



# **Environmental Commission**

August 18, 2015

*(Minutes)*

Prepared by:

**Paul Demarest**

Ms. Heymann called to order, at 7:41pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at Borough Hall.



**Attendance**

**Present**

- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
- Thomas Colwell- Full Member
- Brian Stabile- Full Member (Shade Tree Commission Liaison)
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member (Planning Board Liaison)
- Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2 (Historic Preservation Commission Liaison)

**Absent**

- Paul MacDonald- Chairperson
- Brenda Cummings- Full Member
- Thomas Hennessey- Full Member (Council Liaison)
- Sivert Hagen- Associate Member
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member
- VACANT- Associate Member



**Miscellaneous**

*In lieu of the absent Chairman MacDonald, Ms. Heymann chaired the meeting.*

Not certain of which Commission members were eligible to vote on approving pending minutes, those for the January 20, 2015, March 17, 2015, June 16, 2015 and July 21, 2015 meetings were postponed by the Commission until the September 15, 2015 meeting.

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

Ms. Heymann wished to enlighten the Commission on what the Borough Code, specifically Chapter 16, considers its jurisdiction, powers and responsibilities and distributed copies of such. Mr. Isaacson said he understood that the Commission oversaw all passive parks in the Borough; Ms. Heymann concurred and felt the ordinance does not reflect all aspects of what the body does and/or should be administering. She pointed out that the ordinance indicates the Environmental Commission regulates shade trees located on Borough land when, in fact, the Shade Tree Commission is tasked with such. Mr. Stabile corrected Mr. Isaacson by stating Chapter 16 merely states the body should study and make recommendations on solid waste management. Ms. Heymann clarified that the municipal employee in charge of solid waste matters, other than the Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW), is the Recycling Coordinator (Carol Dacey) as per statute. Mr. Stabile believed there are other duties placed upon the Commission that are indicated elsewhere in the Borough Code other than

Chapter 16. In response to Ms. Bouton-Goldberg's inquiry on an index of open areas, Ms. Heymann said she would forward the Borough's environmental resource inventory, which it regularly updates in conjunction with the Borough Engineer. She asked the Commission to review what the Borough Code mentions of the body and provide feedback so amendments and/or proposals can be forwarded to the Governing Body's Ordinance Committee.

Ms. Abrams questioned if the Borough would have any leverage with the property owner/developer of the Closter Plaza shopping center with respect to lessening the use of Styrofoam, plastic bags, etc. by its tenants following the site's reconstruction. Ms. Heymann replied the DPW is quite thorough in its efforts to separate recyclables from garbage; she noted that most local merchants hire private waste management vendors and, thus, the Borough does not have control over their practices. Mr. Stabile opined that the Commission can voice such concerns and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council. Mr. Isaacson ventured to say that most establishments in the Borough do not recycle given the cost involved to do so; he suggested permits be issued to merchants, as is done with residents, to allow/encourage them to use the DPW facility to recycle.



