Environmental Commission

November 13, 2025 7:30pm – at Boro Hall and via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Yarin opened the meeting at 7:36 pm with the Open Public Meeting announcement.

2. Attendance

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

3. Approval of Minutes (September 11 and October 10, 2025)

September 11: Ms. Rege stated that on Item 7B, the vote for mailings, the vote should have been 3 yes and 2 no and that she was one of the no votes. Correction made in the 9/11 minutes. Ms. Rege moved to approve as amended, second Ms. McCaffrey. All in favor. Carried.

October 10: Ms. McCaffrey moved to approve, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments
The meeting was opened for comments.

Syed Ephraim Hussein (15 Fifth Street) spoke about gas-powered leaf blowers in relation to the noise- and air-pollution issues. He started a petition to have them banned and has so far done about 4 hours of canvassing. He asked whether this is an issue the EC might want to take up in an advisory issue. He also wondered whether there might be events at which he could set up a table. He spoke about companies that testified that electric leaf blowers had no effect on their profits. Discussion. Other members of the public joined the discussion in support. Ms. McCaffrey shared that the EC has tried to work on this issue and that it is helpful to have community members who are passionate about an issue take a leading role. There will be further conversations via email.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update No major changes; the mailer will wait until there is greater consensus about the content.

b. Upcoming events: **NJLM** Councilman Cho will attend. There are some classes that pertain especially to the Environmental Commission, and he will attend what he can. **Rutgers Enviro Stewards class** Mr. Yarin highly recommends this class and offered that the EC can help pay the fee as much as is legally possible.

c. **SJ program refresh and approach** The program is undergoing a major overhaul. As a result, it is offering everyone a grace period and an extension of the look back. Mr. Yarin asked interested parties to contact him.

d. **Recruiting new EC members** It is good for interested people to attend meetings and get to know the Commission. Also, a Planning Board member should join.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Recent events: **ANJEC Congress** Mr. Yarin and Ms. Rege attended and discussed the classes in which they participated; **Bergen County Sustainability Hub** Ms. Rege attended this event and spoke about Green Streets, Complete Streets, and Safe Routes to School. She also spoke about Beyond Plastics and suggested that students might want to get involved. **Rutgers Enviro Stewards Summit** Mr. Yarin attended and spoke about bluebird houses and monitoring. EC members are encouraged to attend these events.

b. **Buzzoni Pollinator Garden updates** Councilman Cho and Ms. Rege spoke about putting out gravel; this will continue this Saturday. Mr. Yarin is redesigning the information signs.

c. **ERI updates** The Mayor and Council have approved $20,000, and Rutgers has lowered their estimate to about $11,000. Remaining funds can be used for signage and information. The Kick-off meeting will be in January. Interested members are asked to join in.

d. **Community Energy Planning Grant updates** This project will wait until the ERI is underway.

e. **Website/social media updates** Mr. Yarin stated that he hopes someone will be able to take on this area. Perhaps Green Challenges could be posted on social media. Ms. Wiley spoke about interactive social media possibilities, as well as educating and communicating with the public.

7. New Business

a. **NVD Environmental Projects** Sam Layvand (who is one of the organizers of the Environmental Club at NVD) offered to help with Social Media. He asked Ms. McCaffrey to meet with some people on Zoom about a composting program at NVD. She and he will set up a time. He suggested educating the club, putting

up flyers, and obtaining a compost bin for NVD. He spoke to the person involved in the Closter Cleanup Crew. She is still interested and will speak to the others. Sam would like to take this on if the original group does not go forward. There is someone interested in revitalizing the NVD garden. Sam will try to meet with him soon. He also asked Mr. Yarin to speak with this person. Either Mr. Yarin or Ms. Rege will do this. Sam asked whether, because NVD is in Demarest, the points would transfer to Closter. This is a question. Sam shared his screen and a website he created about a seed exchange. He offered to enhance it. Mr. Yarin suggested it might be better to add the information to the EC website rather than create a new website and that the EC needs to understand the project a bit more. Discussion. Ms. McCaffrey shared that MacBain Farm has an annual seed exchange and suggested that Social Media might be a good way to publicize seed exchanging. This will be revisited next month after the various parties discuss further. Mr. Yarin hopes that the Cleanup Crew is still motivated and feels heard. Sam will follow up with the leader and report back.

b. **Tech tools for volunteer coordination** Mr. Yarin discussed some tools other Commission uses. One is called Table to Table, which delivers food from point A to point B. It uses delivery technology like Uber. Perhaps similar software could be used in Closter for cleanups. Also, Charity Quest is a gamified method of finding volunteers. Bergenvolunteers.org is an aggregator of volunteer opportunities in the county. It is possible to sign up individually or as a group. Closter could list volunteer opportunities on the site.

8. Plan Review and Comment

a. **Oct. 30 Planning Board meeting** – observations. Mr. Yarin spoke about 104 High Street and said that a lot of soil movement is happening, and a large amount of stone is being imported. He pointed out the carbon emissions generated by the process.

b. **RECO Closter Underground Distribution Project** Rockland Electric will be putting some wires underground. A map and statistics were shown. This process will be slightly infringing on a riparian zone (about 800 square feet).

9. Liaison Reports

a. **Governing Body (C. Cho)** no report.
b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

The Board of Health meeting is next week. Mr. Yarin stated that the goal is to in a friendly way reiterate that state legislation allowing beekeeping supersedes the Closter limiting ordinances. Mr. Yarin will share a video with Mr. Wong,

10. Adjournment
Ms. McCaffrey moved to adjourn, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:44.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Commission Recording Secretary