



Environmental Commission

July 21, 2015

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Ms. Heymann called to order, at 7:35pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, July 21, 2015 at Borough Hall.

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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)
Sivert Hagen- Associate Member

Absent

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

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Miscellaneous

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

Being an agenda had not been prepared for this evening, the Commission decided to postpone votes on approving minutes for the January 20, 2015, March 17, 2015 and June 16, 2015 meetings until the August 18, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Hagen stated that he and Ms. Cummings recently performed her environmental theatrical show, Granny Green's Green Machine, at a summit on recycling hosted by the City of Newark. He noted how impressed he was by the City's sense of urgency with respect to the environmental cause and how high of a priority it takes its recycling efforts, both residentially and commercially/industrially; he wondered if such was voluntary or mandated by the City Council. Ms. Heymann felt the Borough should revisit its own recycling practices, noting the Department of Public Works (DPW) is quite vigilant in monitoring that trash does not intermingle with recyclables. She informed that William Dahle, Superintendent of the DPW, wants to increase the volume in which the Borough recycles because it saves the municipality money via the following: 1.) more recyclables results in less garbage and hauling charges (tonnage); 2.) State of New Jersey pays Borough for percentage of its recycling (approximately \$14,000.00 has been received in last few years). She further explained that Miele Sanitation Co. collects recyclables on behalf of the Borough free of charge.

Mr. Hagen noted that while the local community is excited about there being a Whole Foods Market as part of the redevelopment of the Closter Plaza shopping center, he said Newark is quite content with a new ShopRite supermarket opening up; Ms. Heymann said it is a truism that lower income neighborhoods have the least adequate shopping options available to them because the supermarket chains do not have a large enough profit margin in those communities. Ms. Heymann revealed that the grocer, Stop & Shop, made a bid for acquiring several locations of the failing A&P supermarket chain, 1 of which would be 400 Demarest Avenue; she clarified such needs to be adjudicated in bankruptcy court.

Ms. Abrams informed that the public can recycle refrigerators/freezers in working condition (age is of no consequence), along with clothes dryers and washers if energy efficient, in return for \$50.00. Mr. Isaacson said such items are valuable due to refrigerant reclamation. Mr. Stabile explained that the Resource and Conservation Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) regulates all commercial and industrial solid/hazardous waste, but not household waste. He stated compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs, which contain mercury, can be recycled at any store selling them for a fee, regardless of where they had been purchased as per federal law; he said stores often do not advertise such a service because there is no profit in it for them. Ms. Heymann said the State of New York requires vendors to post signage in their storefronts making the public aware of such recycling. Mr. Stabile said RCRA also regulates rechargeable batteries. Mr. Colwell said he has purchased light bulbs and ceiling fans at a discount through New Jersey's Clean Energy Program online. Ms. Heymann said the discussed items on recycling should be posted on the Borough's website (rather than manning a table outside a store to distribute literature) to optimize public awareness.

Ms. Abrams said a local committee has been organized to protest rail cars transporting crude oil via the Bakken Formation from parts of North Dakota, Montana and Canada through Bergen County; she said it will hold a meeting on July 29th at the Ethical Culture Society in the Township of Teaneck. She said local publications recently discussed emergency contingency plans in the event of a railway disaster.

In observing Buzzoni Farm Park, Mr. Colwell viewed an abandoned playground swing set at the now-defunct Closter Swim Club and asked if it could be utilized elsewhere on open space; Ms. Heymann replied in the negative, believing it to be antiquated and non-compliant with current safety standards.

Mr. Colwell revealed he recently spoke with a Board of Health member regarding the ordinance regulating beekeeping in the Borough; he said his impression was that while the Board is resistant to changing said regulations, it would be open to discussion. In researching, Mr. Colwell found that while the minimum parcel size requirement for having beehives may be negotiable with the Board, there are several other regulations, many of which are state-enforced, that would be more challenging to amend; he noted there are mandated electrical and water sources, the former of which enables bees to survive the winter by having a heat source. Mr. Stabile suggested the Commission clarify if such items are state requirements or merely recommendations; Mr. Colwell responded that according to the New Jersey Beekeepers Association, they mostly seem to be required. Ms. Heymann said representatives of the Association have previously spoken to the Nature Center and Governing Body, questioning the Board's strict ordinance. Mr. Colwell believed the Commission could approach the Board by requesting an easing of the minimum parcel size requirement while reemphasizing the other regulations would be strictly enforced; he reminded that the regulations in place lend themselves to only serious apiarists maintaining beehives on their properties. Ms. Bouton-

Goldberg said Metropolitan Farm (119 Hickory Lane) has beehives on-site and sells honey; Ms. Heymann reminded that farms need not adhere to the Borough's ordinance regulating beekeeping. She mentioned that John Mc Caffrey, caretaker and resident of Mac Bain Farm, has a few hives on-site. Mr. Isaacson opined that the size of the parcel is irrelevant given how bees travel, and reiterated that hives are allowed on rooftops in New York City. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reminded that the City of Englewood recently amended its Borough Code to permit beekeeping.

Ms. Abrams asked the information pertaining to pesticides harmful to the bee population that she previously distributed to the Commission be posted on the Borough's website.