## **New Business**

### **Trail Grant Expenditures**

Ms. Heymann said she began engaging the Governing Body about how the Commission would like to utilize grant monies awarded to the Borough in 2014 as a result of former Commission member/former Councilman John Kashwick applying to the State of New Jersey in 2013 for trail improvement/maintenance. She said that after inquiring with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and other potential contractors, she was put in contact with Kevin Riley, an experienced trail maker who recently did installations for the Borough of Demarest. She said she accompanied Mr. Riley and Mary Mayer, a volunteer with the Nature Center, in walking the Borough's trails; she said Mr. Riley subsequently prepared a proposal and estimate, the cost of which is less than the amount of grant money available (\$24,000.00 not including \$8,000.00 to be matched by the Borough). Ms. Heymann stressed that the grant is not limiting, meaning its monies can go towards any recreation trail (including related signage) in the Borough. Speaking of signage, she noted both the miniature signs situated throughout the trail system and the larger versions mounted on pedestals and located at trail heads, need repair/replacement; Mr. Isaacson reminded that 1 pedestal trail sign is located at the Closter Public Library, near the playground at Memorial Field and at the intersection of Durie Avenue and Tenakill Street. Ms. Heymann reiterated said 3 signs are very weather-beaten and need to be replaced; she said she would contact Fossil Industries, Inc., the company used by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission of which she is a member. Mr. Isaacson said that while the stands of the pedestal signs are in good condition, the upper sign/trail map portion should be stripped and replaced with wide format printed signs having adhesive on their back and a type of ultraviolet coating on their top surface. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reminded that there is a 4<sup>th</sup> such pedestal sign, located in Buzzoni Farm Park, which is in fair condition; Mr. Stabile suggested being placed in a shaded area adds to the sign's longevity. Ms. Heymann stated the reason for the other 3 pedestal signs' demise is, in part, due to the angle of the top portion, the ledge of which collects moisture, snow, etc. She said the prices that said sign maker charges are quite reasonable and her preferred signage is guaranteed for 10 years; she noted the costliest portion is derived from the artwork involved. Mr. Isaacson reminded that the existing pedestal signs were designed by a local artist,

Timothy Blunk. He said he had been recommended to the Commission by its former chairperson, Elizabeth Ravit, PhD, and was delayed in completing them due to illness. He reiterated that a better sealant/thicker laminate is required for the surface of said signs. Ms. Heymann suggested that leftover funds from the trail grant could be used to acquire an additional pedestal sign at another trail entrance; Mr. Stabile felt the downtown area or by the now-defunct Closter Swim Club (Blanch Avenue) would be appropriate. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg hoped any remaining trail grant monies could be utilized for additional parking areas at Buzzoni Farm Park's trail entrances, especially since the Club's parking lot is now inaccessible.

Kevin Riley, Vice President of the Nature Center in the Borough of Demarest, introduced himself; he stated he oversees the Center's trails and grounds and has supervised the installation of several bridges and boardwalks in Demarest. He said he was informed about the Commission's interest in upgrading a portion of Closter's trails by Ms. Heymann through conversation with the Center's Treasurer, Peter Coy. Continuing with his credentials, Mr. Riley said he has been the contact person for Demarest's high school senior service program for 5 years, which usually takes place every June; he noted his group of 5 or so volunteers have seen great results each year. He revealed that if the Commission were to retain his services, the issue of liability would have to be dealt being he is not a business entity, thus, he does not have liability insurance; he stressed, however, that because he sits on the Demarest Nature Center's Board of Directors, he has insurance coverage along with his personal health care coverage. He noted he could commence said project by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Riley said his estimate involves the use of the following pressure-treated lumber components for boardwalks: 1.) 4x6 ties; 2.) 12' long 2x10 boards; 3.) 4' long rebar. Mr. Stabile asked about leaching if such wood-preserving chemicals are involved; Mr. Riley replied said material is marketed as being quite eco-friendly (noting arsenic is no longer a component) and, in fact, the bridge at Brook Street is comprised of pressure-treated lumber. Mr. Isaacson was satisfied with such material being used instead of black locust, which is very expensive.

Mr. Riley explained his proposed improvements for the Borough's trail system:

- 1.) approximately 50 yards east of Ryerson Place and Tenakill Street intersection-
  - a.) remove existing boardwalks to nearest roadway to allow for collection by DPW (any salvaged wood is to be given to Closter Nature Center);
  - b.) relocate existing garbage bins from current location of 50' inside wooded area to nearby Tenakill Street for better public access;
  - c.) extract or cut 1' below grade and bury existing rebar to eliminate safety hazard;
  - d.) install 6 new boardwalks;
- 2.) approximately 20 yards east of Scholz Bridge-
  - a.) remove existing boardwalks to nearest roadway to allow for collection by DPW (any salvaged wood is to be given to Closter Nature Center);
  - b.) extract or cut 1' below grade and bury existing rebar to eliminate safety hazard;
  - c.) install 4 new boardwalks;
  - d.) adjust existing trail marker (yellow blaze) pointing in southerly direction so that it points west towards boardwalks in vicinity;
- 3.) approximately 50 yards east of Scholz Bridge-
  - a.) clear and widen trail (yellow) eastward to Northern Branch railroad track;
  - b.) close side trail meandering southward to allow for regrowth;
  - c.) re-blaze trail marker (yellow blaze) at Northern Branch railroad track;
  - d.) clear and widen trail (yellow) from railroad track to A&P Supermarket parking lot;

