



Environmental Commission

February 16, 2016

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Ms. Heymann called to order, at 7:39pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

Thomas Colwell- Full Member
Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
Sivert Hagen- Full Member
Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

Paul MacDonald- Full Member
Steven Isaacson- Full Member
Brian Stabile- Full Member/Council Liaison
VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

In lieu of the Commission nominating its Chairperson for the calendar year 2016 along with the absence of the incumbent, Mr. MacDonald, Ms. Heymann chaired the meeting for this evening.

The Commission postponed a vote to approve the minutes for the January 19, 2016 meeting until the March 15, 2016 meeting so to allow for additional review.

The Commission did not entertain a vote to approve the minutes for the October 20, 2015 meeting.

Ms. Heymann opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments.

Steven Lopez, 89 Union Street, Closter, New Jersey, introduced himself. As per the Commission's request at the January 19, 2016 meeting for which he was in attendance, Mr. Lopez distributed widely-accepted guidelines regarding cyclists' use of trails. He explained the most important rule is yielding to others, in other words, a cyclist should stop, dismount and yield to all other types of trail users be it hikers, joggers, dog walkers, horseback riders, etc. He further commented that a cyclist should leave no trace with respect to the trail's surface if it is experiencing muddy/wet conditions; he noted that if a cyclist encounters a section on an otherwise dry trail that happens to be otherwise, he/she should not dogleg the trail but rather ride through its center to prevent gradual widening of the trail. He opined that if there are wet conditions, it is best to avoid a trail altogether. He believed guidelines should be posted throughout a trail so non-cyclists are aware they may encounter bikers.

Mr. Lopez stated he viewed 2 areas in Schauble Park that have been converted by youths, without authorization from the Borough, to accommodate bicycle motocross (BMX), an on- or off-road sport, 1 of which includes a jump track. He said that while they are contained, official regulations should be codified by the Governing Body to prevent their expansion and ensure such trails are safe and controlled. Ms. Heymann said the Mayor and Council, not the Commission, must decide whether to sanction BMX usage of certain Borough trail(s). She revealed that 1 of the subject trails located near the ballfield in Schauble Park is quite amateurish in design, barely delineated and has been in existence since at least the 1960's; she noted the other BMX trail is much newer and more elaborate. She promised to forward the matter to the Governing Body. Mr. Hagen opined that the BMX use of trails damages the surrounding environment and opposed allowing both trails to remain. Ms. Heymann concurred, noting the more advanced trail is in close proximity to Haring Street than the other which is deeper into the woods of Schauble Park. She said the Borough needs to determine its liability of allowing such trail use to continue. She reminded that there is a demand for the BMX trails, noting the Borough's youth had previously lobbied for the installation of a half-pipe for extreme gravity sports (skateboarding, etc.), which was rejected by the municipality. In response to Mr. Colwell, Ms. Heymann said both trails in questions are isolated from the rest of the trail system. Mr. Hagen pointed out there is a similarly-used section of trail located behind the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue); Ms. Heymann promised to ask Kevin Riley, who is currently providing trail improvements in said area, what he has witnessed. She pointed out that the recent election of 2 younger members to the Council, Brian Stabile and Jannie Chung, may result in a more favorable opinion of the BMX trail(s). In response to Ms. Bouton-Goldberg, Mr. Lopez said he would be willing to serve in an advisory capacity to the Borough on the BMX trail issue if need be.



Old Business

Trails

Ms. Heymann said the Commission is awaiting a response from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regarding the Borough's recent request for an extension of time to allow Mr. Riley to complete trail improvements relating to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough. She said that although the project was to be finished by March 2016, she felt confident the NJDEP would agree to additional time. Ms. Heymann cited the written request made to Brandee Chapman, Coordinator of the NJDEP's Recreational Trails Program.

With respect to proposed trails in and around the conservation easement by the Temple Emanuel of Closter (180 Piermont Road) and Buzzoni Farm Park, Ms. Heymann said Dr. Goldberg prepared several maps based on his travels in the area, which will be reviewed by her and Mr. Riley. She informed that there have been no discussions recently between Closter and the Borough of Norwood regarding a potential replacement bridge spanning over Dwars Kill near Blanch Woods where trails are being contemplated. She noted there is an existing bridge near Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. (75 Blanch Avenue), which was closed by Norwood to prevent access onto the southern portion of its Northwoods condominium complex.

Ms. Heymann stated she began discussing Closter's trail map design with David Emerson, a founding member of the Demarest Nature Center.

As for the \$6,000.00 matching requirement for the Borough as part of the Recreational Trails Program Grant it received, Ms. Heymann said such would be easily met through labor costs from the Department of Public Works (DPW) and other administrative assistance; she reported that of the \$24,000.00 awarded by the NJDEP, only \$2,000.00 and \$9,500.00 has been expended towards Mr. Riley's compensation and materials respectively.

Signage Prohibiting Dumping on Public Land

The Commission had no update to report.

Site Contamination (400 Demarest Avenue)

In light of Councilman Stabile's absence, there was no discussion.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

In light of Councilman Stabile's absence, there was no discussion.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said the Board would soon be discussing the Borough's pending submission of a constitutionally compliant fair share plan in response to the Supreme Court of New Jersey's decision in March 2015 to relinquish oversight of the state's affordable housing process from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH); she assured the Commission would be officially invited to attend those Board meetings to give its input.

Ms. Heymann mentioned 2 recent Board applications involving the creation of flag lots, specifically 679 Closter Dock Road and 80 Knickerbocker Road, the former having been denied by the Board only to have it reversed by the Superior of New Jersey (Law Division) and the latter still being considered by the Board. She explained the Board is generally against the construction of private roads having development at their dead ends/cul-de-sacs; in fact, she said the Borough adopted an ordinance roughly 25 years ago banning flag lots outright as a means to slow development throughout the Borough. She said several years later, the Borough would require a minimum of 1 acre for a lot to be subdivided, which was intended to preserve space in Closter.

Shade Tree Commission (STC)

In light of there still being no Liaison appointed by the Governing Body for the calendar year 2016, there was no report given.

Green Team

Concerning the upcoming Borough-wide cleaning/recycling event, Mr. Hagen said this year, Easter falls on the last weekend in March and by April, poison ivy is rampant, leaving only mid-March to hold the 1-day event; he reminded that at the end of the day, all garbage collected is displayed on the front lawn of Borough Hall to raise awareness. He said in 2015, the event was held in the 1st week of April and the public turnout was abysmal. Mr. Colwell suggested April 2nd be chosen so not to interfere with upcoming sports programs handled by the Recreation Commission; he also said he would inquire with Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders about their

schedules. Mr. Hagen said he would need to expedite the assistance received from the Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA), which provides gloves, tongs, bags, etc. as well as a \$300.00 grant annually for the event.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg revealed that electric utility service had been restored at the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue).



New Business

2016 Recreational Trails Program Grant

The Commission decided not to apply for said grant this year being Mr. Riley had yet to complete those trail improvements that were the subject of the grant awarded through the same program to the Borough in 2014; it said it would likely apply again in 2017.



Plan Review

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



Adjournment

Mr. Hagen questioned if there had been any proposal to redevelop 81 Eckerson Avenue, which has remained vacant since the 1-family house on-site was demolished a few years ago; the Commission replied it did not know.

There being no further items to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Hagen and seconded by Mr. Colwell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. The motion passed by acclamation.