Environmental Commission

November 14, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance at 7:32 pm with the Open Public Meetings announcement.

2. Attendance:

Paul Yarin-present	Council Liaison Cho-present
Krishna Rege-present	Conway Wong-present
Rachel Suter-present	Shelagh McCaffrey-present

Members of public also Present: Todd Bradbury (Shade Tree Commission), Yeony Hong (Northern Valley Demarest Senior student) and Charles McKinney (Palisades Interstate Park Commission).

3. Approval of Minutes (October 10, 2024) Ms. Rege moved to approve, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Approved.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments

Charles stated that he has been talking to people and is trying to construct an analysis of the current conditions. He described the land structures and their benefits. He wondered whether there were additional places where connection to the park would be beneficial to Closter. He also asked whether people were aware of flooding concerns. He asked what would make the rough land more attractive to residents of Closter. Discussion. Shelagh McCaffrey spoke about a mountain biking community that helps with trail maintenance. She also spoke about some storm runoff on Ruckman Road. Charles encouraged all to reach out with comments and suggestions and spoke of his desire to have a partnership with the community.

Yeony Hong discussed her interest in the scientific and educational aspects of the environment. She is actively involved in the environmental science club at NVD. She proposed that she could recruit volunteers to assist with various projects. Ms. Hong and Mr. Yarin will explore the possibility of the Closter EC presenting to the club.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update and 2025 budget deadline. The deadline is in a couple of weeks. The commission was invited to speak about any budget issues. As no one commented, the budget from last year will be submitted again.

b. Recent events – Marc Gussen gave a talk about forest ecology at the Closter Library. Yeony Hong gave information on what he spoke about, including the deer population and invasive species.

Two groups from Acton Academy visited Buzzoni Garden and learned about the pollinator garden from Ms. Rege.

Upcoming events: A series about building electrification; the Palisades Interstate Commission meeting about the Alpine Scout Camp; meetings about food waste in schools; a hybrid course on Tuesdays at Rutgers about invasive species, climate change, and other topics. Ms. Rege will receive a conservation award in January for her work.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Composting update: Ms. McCaffrey shared that the composters have been received and about half have been distributed. There will be an online push to distribute the others. There will also be discussions about pick-up and drop-off services. The Demarest Environmental Commission is interested in collaborating. She said that the next thing she would like to look at is food waste in schools. Yodi shared that NVD is starting to compost. Ms. McCaffrey said she would like to work with the High School students. Charles asked for information on the composters. Some EC members will attend upcoming BCUA session on food waste recycling.

b. Buzzoni Pollinator Garden sprinkler update: Inspections and approvals are being worked through concerning the sprinkling system.

c. Grants update – CEPG stakeholder meetings: Details about energy use in Closter and the following processes were shared. Mr. Yarin spoke with the director of the Senior Center. The first Tuesday will be set aside at the Senior Center for hybrid meetings about these topics involving the public. Ms. Rege suggested adding some weekend dates as well. Details will need to be worked out. He asked commission members to speak to the community. Ms. McCaffrey

suggested posting on social media. Yoni suggested using social media stories and offered to talk to middle school teachers.

d. Hagen Park trail maintenance update: Mr. Yarin made a boardwalk to allow easier walking for the woman who contacted the commission about trails.

7. New Business

a. Swim Club cleanup plan: Mr. Yarin spoke about the Borough's plan to remediate the Swim Club. As the Buzzoni Farm is across the street, the EC should learn more and think about the process and how it will affect the Farm. Discussion, including the soil under the parking lot. Todd Bradbury of the Shade Tree Commission joined the discussion about tree mitigation.

b. Alpine Scout Camp plans: Charles said that he imagined that the people of Closter had not thought about this land as a park but that now access to this land will be improved. Ms. Suter spoke about playing in the area's streams as a child. Charles clarified that only the New Jersey Scouts are leaving the park. The New York Scouts are staying. Charles will communicate with both Mr. Bradbury and Ms. Suter, as well as Marc Gussen.

c. Offshore wind economics: A letter was sent to most New Jersey towns from an energy consultant working for a group opposing offshore wind development. The letter claims that the offshore energy project will cause energy prices to skyrocket. Mr. Yarin reached out to a lot of experts. It is a confusing issue, and Mr. Yarin will need to present a report at some point. Ms. McCaffrey spoke about some concerns about offshore wind development. Mr. Yarin feels he should respond to the Borough but is not sure whether the Borough has to respond to the letter.

8. Plan Review and Comment The EC is still looking for a Planning Board liaison.

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body The Shade Tree Commission is looking for an EC liaison. The Swim Club was once a small airplane landing area. Councilman Cho shared that he gets several emails a week like the one about offshore development and said that Mr. Yarin doesn't need to delve into it in an extreme way. Councilman Cho will attend environmental classes at the NJ League of Municipalities Convention.

b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

10. Adjournment The meeting ended at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marti Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary