



Environmental Commission

March 18, 2014

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

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

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2014 Reorganization

Not having the oath of office forms in-hand, Councilman Kashwick stated the swearing-in of appointed Commission members was postponed to the April 15, 2014 Meeting.

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Attendance

Present

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

Absent

- Paul MacDonald- Chairman
- Keith Scholz- Full Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)
- VACANT- Associate Member
- VACANT- Associate Member

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New Business

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

A motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Cummings, to approve the minutes, with a noted correction by Mr. Di Dio, for the February 18, 2014 meeting; the motion passed by acclamation.

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

Correspondence

Councilman Kashwick read correspondence received by the Commission into the record. Specifically, he asked the Commission for feedback to complete a questionnaire prepared by the organizers of the Bergen County Environmental Commission Annual Meeting, which he would

be attending on March 31st. The Commission agreed to the following goals/projects it has slated for 2014: 1.) establishment of inter-borough trail connection (“Northern Valley Trail System”); 2.) establishment of bee and/or butterfly sanctuary at Buzzoni Farm Park. Ms. Cummings noted the Green Team wishes to coordinate a program with the Department of Public Works (DPW) for purposes of educating the public on sustainability. Mr. Isaacson said, in order to expedite the lingering request previously made to the Governing Body, the Team should provide a recycling bin to the Mayor’s office to place on the 2nd floor of Borough Hall, reminding there is no means of recycling within the building.

Continuing with the questionnaire, the Commission said the “Northern Valley Trail System” should be considered a goal shared by neighboring communities (along with Earth/Green Fairs) as well as the entire county for 2014. Councilman Kashwick read the inquiry about the Borough’s storm sewer drains being labeled; Mr. Isaacson explained that the normal indication is to have the figure of a fish inscription cast onto the metal curb piece, and Councilman Kashwick confirmed that dumping into such drains would contaminate the potable water supply. Mr. Colwell confirmed that a drain on Cedar Court, in close proximity to the Oradell Reservoir, is not labeled as did Ms. Bouton-Goldberg say of a drain on Anderson Avenue. Mr. Isaacson suggested the Green Team educate the public on the meaning/importance of drain markings. Ms. Cummings reiterated the Team has its own website, which is offered as a link off the Borough’s, along with a Facebook page; Mr. Jun revealed that he is collaborating with an acquaintance employed with the online social networking service to hopefully place advertisements on its page. Ms. Cummings said she would mention the Team’s online presence in the column she writes for the local newspaper, Suburbanite. Ms. Abrams questioned the cleanliness of the Borough’s drinking water; Councilman Kashwick responded that while during the wintertime, salinity is high due to road treatments used, the water supply is usually fair. Mr. Colwell said being his residence is in close proximity to a reservoir, he is more cognizant of how harmful the common practice is of discarding medication into trash.

Lastly, the Commission answered that the Nature Center’s pond, Dwars Kill and the Oradell Reservoir (indirectly) are under its control.

Councilman Kashwick spoke of an article on pesticides received from the Mayor’s office; he said several localities are contemplating the ban on their use. Ms. Abrams said certain types have been found to be harmful to the bee population. Mr. Colwell questioned the feasibility of banning all pesticides given their widespread availability and favored educating the public on protecting the surrounding environment when applying such chemicals. Mr. Isaacson said the pesticide used by United Water Co. to kill mosquito larvae in and around the Oradell Reservoir presents a danger to drinking water; he stressed that before action is taken on the matter, it must be known what types of chemicals are utilized both privately and by the Borough in treating landscape. Ms. Cummings said several organizations are attempting to convince Lowe’s, The Home Depot and other home improvement retailers to heavily label such harmful merchandise in lieu of banning their sale altogether. Citing an article from the weekly newspaper, The Nation, she said research shows pesticides can affect the learning capabilities of children; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg felt pesticide use should be discussed at the Bergen County Environmental Commission Annual Meeting. Mr. Isaacson noted, however, that fertilizers promote the growth of algae and, in turn, nitrites in water; Ms. Cummings agreed, saying cut grass, so long as it is not too clumpy, is the best form of fertilization for lawns.

Councilman Kashwick said the issue of bicycle racks being installed in the downtown area was discussed at the Governing Body’s meeting on March 12th, with mention of a 2-slot rack at a cost

of \$600.00 as requested by the principal owner of Zendiggi Kebab House (224-228 Closter Dock Road); Mr. Isaacson countered that he estimated a 7-slot rack could be purchased for \$200.00 dollars at most. He noted that the wide sidewalks throughout New York City could accommodate larger circular racks; he stated the Borough should be tasked with installing 1 at Veterans Monument Park and other public grounds while the Chamber of Commerce would likely be placing racks at both the privately-operated Heidenberg Plaza and Closter Commons shopping centers.