Mr. Colwell informed that the Borough recently gained Thomas and Laura Pendleton, formerly of Virginia, as residents (they live on the Alpine Scout Camp grounds). He said Mr. Pendleton is employed with the Boy Scouts of America's Greater New York Councils as its Camping Director. Mr. Colwell said the Pendleton family, including the 2 sons, is very involved in Closter's Cub Scouts' training program; he said Mrs. Pendleton expressed interest in having the Scouts collaborate on environment-related service projects on a long-term basis to instill greater pride in the fruits of their labor. He suggested volunteering at Mac Bain Farm (from April to November) and assisting Ms. Bouton-Goldberg with the pollinator garden at Buzzoni Farm Park. Ms. Heymann said given the young age of Cub Scouts (1st through 5th grades), less tasks are available to them; however, she said Mr. Mc Caffrey is capable of mentoring them through various projects at the Farm.

In speaking with Borough of Haworth Councilman Michael Bain, Mr. Colwell said a suggestion was made to have its Commission meet with its Closter counterpart about working on various projects together. Mr. Colwell said Haworth's DPW is clearing obstructions in waterways because of apparent procedure changes by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP); Ms. Heymann clarified that the State has slightly ameliorated the subject statute, and Mr. Dahle is aware of the exact language. Mr. Hagen said clearing/straightening of stream embankments has taken place recently in both Tenakill Brook and Charlie's Creek; Mr. Isaacson said such was permitted so to alleviate flooding (caused by fallen debris, tree limbs, etc.) of residential properties abutting said waterways.

Mr. Colwell suggested several municipalities approach United Water Co. to have the public utility thin out the deer population on its grounds surrounding Oradell Reservoir. Ms. Heymann said deer, along with coyotes, foxes and turkeys are prevalent throughout the Borough; Mr. Stabile said blooming animal populations are a sign of a healthy ecosystem within the region. Ms. Heymann agreed, noting all species must co-exist harmoniously.



Old Business

Trails

Ms. Heymann said she would keep the Commission abreast on how grant monies, which were awarded to the Borough as a result of former Commission member/former Councilman John Kashwick applying for a grant in 2013 to improve trail sections, are allocated; she noted that because of the smaller dollar amounts involved, quotes would be sought instead of going out to bid.

Mr. Isaacson said he recently walked trail sections located behind the A&P supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue) and took photographs which he distributed to the Commission via email. He reported the trail sections are in good condition except for a few areas with overgrown vegetation, which could detract the public away otherwise if 1 were squeamish about acquiring deer ticks; he believed clippers and/or a machete could clear those areas. Ms. Heymann said that the trail section by Tenakill Street is slated for repair using grant monies, but the area Mr. Isaacson inspected was deemed to be in satisfactory condition as per Mr. Kashwick's grant application.

Mr. Isaacson commended the Borough of Demarest on its selection and installation of boardwalk material. In response to the commonly-held belief that Demarest's trails are much more walkable than those of Closter, Ms. Heymann said that Mr. Kashwick's belief has been that trails in Closter should be for hiking, not walking, thus resulting in a more natural/unkept appearance. She stated either black locust or composite lumber (such as *Trex*) should be used in replacing boardwalk planks, especially those in low-lying areas that tend to flood. Mr. Isaacson confirmed the duckboards at the south end of Charlie's Creek are comprised of black locust.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said Mr. Mc Caffrey is awaiting funds to purchase blueberry and raspberry bushes for planting on-site; she said she informed him that he would get reimbursed from the Borough after he bought them. Ms. Heymann corrected her, saying a purchase order must 1st be generated by the Finance Office, which makes funds available to an approved vendor on file.

Site Contamination (400 Demarest Avenue)

Regarding contamination at 400 Demarest Avenue, which was caused by a former dry cleaning establishment on-site, Mr. Stabile confirmed monitoring wells/test borings have been installed on adjacent Borough land to investigate leaching of solvents into the groundwater. He said the wells indicate contamination to be at 1.3 parts-per-billion, slightly above the New Jersey threshold (1 part-per-billion). Mr. Hagen questioned if Stantec, Inc., an environmental consulting firm retained by the subject property owner, was authorized to do such work on Borough property; Mr. Stabile replied the Governing Body had to have granted permission. He continued saying that the firm may find reason to conduct deeper exploration into Borough land and install clean wells; he said Closter can only grant or decline permission to access its grounds, but all other decision-making is left to Stantec, Inc., the licensed site remediation professional (LSRP). Mr. Stabile said the LSRP must delineate the contamination and, based on its investigation, put into place a type of remediation system, which can be in the form of an actual mechanism to force the breakdown of contaminants or to simply allow them to dissipate naturally.

Ms. Heymann said there are several sites within the Borough being monitored for contamination; she stated 220-222 Closter Dock Road, where the former and current "Cahanna Cleaners" dry cleaning establishment remains, is an example of a fully-remediated site. She further noted that 48 Perry Street and 58 Perry Street, formerly a Colgate-Palmolive Co. facility, is now considered a brownfield; she said several Borough offers have been made in years past to purchase the lots, which were declined. Mr. Stabile added that in the future said site will apparently be subject to a limited soil load out whereby existing soil is removed and new fill imported to allow for its redevelopment. Mr. Stabile believed there have been no structures on-site for several decades.

Ms. Heymann expressed frustration that the Borough has spent approximately \$90,000.00 over the past 20 years to remediate a DPW facility on Ruckman Road.



New Business

No new business items were discussed.



Liaison Reports

There were no liaison reports given by Commission members.



Plan Review

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



Adjournment

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 8:18pm. The motion passed by acclamation.