



Environmental Commission

September 20, 2016

(Minutes)

Prepared by:

Paul Demarest

Chairman MacDonald called to order, at 7:43pm, the Regular Monthly Meeting of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Closter, New Jersey, convening Tuesday, September 20, 2016 at Borough Hall.



Attendance

Present

- Paul MacDonald- Full Member
- Steven Isaacson- Full Member
- Thomas Colwell- Full Member
- Sivert Hagen- Full Member
- Sophie Heymann- Full Member/Planning Board Liaison
- Brian Stabile- Full Member/Council Liaison
- Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg- Alternate #2/Historic Preservation Commission Liaison

Absent

- VACANT- Full Member/Shade Tree Commission Liaison
- Ethel Abrams- Alternate #1
- Arthur Goldberg, MD- Associate Member



Miscellaneous

The Commission postponed votes to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2016, June 21, 2016 and August 16, 2016 meetings until the October 18, 2016 meeting.

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting to the public for questions and/or comments. No one wished to be heard.



Old Business

2017 Northern Valley Earth Fair

Chairman MacDonald stressed the subcommittee tasked with planning the Fair must convene soon; Mr. Isaacson reacted its tasks must first be identified. Chairman MacDonald said he is awaiting a response from Julia Grammer-Kislevitz, the Chairwoman of the Environmental Commission for the Borough of Cresskill regarding details on how it previously organized the annual event. Mr. Isaacson replied that the former Co-Chairman of Cresskill's Commission, Michael Swan, recently spoke to Closter and mentioned there had been a compilation of handwritten notes on the planning of past Fairs which had been transferred to Google Sheet, a web-based spreadsheet; the Commission agreed such is a valuable resource and must be acquired.

Councilman Stabile reiterated the Governing Body supports the Commission's effort to host the Fair next year but would only adopt a Resolution to that affect one the venue(s) are confirmed

and all insurance/liability requirements have been met. Chairman MacDonald said he is still waiting for the Borough Administrator, John Fry, to review the application and forward it to the Superintendent of Closter Public Schools, Joanne Newberry, so both Tenakill Middle School's building and field can be reserved as venues on April 22, 2017. Ms. Heymann pointed out said field has a steep elevation and suggested Memorial Park is more suitable given it has a band shell and space for vendors, etc. Councilman Stabile believed Memorial Park is closed to all activities at the beginning of each year; Ms. Heymann disagreed saying she was told otherwise by the Chairman of the Recreation Commission, James Oettinger. She stated that if the band shell would not suffice for cover in the event of inclement weather, the Fire Department could lend its 2 canopies; Mr. Isaacson noted the School's gymnasium could also be utilized.

Mr. Colwell said he emailed the Borough of Demarest's Mayor, Raymond Cywinski, to recruit the municipality as an Fair organizer; he said he also contacted Councilman Michael Bain and former Mayor John De Rienzo of the Borough of Haworth, the latter being the current Chairman of the Bergen County Environmental Council. He noted he had yet to contact Closter's Fire Department and Ambulance/Rescue Corps. Mr. Isaacson suggested Kevin Riley, Peter Coy and David Emerson be contacted given their ties to the Demarest Nature Center.

Trails

Ms. Heymann said Mr. Riley is continuing trail improvements related to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014. She said the Borough is awaiting the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to issue a General Permit #17 (GP 17) relating to anticipated trail improvements near wetlands surrounding Buzzoni Farm Park. She mentioned there is a trail section beginning at Ruckman Park east of the playground that is marked with logs on both sides of its path, which connects to the driveway at 180 Piermont Road (Temple Emanu-El of Closter); she continued explaining once beyond the steps/ramp at the steep elevation near the driveway, the trail travels northwest through an alley of pine trees in Buzzoni Farm Park, then Blanch Avenue (marked with blue blaze). She said one could then opt to take the white-blazed trail leading to the Nature Center's blue-, green- and red-blazed trails (most of which consist of boardwalks). To simplify, she said the Commission's white-blazed trail links to the Center's blue-blazed trail at Ruckman Park, which connects to its green- and red-blazed trails and the latter continues west of the Park; she said the described journey of circular trail could be completed in 30 minutes when beginning at either Ruckman Park or Blanch Avenue. Ms. Heymann said Mr. Riley was asked to measure distances of said circular trail section so it can be included in a future revised trail map. She encouraged both the Commission and Governing Body to walk said trail, which once finished, would complete the entire northern section of Closter trails spread throughout 150 to 200 acres. Councilman Stabile cautioned for a soft opening of the new trail until the required permitting is secured through the NJDEP, which could take up to 6 months.

A motion was made by Mr. Colwell and seconded by Ms. Heymann, to approve Mr. Riley's compensation for an additional 50 hours as per his contract with the Borough at an hourly rate of \$25.00, to complete trail improvements related to the Recreational Trails Program Grant awarded the Borough in 2014. The motion passed by acclamation.

