Environmental Commission

June 11, 2026 7:30 pm – at Boro Hall and via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Yarin opened the meeting at 7:34 pm with the Open Public Meetings Announcement.

2. Attendance

Present: Paul Yarin (Chair), Marina Layvand, Ansar Batool, Liel Dulev, Arati Navar, Anna Maroules (Council Liaison by Zoom at 7:43)

Absent: Sarah Ritter Chung, Council President Chris Cho, Krishna Rege, Conway Wong.

3. Approval of Minutes (May 14, 2026) – Ms. Layvand moved to approve the minutes, second Mr. Dulev. All in Favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments

Yusuf Zaman (404 Blanch Ave) volunteers at the Nature Center and is starting on the CNC Natural Resources Committee. He has a lot of interest in the natural resources in Closter.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update – no update

b. Partner orgs / events

c. Sustainability Summit report – Mr. Yarin attended; there is a new state food waste law requiring counties to cut food waste 50% by 2035 (vs. a 2022 baseline); landfill disposal, including waste-to-energy, does not count. A result is that it will be easier for municipalities to operate compost programs. Grants are available. Patisserie Florentine already composts informally and supports a centralized Closter food-scrap program. A local food-scrap drop-off pilot would earn Sustainable Jersey points and position Closter ahead of coming county requirements. The State opened an additional 3,000 MW of community solar capacity. Mr. Yarin noted the former Swim Club site as a possible solar location under provisions for contaminated sites; economics are uncertain given reduced federal incentives, and further study may be warranted. The presentations are available online. The Sustainable Business Registry allows qualifying businesses to register and be promoted — an available Sustainable Jersey points action.

Advocates for Transforming Landscape NJ has a checklist available that can be given to landscapers to ask that certain good practices be followed.

6. Unfinished Business

Birdhouses – A couple of duck houses are still owed, as well as a map of where they are installed. The HS woodworking class has finished theirs. They would like to do this project again next year. The HS may be able to provide materials. Perhaps the houses should bear a marking that the HS created them. The HS students would also like to look into 3D printing. The materials involved in 3D printing would need to be reviewed for safety to birds.

Buzzoni Garden – A Whole Foods corporate volunteer team helped at a volunteer event, and a lot has been done. Weeding help is needed. Ms. Layvand will draft a website notice seeking weeding volunteers; Mr. Yarin will post it. Chokeberry bushes are needed and are being sought. Ms. Rege would like the timing on the sprinklers to be changed.

MacBain Farm is looking beautiful; James McCaffrey is the new caretaker. The new plastic has been installed, as has a new herb garden. New plants have been installed and more are ready. The season will open at the end of June.

Green Challenges – There is a new challenge concerning milkweed and other native plants.

Health walks are ongoing Sundays at 10:00am, meeting at Ruckman Park

Trail maintenance – no major update, but volunteers are needed to clear trails at the Nature Center.

ERI – Rutgers has been given all of the data, but there is no update. Mr. Yarin will follow up with them.

CEPG – Mr. Yarin will follow up.

Closter Swim Club, EC website – no update

7. New Business

a. Sustainable Jersey grant award – Council President Cho has successfully applied for a $2,000 grant. There will be a presentation; the exact project is still being decided. The companion $20,000 application was not awarded. The grant

funds energy education and public outreach over one year; kickoff likely in spring.

b. Closter REV 250 event planning (June 13) – Mr. Yarin spoke about ways to connect the historical aspect of the event to the ways the people of the period related to nature and the surroundings. Volunteers are needed to operate the booth. Perhaps the EC will have their booth during the early part of the event. Members who can will volunteer at the booth. Mr. Yarin will be there all day.

8. Plan Review and Comment

None

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body (A. Maroules) – Everyone is gearing up for Rev250 this Saturday.

Someone anonymously emailed about the possible contamination of the Swim Club parking lot, but the Borough is not able to respond to anonymous communication.

b. Planning Board (A. Batool) – The Board is fairly quiet right now. Mr. Yarin will speak about green building when he has the materials prepared so the process is helpful but not burdensome.

10. Adjournment – Ms. Layvand moved to adjourn, second Mr. Dulev. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Commission Recording Secretary