Regarding the Commission's Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) membership, Councilman Kashwick stated the organization is asking for Commission members to update their contact information. He explained that ANJEC membership is automatically given to full members, while alternate and associate members can join if paid for; he noted there are funds available in the Commission's budget for such.



Old Business

Trails

Mr. Isaacson said there was nothing to report. Councilman Kashwick said a request for proposal (RfP) should be prepared for the maintenance and improvement of trails not located within the Nature Center's grounds once snow has completely melted. He suggested he along with Chairman MacDonald and/or Mr. Isaacson walk said trails for evaluation. Mr. Isaacson suggested a local landscaper be retained to clear brush from the trails; Councilman Kashwick believed the DPW should handle such a task while the repair/replacement of damaged boardwalks is best performed by a company chosen through the bidding process (equating to when the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference was hired by the Nature Center to do similar work). He mentioned \$18,000.00 was remaining in the budget for such.

With respect to installing a commemorative plaque at Scholz Bridge, Councilman Kashwick said \$400.00 was available. While a design has not been finalized, Mr. Isaacson said he would obtain estimates on materials and installation.

Green Team

Ms. Cummings said the Green Fair would be held at the Borough of Norwood's Kennedy Field and community center on April 26th, and there would be several activities for children and adults along with vendors and food/refreshments. She informed both Closter and the Borough of Tenafly's Nature Centers would assist during the evening. She stated a butterfly specialist would be present, and Maria Costa ("The Original Mrs. Wonderwhy?") would be performing tricks involving science and nature; Ms. Cummings further stated that electric automobiles would be on display. Ms. Abrams said online promotion of the event was at www.intheearthfair.org. Mr. Jun reminded there was no rain date.

Ms. Cummings reported the annual Borough-wide garbage cleanup/recycling event would take place on May 3rd from 10:00am to 1:00pm; she noted meeting places would be at Borough Hall, where trash collected would be put on display to enlighten the public and the Boy Scout cabin located across from the Nature Center's pond. She informed that people offering their pickup trucks and vans to haul garbage found to the front lawn of Borough Hall would be appreciated. She said grant money from the 2013 event would be utilized for food/refreshments, prizes, etc.

while equipment (gloves, pokers, etc.) are available at no cost courtesy of the Bergen County Clean Communities program.

Councilman Kashwick said the Borough stopped collecting garden refuse as of the latter part of 2013 and said, as discussed at a recent meeting of the Governing Body, the future practice would be for such collection to occur a few times per year excluding grass clippings, which would not be picked up. Mr. Isaacson clarified that as far as vegetative waste (yard debris) is concerned, the Governing Body decided that being only 120 to 150 households are affected, its collection would be stopped as well. Ms. Cummings noted that it was stipulated elderly residents or those needing assistance could contact the DPW in advance for collection. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg expressed concern with the new procedures, saying having to cart her garden waste to the DPW facility creates a hardship. Mr. Colwell questioned if during the winter months, regular garbage (less yard debris) could be placed at front doors for such residents if arranged with the DPW in advance. Councilman Kashwick stated such details on scheduling have not been decided on, but confirmed the DPW, overall, would not be collecting as frequently as in years past. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg felt residents should have been made aware of such significant changes to Borough services through other means than simply the Borough calendar, which often misinforms the public. Mr. Jun felt the report prepared by the committee charged with evaluating the pros and cons of privatizing the Borough's garbage collection, was much too difficult to comprehend the findings and suggestions made in it; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reiterated the importance of having a Borough brochure to relay such information to residents, but believed 1 should not be printed until the new garbage services are finalized. Mr. Isaacson spoke of suggestions previously made to have garbage more/less frequently collected during certain times of the year keeping in mind perishables go bad in heat while taking more time to do so during the winter months; he noted that the committee, on which he served, had none of its recommendations addressed by the Mayor and Council, which simply declared it would go out to bid for collection services in January 2015. Councilman Kashwick replied that the Borough's recycling contract with Miele Sanitation Co. is expiring and trash collection would remain non-privatized. Ms. Cummings questioned if the Chamber of Commerce could provide recycling bins on private properties as it intends to do with bicycle racks; Mr. Isaacson responded while it could pay for some bins, collection was not the responsibility of the Chamber. He reiterated that youngsters want to recycle while frequenting the downtown area, but when there are no options to do so (absence of bins) they should not be expected to hold onto recyclables until returning home. He further commented that by educating the public, it can be made aware that recycling saves the municipality money by keeping at bay its trash tonnage and, thus, tipping costs for waste disposal; he clarified that because the Borough does not collect more types of plastics, those plastics are combined with trash and add to tipping costs. Councilman Kashwick suggested that as part of the upcoming bid for recycling vendors, the Borough should require that the company awarded the contract provides and maintains bins. Mr. Colwell agreed, saying that barges full of recyclables inside plastic bags en route to China are being returned because of the contamination caused by the bags, resulting in associated costs increasing dramatically.