Chairman MacDonald stated there are several trails in Schauble Park off Haring Street and Bergenline Avenue that were recently created by volunteers of the high school senior service program. He explained they had been laid out in such a way to avoid an area that has a jump track illegally installed for bicycle motocross (BMX). He said the trails lead in the direction of Demarest though a few fallen trees now block the path. He informed that Mr. Riley agreed to

clear said trail. Mr. Hagen said the trail markings recently installed by the volunteers on the south side of Charlie's Creek in Mollicone Park near the dam, appeared disheveled. Mr. Isaacson said the Demarest Nature Center hosted its 1st Annual Dog Walk on September 17th to promote leashed pets and their owners utilizing the municipality's trail system; he suggested Closter do the same.

Ms. Heymann said there are several small waterways, particularly a stream running parallel to the Stop & Shop supermarket (400 Demarest Avenue), which are now dry and can ideally be cleaned of debris by the Department of Public Works (DPW). She hoped such could occur before the DPW begins curbside leaf collection, which she anticipated should not be difficult being this year was very dry and the leaves should not be saturated as was the case in 2015. Councilman Stabile said the NJDEP recently eased its regulations somewhat by allowing DPW's to conduct minor cleanups, not including diversion, in waterways because it realized the benefits of such outweighed any negative impact on the environment. Responding to a suggestion for the Bergen County Sheriff's Office to lend prisoners for labor, Ms. Heymann said it generally frowns upon them working in large open areas being more supervision is required.

Ms. Heymann promised to collaborate with Mr. Riley on updating the trail map with the improvements he has logged thus far via the Global Positioning System (GPS). She said the Nature Center's trails and how they fit into the rest of Closter's trails, including those forthcoming in the northern section as previously discussed, would be part of a new map.

Mac Bain Farm

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg reported deer are still infiltrating the fields by going underneath the fencing located at the Farm's western end. Ms. Heymann said, according to John Mc Caffrey, the Farm's caretaker and resident, the fence at the southern portion may require reinforcement as well. She stated the fence on the Farm's east side along the driveway appears to be in good condition. Councilman Stabile expressed concern that deer continue to enter despite the Borough paying \$6,000.00 for repairs by Dimick Fence Co. recently. Ms. Bouton-Goldberg said the work performed (bracing and wire), given the limited budget, was of high caliber. Chairman MacDonald said some of the fencing consists of wood posts rather than metal; Ms. Bouton-Goldberg noted that no post work was performed by the fence contractor which would have been quite costly. Mr. Isaacson said his impression was that the recent fence rehabilitation was to abate the deer problem once and for all, not be part of a long-term project phased out over several years. Councilman Stabile questioned why the Commission was hesitant to have a fair and open bid for fence work costing more than \$6,000.00, instead opting for Mr. Mc Caffrey's recommendation. Mr. Colwell explained there was urgency to fix the major faults in the fencing to prevent the loss of the entire harvest of crops this season. Ms. Heymann reiterated both Mr. Mc Caffrey and Dimick Fence Co. failed to provide the Commission with adequate specifications required to go out to public bid. She suggested the New Jersey Farm Bureau (advocacy group) be contacted to assist with writing such details for bid; Mr. Isaacson said a land survey should be provided to the contractor(s) so proper heights, distances, etc., can be determined.



Liaison Reports

Governing Body

Councilman Stabile announced the railway operated by CSX Transportation Co. that travels through Closter's downtown area was officially decommissioned a few months ago, which translates to the railroad not utilizing the track but retaining ownership. He said such gives the Borough the opportunity to use the track for beneficial uses. He explained there is a transportation alternative fund provided by the federal government that is filtered through the New Jersey Department of Transportation to municipalities and it currently has \$10,000,000.00; he stated an individual project could garner up to \$1,000,000.00 of said fund. He said an option is to convert the decommissioned railway to trails, noting he is in contact with the Mayor of Orangetown, New York which has done rail-to-trail conversions. Councilman Stabile pointed out that the Borough is also in a position to discuss the maintenance of rail crossings, which are often deplorable; he noted such would be paid for by Closter, though there are major liability issues and repairs would be per rail specifications. Ms. Heymann revealed that being the railway has been deactivated, parking spaces perpendicular to the track between Closter Dock Road and the Elks Lodge (150 Railroad Avenue) could now be used by the public legally. She expressed relief that the railway would not be used for freight transport, which had been contemplated by both Miele Sanitation Co. (58 & 60 Railroad Avenue) and Capital Hardware Supply, Inc. (10 Railroad Avenue). Councilman Stabile informed that the rail crossing at Old Hook Road, slated to be closed for weeks to perform upgrades, has been postponed.

