Environmental Commission

July 9, 2026 7:30 pm – at Boro Hall and via Zoom

Minutes

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

2. Attendance

Present: Paul Yarin (Chair), Marina Layvand, Council President Chris Cho, Arati Navar, Anna Maroules (Council Liaison via Zoom), Krishna Rege, Conway Wong

Absent: Sarah Ritter Chung, Ansar Batool, Liel Dulev

3. Approval of Minutes (June 11, 2026) – *Postponed*

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments – No one wished to speak.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update – Only necessities spent to date (secretarial fees, ANJEC dues) — roughly 16% of the $4,775 operating budget at mid-year. Passive Parks ($2,000) and Events ($1,500) funds are untouched; members were invited to propose fall events. Ms. Layvand proposed reviving the September fair to showcase the garden; this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.
b. Partner orgs / events – Bergen County Sustainability Hub meeting, Monday, July 27, 7:00–8:30 pm, Saddle Brook Municipal Building. Ms. Rege has attended previously and recommends it. Members may attend.
c. Closter REV 250 event report – A lot of people from the public came by the booth for conversation. Mr. Dulev and Mr. Yarin worked in the booth.

6. Unfinished Business

Birdhouses – Sam Layvand has been discussing a birdhouse curriculum with the NVD woodworking teacher. He and Mr. Yarin spoke about ways the EC can speak with the Environmental Club at the High School. Four birdhouses are at the Buzzoni Garden waiting to be installed. Sam Layvand will contact the Environmental Club advisor in early fall; installation is planned in the coming weeks.

Buzzoni Garden is starting to bloom; thank you to many volunteers. PAVA World worked in June to plant and weed, along with Council President Cho and his son. Mr. Yarin will send a thank-you note to PAVA; formal recognition may be repeated at season's end.

MacBain Farm – Barring excessive heat, the Farm will be open Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, 9:00–1:00 and 4:00–6:00.

Green Challenges – The Native planting challenge has garnered a lot of participation. Commission members are welcome to reach out for plants.

Health walks are on hiatus for a while but will probably resume in September. Discussion of communication.

Trail maintenance – no update.

ERI – Rutgers has assigned two students (Luke Tilton, Will Clark) to harvest and input data. The students have been invited to visit Closter, but this hasn't happened yet. EC members are invited to join the upcoming site visit as guides. The field research they are able to do may not be as extensive as what the EC wishes.

There is an invasive species strike team; they have a website.

An app exists that allows people to photograph and add specific examples of invasive species to a national website. Adding information from Closter would be a possible future project (Green Challenge, perhaps) for the EC. The database currently has only one Closter record; Mr. Yarin will file at least one sighting via the app before the next meeting. The RVCC Center for Environmental Studies conducts deer surveys and advises on exclosures — a possible future resource. An accurate way to test water concerns macroinvertebrates. It would be good for someone to learn how to do this test.

Closter Swim Club, EC website, CEPG – no updates.

7. New Business

a. Sustainable Jersey grant award – Council President Cho spoke about the $2,000 grant he received for Closter. The project outlined in the application concerns engaging students at the Hillside and Tenakill Schools in environmental concerns and mentions having an art contest. The Sustainable Jersey and PSE&G foundation logos need to be on all promotional materials. Sam Layvand liked the

idea of the art contest and suggested highlighting specific environmental concerns. The companion $20,000 application was not awarded. Council President Cho will contact the school principals and superintendent. Mr. Yarin offered utility outreach contacts (Orange & Rockland, PSE&G) as expert speakers.

b. Buzzoni Park tree concerns – The Tree Alley has been there close to 100 years. Some of the Norway Spruce in the alley have fallen, and some are not very well. Also, there are some gaps due to earlier trees falling. EC members are asked to go to the park and look at the alley to see what needs to be done, as the park is under the jurisdiction of the Commission. A tree expert has advised that branches would need to be trimmed to allow sunlight to reach any new plantings. Ms. Rege suggested that at least the dead trees could be removed, for safety. Mr. Yarin shared that Marc Gussen from the Nature Center supports leaving trees that have safely fallen where they are, to create habitats for animals. Discussion. More research will be needed. Council President Cho shared that people often want to donate trees and that it would be possible for them to be directed to replace these trees. Health of the forest, water levels, and species are also factors. DPW may be able to remove the dead trees. The Rutgers ERI team will be asked to document the alley. Mr. Yarin will reach out to a NJ Forestry Department contact. The spruce are non-native; native replacements were discussed. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

8. Plan Review and Comment

a. TBD

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body (A. Maroules) – Councilwoman Maroules had to leave for another meeting. No report.

b. Planning Board (A. Batool) – no report

10. Adjournment – Ms. Rege moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Layvand. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Commission Recording Secretary