- 4.) wood trestle bridge south of trail entrance near 400 Demarest Avenue (A&P supermarket)-
  - a.) repair broken/missing handrail;
- 5.) dirt access road traveling west of trail entrance near A&P supermarket-
  - a.) reroute path away from wet area to drier land;
  - b.) remove shopping carts from culvert and return them to A&P supermarket;
  - c.) replace dilapidated boardwalks of trail section located between Brook Street and Durie Avenue;
- 6.) approximately 30 yards north of Durie Avenue-
  - a.) install 1 new boardwalk to span wet conditions while ensuring rebar will not puncture potential conduit (sewer easement) below ground;
- 7.) approximately 10 yards south of wood trestle bridge at Brook Street-
  - a.) install 5 new boardwalks;

Mr. Riley said his estimate includes \$200.00 for carting debris but not does cover travel time and mileage associated with material acquisition from the hardware chain, Home Depot. He said he would purchase material in batches of 3 to 4 boardwalks at a time to make the project manageable; he explained that way the lumber can be anchored before theft and/or shifting could occur. He proposed 4 hours of labor per boardwalk installation; he noted that placing the boardwalk down would take 1 hour to achieve and the remaining time would be devoted to anchoring. Mr. Stabile informed that the Governing Body would prefer a local business, such as Dykes Lumber, Inc. (23 Naugle Street) is considered as a vendor to buy material from. Mr. Riley said he would considered such, noting that the nearby hardware chain, Lowe's, located in Nanuet, New York does not have a saw on-site to cut lumber. Ms. Heymann reminded that the Borough would be exempt from paying sales tax for materials.

Ms. Heymann said it would be prudent to correct/replace trail markers throughout the Borough's trail system, noting while some face the wrong direction, others have been inserted too deep into a tree, which is now growing around the marker causing it to become loose. She said there have been past discussions about both Closter and Demarest's trails having a common décor; Mr. Riley admitted Demarest has not addressed such but reminded that such could be discussed during the municipality's walk event slated for September 19<sup>th</sup>. He informed the staging area for said walk would be the Trestle Bridge Trail by Demarest's DPW facility.

Mr. Isaacson said the trail (gold) on the western side of the Borough where it joins 2 of Demarest's trails (blue and red), should become a main trail leading to Scholz Bridge. Ms. Abrams questioned how the Borough's trail system can be better advertised to the public; Ms. Heymann opined that word of mouth is the best resource. Mr. Riley revealed that Demarest indicates on its maps those Closter trails located south of Durie Avenue, and they are mailed, along with a newsletter and calendar, to residents every January. Ms. Heymann pointed out that the Borough's quarterly newsletter, Currently Closter, should include articles about trails. Mr. Isaacson suggested the trails be utilized for geocaching and scavenger hunts; Mr. Riley agreed, stating a member of the Demarest Nature Center, Lewis Nelson, and his son placed a geocache in a birdfeeder in Emerson Meadow located off Columbus Avenue.

In further response to Mr. Riley's estimate, Ms. Abrams pondered if displaced shopping carts to be removed from a culvert near the A&P supermarket can be scrapped for metal. Mr. Isaacson warned that trail work proposed to be done on a sewer easement should be properly researched beforehand; Mr. Riley replied that Demarest's Stelfox Trail is situated upon such an easement with the installation of boardwalks.