Planning Board

Ms. Heymann said the Board is considering an application for 248 Closter Dock Road (Heidenberg Plaza) whereby an existing tenant ("Wally's Hot Bagels") would expand into an adjacent space to accommodate seating for 40 customers; she noted the lack of on-site parking is a concern. Chairman MacDonald said the existing "Starbucks" coffeehouse within the Plaza is apparently relocating to the redeveloped Closter Plaza in the coming months. Councilman Stabile stated the trees planted along Closter Dock Road in the Borough's right-of-way as part of the site improvements recently undertaken at Heidenberg Plaza were to involve structural soil; he said the Shade Tree Commission wanted to ensure proper water absorption.

Green Team

Mr. Hagen said there were no new matters to discuss.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Ms. Bouton-Goldberg stated the selection of a caretaker for the Harold Hess Lustron House (421 Durie Avenue) is still underway. She said the HPC continues to endorse Michael Pisano (44 Columbus Avenue), a local painting contractor, for the position. Councilman Stabile stated he along with Ms. Heymann, the Borough Attorney (Edward Rogan, Esq.) and former Borough Administrator, Erik Lenander, recently gathered to create better language for an upcoming request for quotation (RFQ).



New Business

Harvest Festival

Ms. Heymann believed the annual event at Mac Bain Farm should be held earlier this year than in years past to ensure a plentiful supply of pumpkins (potentially 500); she said Mr. Mc Caffrey concurred with the suggestion. Mr. Isaacson noted the 2016 Festival had yet to be officially

advertised. Ms. Heymann believed the question of publicity should not be of concern because the event is centered around the autumn season in general, not Halloween. Mr. Isaacson felt the Festival should continue to be held on a Saturday and pointed out Rosh Hashanah is October 3rd and 4th while Yom Kippur is October 12th. Ms. Heymann stated so long as the weather remains cool and Mr. Mc Caffrey uses tarpaulin to protect the pumpkins grown on-site from extreme temperature and animals, there should be more than enough for the Festival. Mr. Hagen questioned if Mary Mayer, a Farm volunteer and former Commission member who resides nearby at 12 Mc Cain Court, could store the pumpkins in her garage to ensure their survival for the event. Ms. Heymann responded that Ms. Mayer is on vacation and will be moving out of Closter next spring; she also said transporting the pumpkins within the Farm is arduous, yet alone off-site. Mr. Isaacson suggested renting a storage container, such as Portable On Demand Storage (PODS). Ms. Heymann replied such would be too costly and stated the pumpkins at the Farm are currently in a shady area near the main road at the south end of the site, but worried they would not keep if the temperatures rose. She believed pumpkins can survive in a garage under controlled temperature for up to 3 months. Mr. Isaacson reiterated the Commission wants to avoid paying a premium price for pumpkins on the eve of the event if the Farm's do not keep; Ms. Heymann concurred, saying Mr. Mc Caffrey went to Morris County last year to purchase 250 pumpkins for the Festival despite there being several local nurseries/farms that had an overabundance. Chairman MacDonald pointed out that Lupardi's Nursery, Inc. (75 Blanch Avenue) need to buy pumpkins this year being deer have destroyed much of its supply by hitting them with their hooves; he said it does not intend to grow them on-site in the future. Mr. Isaacson said the large annual pumpkin sale held by the Congregational United Church of Christ in Cresskill is a possible source for next year's Festival, noting he had yet to hear back from the Church's outreach coordinator, Carolyn Schinkel. Ms. Heymann promised to contact the Superintendent of the DPW, William Dahle, to reserve a truck to transport the Farm's pumpkins, which are now placed in plastic crates, to a temporary storage area; she hoped Commission members could assist in relocating them. Councilman Stabile stressed that the truck should have a lift gate.

Mr. Isaacson said he would print postcards for the local school system to distribute and advertise the Festival. Following a telephone conversation with Mr. Dahle, Councilman Stabile confirmed he would have a DPW truck available for pumpkin transport. Ms. Heymann noted there is sufficient garage space at the DPW facility for the pumpkin storage. Councilman Stabile mentioned Columbus Day is October 10th; d Mr. Hagen said an annual book sale held by the Closter Public Library is on October 14th and 15th but it is slated to end early in the day.

A motion was made by Ms. Heymann and seconded by Mr. Colwell, to hold the annual Harvest Festival at Mac Bain Farm on October 15, 2016 commencing at 3:00pm. The motion passed by acclamation.

The Commission agreed that the Farm's pumpkin transport would occur on September 23rd and those members who can assist in loading/unloading should be on-site at 9:00am. Ms. Heymann stated there are still a few scratched pumpkins on-site that are suitable for making pie and soup. Chairman MacDonald mentioned that former Commission member, Brenda Cummings, who fronts an environmental theatrical show known as Granny Green's Green Machine, is welcome to perform at the event and noted her services have been budgeted for. Mr. Isaacson said he would purchase refreshments for the Festival. Mr. Colwell informed that Closter's 4th Annual Borough-Wide Garage/Yard Sale, which benefits its Food Pantry, is scheduled for October 15th.



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 Mr. Colwell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:53pm. The motion passed by acclamation.