Environmental Commission

May 9, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order by Paul Yarin at 7:34 pm with the Open Public announcement and Pledge of Allegiance

2. Attendance

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

Absent: Krishna Rege (KR)

3. Approval of Minutes (April 11, 2024) PY stated that he wants to make corrections to the formatting of the minutes. RS moved to approve the minutes, CC second. Approved.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments No one wished to make a comment.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report The budget has not yet been approved. The EC is still working with its temporary budget.

The ANJEC grant was applied for again in relation to the pollinator garden. The Audubon Society grant for $500 was received. No one from the EC was able to attend the Arbor Day ceremony. There is no real update on the Greenway.

6. Unfinished Business

a. **Buzzoni Farm Park** update-KR was not present

b. **Composting** concepts update-SM and PY attended the sustainability summit. They learned a lot about composting. Limitations are cost and transportation of food waste. A lot of towns are focusing on food waste coming out of schools. They made connections at the summit. Working with nearby towns may be helpful. Maybe an event can be held at MacBain Farm to improve awareness. Start with backyard composting and move on to those who can't compost at home and then include schools. RS said that per the survey the Earth Machine continues to be popular and that people are open to education. PY suggested that everyone should try composting in order to model behavior.

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c. **No Mow May** update-10 more signs were purchased. Members should try to distribute to residents who are committed to the program. SM asked for pictures of the signs on properties to put on Social Media. PY said they should be on the website already.

7. New Business

a. **Sustainable Jersey Summit** report-PY shared photos from the conference. The conference included a chance to experiment with electric lawn and garden equipment. PY would like to connect the person in charge of that program with the Closter DPW. The Mayor of Maplewood banned gas leaf blowers in their DPW. SM spoke about the course on invasive species management. There were talks on deer management. Speakers from the conference might be good candidates for talks in Closter. Stormwater management is becoming a hot topic. The Rocket Composter is a very expensive and powerful composter that some schools use successfully and defray their food-waste-removal costs.

b. **Poison Hemlock** concerns-An email came from the Director of the Nature Center about the presence of this plant that is toxic when eaten. It has to be dealt with before it blooms. The extent of the problem in Closter has to be determined; it will be helpful to discuss with people who have dealt with it. People need to be educated about this—deadly to people and pets.

c. **DPW** collaboration topics-PY spoke to the DPW superintendent about accepting a donation of three picnic tables. The donor wants to be thanked on Facebook. There is one at Buzzoni, but maybe one could go near that pollinator garden. The DPW is willing to purchase and store garbage pickers for cleanup days. PY will check with EC members who are not in attendance today. The Trex company (that makes benches out of recycled material). One thing they recycle is the hard-to recycle lightweight film. 1,000 lb. (approximately a compressed pallet) will earn the organizer a bench. On a side note, Bill Dahl is possibly retiring.

8. Plan Review and Comment

9. Liaison Reports

a. **Governing Body** CC reported that a new stormwater management ordinance would soon be adopted. PY shared that there are incentives for purchasing EV school buses and garbage trucks. For the Trex bench, could the collection be at the DPW? CW asked whether there is still a garden at the school. There is one at Hillside and a gardening club.

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b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment) Discussion.
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

Discussion about the possibility of reducing waste-removal fees.

SM reported that the Swim Club was added to a list of parks in Closter. This topic was discussed at a Mayor and Council meeting. Open space is placed on the list to be protected from building to meet affordable housing needs, but COAH imposes a maximum amount of land that can be protected. To be continued.

10. Adjournment SM moved to adjourn, second RS. All in favor, Meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary

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