of a hunt (he clarified that the county and national chapters may feel differently). Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said that both the Greenbrook Nature Sanctuary and Flat Rock Brook Nature Center in the City of Englewood stated they would not be in existence a decade from now if the deer are not controlled; she said salt licks are not reliable.

Said motion was withdrawn by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg to allow for further research by the Commission on the matter, including how other municipalities address deer population, before presenting its findings to the Mayor and Council.

Councilman Kashwick said he, Chairman MacDonald and Mr. Isaacson should gather soon to prepare a draft of specifications (as part of going out to bid) regarding the \$24,000.00 trail grant recently awarded by the State of New Jersey to the Borough.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Di Dio and seconded by Councilman Kashwick, to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm. The motion passed by acclamation.