Councilman Kashwick said he, Ms. Cummings and Mr. Jun will be meeting with William Dahle, Superintendent of the DPW, Borough Administrator Richard Sheola, Mayor Sophie Heyman, Councilwoman Victoria Amitai (representing the Improvement Commission) and Nils Abate of the Shade Tree Commission on March 25th to discuss the final stages of the Borough obtaining certification from the Sustainable Jersey program. Ms. Cummings explained the certification is a system developed by a private organization whereby a locality can, if documented, gain points towards certification. She pointed out there are mandated/priority actions, referring to a past project in which the carbon footprint of all of the Borough's municipal buildings was researched;

she noted said project garnered 50 points which have since expired. Councilman Kashwick stated the Borough's current Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) is inadequate and needs updating prior to its submission. Ms. Cummings said the Green Team has previously met 3 strict deadlines for documentation. Councilman Kashwick believed such deadlines have been eased recently.

Ms. Abrams expressed concern that Kmart (19 Ver Valen Street) is not recycling their customers' plastic bags, and she questioned how it and other establishments could be compelled to do so. Councilman Kashwick felt plastic bags should be banned outright, noting there has been a bill pending in the New Jersey Legislature for some time regarding such a possibility. Mr. Isaacson said California and Hawaii residents are deterred from using plastic bags by being charged a fee. She also said the public should be made aware of the environmental harm caused by six pack rings, and Ms. Bouton-Goldberg felt the Commission should post signs showing how the plastic yokes are a danger to wildlife (referring to an infamous photograph of an entangle turtle). Mr. Jun believed that the supermarket, A&P (400 Demarest Avenue), should give its shoppers more of an incentive to using reusable bags than the current rate of \$0.05 per bag of groceries. Ms. Abrams said she strategically places her reusable bags in her automobile to make their usage habit-forming. Mr. Isaacson said the Commission could reintroduce the black polyester mesh bags it sold a few years back, or string bags which take up less space. He further suggested the Commission could obtain 100 reusable bags and ask A&P shoppers for their email addresses (with the hopes of building a database) in exchange for a free bag. Ms. Cummings said the public should be polled if it favors a ban on plastic bags or at least having a fee assessed for their use; Councilman Kashwick interjected, saying he was not sure as to the legality of charging a fee and that a statute may be required to do so; he said, however, that the Borough is not likely precluded from banning the use of plastic bags altogether. He believed if the collection of a fee is legal, proceeds should go towards the Borough's open space account rather than to the store where it was collected. Because the Green Team has several projects taking place the 1st half of 2014, Councilman Kashwick said a reusable bag initiative should be tackled later in the year. Mr. Isaacson said he would find a source to produce the bags.

Mac Bain Farm

Councilman Kashwick said the appearance of John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, before the Commission to present a planting plan for the upcoming 2014 season has yet to be scheduled.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Kashwick said the 2014 municipal budget was introduced on March 12th and will likely be adopted at either of the Governing Body's April meetings; he noted the Commission received the exact amounts it requested and the \$18,000.00 in last year's open space account dedicated to trails has not been expended so no more was requested for 2014. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reiterated the need for a water utility service connection at Mac Bain Farm, especially since the well should be reserved for the on-site residence's use only. Councilman Kashwick said the \$18,000.00 mentioned could go towards such a project. Mr. Isaacson said there is apparently a partial layout of water pipes installed by Mr. Mc Caffrey, which should lower the cost for the service connection. Councilman Kashwick reminded that money reserved for the

Farm's barn project, currently on-hold, could possibly be transferred to help pay for installing the water service.

Planning Board

Mr. Di Dio stated a Major Soil Movement application has been filed for the new construction of a 1-family house at 20 Church Court.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

On behalf of the absent Mr. Scholz, Councilman Kashwick informed that Arbor Day festivities would be on April 28th, the venues of which are Hillside Elementary School and the Closter Public Library, the latter at which there will be 2 trees replaced along High Street.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she recently perused old newspaper articles and the October 1935 edition of Bergen Review detailed Closter's 1st annual "Prettiest Yard in the Community" contest; she believed such a competition, having several categories, should be revived by either the Environmental or Improvement Commissions; she noted 363 High Street would get her vote as winner.



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 Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and seconded by Mr. Di Dio, to adjourn the meeting at 8:29pm. The motion passed by acclamation.