Environmental Commission

April 11, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. Chair Yarin opened the meeting at 7:34 pm with the Call to Order, public announcement, and Pledge of Allegiance

2. Attendance

Present: Paul Yarin (PY), Krishna Rege (KR), Rachel Suter (RS), Shelagh McCaffrey (SM), Conway Wong (CW), Councilman Cho (CC)

3. Approval of Minutes (March 14, 2024) KR moved to approve, second SM. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus Avenue) commended everyone who came to the cleanup day. He suggested that a banner be created to draw attention to the bags of garbage on display. He also suggested that people go to the Mayor and Council meetings to be able to speak on behalf of the Environmental Commission.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report There is no formal report this month. The budget has not yet been passed. KR was speaking to the administrator and learned that up to 25% of last year's budget can be spent even though this year's budget hasn't been approved yet.

KR explained that $1500 were received in 2022 but not 2023. The commission is applying again in 2024. The irrigation system is more expensive than what they cover, but whatever is over can come out of Open Space Funds. SM asked what the irrigation system looks like and shared that a friend of hers would donate some materials. PY gave a background on the irrigation to date. SM will look into this.

Mayor Glidden joined to thank the Environmental Commission for the cleanup on Saturday and to Swear in Krishna Rege for another term on the commission.

KR continued speaking about the ANJEC grant application due April 26. PY will do some of the writing for the group. PY suggested requesting a specific amount toward the irrigation system.SM and PY will go to the Sustainability Summit on May 3 in Holmdel, NJ 9:00-4:00. PY encouraged others to go. Tickets can be purchased from the budget.

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Compost Awareness Week is coming up (May 5-11). Earth Day is coming up (April 22, 2024). The EC has been invited to the Arbor Day celebration on April 26 at the Closter Grove.

The Greenway would like some people from each commission to be come to a meeting. CW explained what the Greenway is. CW and SM volunteered.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Daffodil planting at Buzzoni Farm Park update: This did not turn out to be a big volunteer event, but some flowers are already blooming.

b. Closter Cleanup Day update Many people came out to volunteer. PY likes the idea of creating a banner saying that the bags are part of the cleanup. RS suggested getting pool scoopers to pull trash from streams, etc. SM suggesting doing another cleanup in the fall. Discussion. Maybe there could be a different focus in the spring and in the fall. There was not enough turnout at the Nature Center. Maybe the flyers should list Nature Center as one of the meeting spots and EC members could be at each spot to sign people in. It would be good to coordinate young people more. CW is looking for 7 pickers that are still missing. PY suggested checking with DPW. KR will check. Maybe sign the pickers out to people to allow for followup. KR will spearhead a fall cleanup (dates, clearances, etc.).

c. Composting concepts update: RS shared that there are 25 responses to the 5-question survey. Most people were interested in the mill and the Green Machine. Most people are willing to spend under $100 or $100-200. SM is looking for a discount on equipment. People were interested in compost education. People suggested town buybacks, townwide composting, and other ideas. SM has reached out to the health officer, who happens to be a backyard composter and gave his blessing. SM is formalizing permissions for a bin at MacBain Farm. John McCaffrey is open to this but wants the permission of the Farm Committee. SM asked for the logistics of collecting funds from people, placing orders, and getting the bins to people. Compost week seems like a great time to start the program. Social media will be a great way to communicate. SM suggested KR be an admin for FaceBook. She also suggested that her own personal assistant at her veterinary business put material on social media—as long as the EC agrees with this. PY said that the BCUA already subsidizes the compost bins and that the best contribution the EC can make is teach people. He also said that the EC should be the early change. SM suggested creating a pilot program—maybe subsidize a few

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Green Machines and then get people's feedback. PY said maybe a composting journey could be an interesting idea.

d. No Mow May 2024 Last year people who used the signs all returned them. PY designed new signs this year. They are bright yellow. More can be added each year. Maybe a Google Map can show who is doing it. Everyone voted to earmark up to $500 for the signs.

e. Closter fleet electrification update Suggestion made to and accepted by the administrator: buy a single electric police vehicle and put in a charger. Councilman Cho is speaking to the administrator about this. CC also said that the Borough vehicles could also be turned over to electric. PY and CC will talk to him before the next EC meeting.

7. New Business

a. EV transportation network concepts PY introduced the companies Circuit (that provides EV shuttling) and Zoom (that does EV school buses).

KR shared that Dimitri closed the gap in the fence at Buzzoni. Next a few things need to be planted outside the fence. Two truckloads of dirt have been spread. The plants will be about $530. Some funds are left from the Audubon grant. SM moved to approve the remaining $280 from the EC funds, second PY. All in favor. Carried.

8. Plan Review and Comment NA

9. Liaison Reports

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

There is an interesting article on the Open Public Meetings Act. It boils down to that if there is a multi-person email conversation it could count as a quorum, so everyone should please use the meetings for conversation and no reply all to emails.

10. Adjournment Meeting ended at approximately 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Marti Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary

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