Mr. Riley explained that the Demarest Nature Center's trails are quite damp, resulting in them rarely being used by bicyclists; he deemed such a blessing in disguise because bicycles eventually cause as much damage to trails as do all-terrain vehicles.

Mr. Stabile commended Mr. Riley's presentation, stating the simple design is very appropriate for Closter. In response to Mr. Isaacson's inquiry about trails complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) since public funds are involved, Mr. Riley responded that Demarest had inquired with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. He noted that his former contact with the Conference, Edward Walsh, is now a private contractor who builds trails such as 1 in Harriman State Park in New York stretching from Perkins Memorial Drive and Tower to the Appalachian Trail., of which approximately 2 miles is ADA-compliant. Mr. Stabile believed that such a stipulation would have been mentioned in the trail grant. Mr. Riley felt existing trails would be exempt from having to be retrofitted. He further stated that Demarest is considering installing a 2-mile loop from Wakelee Field to a tennis court area, which would cost approximately \$100,000.00 not including any prior approvals such as ADA compliance. Ms. Heymann noted that some of the Closter trails being discussed this evening were originally installed via grant monies; she said completing that project was tedious and costly because there had been concern about disturbing the supposed habitat of a red-shouldered hawk spotted in the area; she said the Borough had to prove to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), through nesting and migration, that such would not be the case.

Ms. Heymann said the Governing Body recently approved Mr. Riley's proposal and the only obstacle remaining is the Borough's Risk Management Consultant approving liability documentation considering Mr. Riley is an individual, not a business entity.



## **Old Business**

### **Dumping & Signage on Public Land**

Mr. Stabile indicated either Chairman MacDonald or Councilman Hennessey would research what the Borough Code dictates in terms of violations and penalties associated with illegal dumping, but noted they did forward estimates for signage to post at strategic locations; he believed the cost to be reasonable.

### **Site Contamination (400 Demarest Avenue)**

Mr. Stabile confirmed that 2 monitoring wells were installed via drilling rig on adjacent Borough property to monitor leaching from the site of the A&P Supermarket; he reminded that said lot was once home to a dry cleaning establishment whose use of solvents caused contamination. Mr. Stabile informed that he contacted Stantec, Inc., the licensed site remediation professional (LSRP) for 400 Demarest Avenue. He explained, procedurally, the NJDEP deputizes LSRP's, which are private entities, as state representatives by certifying them to follow regulations for site remediation. He continued to say that the LSRP reported there still to be chlorinated compound issues related to the dry cleaners and an investigation is ongoing; he noted that the 2 wells had slightly elevated/exceeding concentrations at the time of the last groundwater sampling event. Ultimately, he said the LSRP will continue to monitor the wells via individual testing/sampling or, if they remain impacted for a significant period of time, additional monitoring wells could be installed deeper into Borough land.

*Railroad Oil Transport*

Ms. Abrams revealed a rally would be held on September 20<sup>th</sup> to protest the dangers of having rail cars transport crude oil via the Bakken Formation from parts of North Dakota, Montana and Canada through Bergen County. She noted a venue has not been confirmed and inquired about indoor locations that could hold 300 people. After convincing Ms. Abrams not to reach out to local schools given what they would charge in order to compensate custodial staff, Ms. Heymann said churches and synagogues were more generous with such events. Mr. Colwell suggested the First Congregational United Church of Christ in the Borough of Haworth be contacted, especially since the subject railway travels through much of the municipality, unlike Closter, where the track merely touches its outskirts. Ms. Heymann also pointed out that the rail line is situated adjacent to Councilman Arthur Dolson’s place of employment in the Borough of Bergenfield.

*Plastic Bag Ban*

Ms. Heymann mentioned the League of Women Voters, which is promoting a ban on plastic bags throughout Bergen County, is hoping to have a speaking engagement at the Closter Public Library in October. She said the Borough of Woodcliff Lake is considering an ordinance that would prohibit their use by its merchants. Mr. Isaacson said a charge for plastic bags could be assessed as is done in New York City to entice recycling. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated that Ms. Cummings had recently done her own study and found that out of all the regional grocery chains, only ShopRite actually saw its recycling practices to fruition. Ms. Heymann clarified there are pros and cons to the issue; she said paper bags are often much more expensive for merchants to buy, and while they can be recycled often from sustainable sources, the manufacturing of paper bags adds to the carbon footprint. Ms. Abrams reiterated the importance of the public taking advantage of reusable mesh bags.



**Liaison Reports**

*Governing Body*

In light of the absent Councilman Hennessey, Mr. Stabile thanked Ms. Bouton-Goldberg and Ms. Heymann for their presentation at a recent Mayor and Council meeting, which detailed the future rehabilitation and use of the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue), a post-World War II era prefabricated enameled steel house, which was recently given Borough-designated historic status. Ms. Heymann reacted that the report and video presentation given were poignant. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg invited the Commission to visit the historic structure on August 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>, the same day members of the Governing Body would be present; she said she would confirm on which date the invitation falls.

Mr. Stabile reiterated his support for retaining Mr. Riley for mentioned trail improvements. He also pointed out that the Commission should be aware of any noise complaints related to construction or otherwise as well as dust control, especially given the ongoing demolition at the Closter Plaza shopping center and future projects involving industrial sites nearby residential neighborhoods.

*Shade Tree Commission (STC)*

Mr. Stabile said there were no new matters to discuss, noting the STC customarily does not convene for meetings in August.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann stated a pending application involving an addition to a warehouse at 23 Naugle Street, upon which a lumber yard (Dykes Lumber, Inc.) is situated, will be forwarded instead to the Zoning Board of Adjustment because the Board Attorney determined a Use Variance is required.

Ms. Heymann informed that the Zoning Board of Adjustment continued to hear testimony on a proposal to construct a new assisted living facility (specializing in memory loss) at 59 West Street, 11 and 15 Van Sciver Street; Mr. Isaacson reported that the applicant may revise the proposal, resulting in an adjournment until September 16<sup>th</sup>. He said the wetlands on-site and in the vicinity were determined to be isolated from the Oradell Reservoir as per the NJDEP.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg indicated there to be no new issues to discuss.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she reiterated to John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of the Farm, the need to plant blueberry and/or raspberry bushes on-site, especially in light of the upcoming Harvest Festival. Ms. Heymann revealed a means by which to prevent birds from damaging the berries is by placing shiny tape over the bushes, which scares them when it blows in the wind. She also states that blueberries are very expensive while raspberries expand from their roots, making them more plentiful; she further stated that raspberries are far easier to grow and prune. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported there are species of raspberry that give 2 crop yields according to Mr. Mc Caffrey.

Mr. Isaacson said Ms. Mayer suggested the Harvest Festival be held on October 24<sup>th</sup>, with the 25<sup>th</sup> as a rain date.

Green Team

Due to both Ms. Cummings and Mr. Hagen’s absence, no new matters were discussed.



**Plan Review**

The Commission did not receive any land use board applications for its consideration.



**Adjournment**

Ms. Abrams said she is researching possibilities for a banner/table cloth identifying the Commission’s exhibits at public events. Mr. Isaacson said that a fitted/printed cover for a standard 6’ long table would cost roughly \$200.00. He commented that a banner, runner or throw would be less expensive.

Mr. Isaacson informed that apparently there are coyote dens situated at 515 Piermont Road, a large tract of vacant land/farm field. He noted that overgrowth, which had acted as cover for the coyotes preying on deer, etc. was recently cut. Ms. Heymann stated a coyote was recently

spotted on Cedar Lane while Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said she witnessed 5 roaming Buzzoni Farm Park. Ms. Heymann revealed she had 22 turkeys on her property earlier in the day.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm. The motion passed by acclamation.