Environmental Commission

February 8, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Chair Yarin called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm with the public meetings announcement.

Attendance

Present: Council Liaison Cho, Rachel Suter, Shelagh McCaffrey (pending official appointment), Conway Wong, Chair Paul Yarin

Absent: Krishna Rege, Modi Feibish, Jim Oettinger

~~**Approval of Minutes**~~ (postponed)

Open Meeting to Public Comments

Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus Avenue) shared that he recently spoke with John McCaffrey who is willing to donate (4,000-5,000) daffodil bulbs and plant them at Buzzoni. He would bring his equipment and rototill, but volunteers would be needed to drop the bulbs and protect them. This would need borough approval. He asked for support. Chair Yarin said that as Ms. Rege is most involved with that property, he would like to hear her thoughts.

Executive & Treasurer's Report

Unfinished Business

a. ANJEC membership The dues have been paid. Chair Yarin recommended members review the free online handbook.

b. Closter Cleanup Day (vote on April 6/7, 2024, date) Coordination is needed with Police, Scouts, Church. Photos need to be taken, and then people need to be thanked. Chair Yarin moved to approve the date/rain date, second Ms. Suter. Councilman Cho pointed out that it is during the school break. Discussion. All in favor. Date carried.

New Business

2023 Review and 2024 Goals The temporary budget was shown on a screen. 2023 was reviewed: Sustainable Jersey certification, pollinator garden, EC website, Trees for Schools grant, No Mow May, and many other activities. Chair Yarin encouraged members to learn about environmental groups. 2024 goals/programs were shown on the screen, including continuation of 2023 programs and guidelines for green building, composting, community energy planning.

Ms. Suter and Ms. McCaffrey brought up ideas about composting, including educational opportunities. Perhaps MacBain is a good location for composting. Spring is a good time. Maybe something can be coordinated with town cleanup day. Ms. McCaffrey shared that she noticed that some towns subsidize the cost of composting bins. Ms. Suter suggested YouTube videos. More ideas will be brought to the March meeting.

Ms. McCaffrey discussed Sustainable Jersey ideas. She pointed out activities that Closter is already doing that could qualify as SJ actions as well as some future actions. Also, she pointed out that Closter used to have a farmers market and points could be earned by starting that up again. Ms. McCaffrey offered to share her Google Doc. Chair Yarin will send that around.

New EC members Mr. Wong and Ms. McCaffrey will be officially appointed at the next Mayor and Council meeting. Anyone interested in being the liaison to the Shade Tree Commission was asked to come forward.

NJ BPU Community Energy Planning Grant Slides were shared. The goal is to de-carbonize. One to two years are spent assessing and analyzing. Chair Yarin will send in the application for the planning grant. The administrator and Council have been supportive so far.

School sustainability concepts Chair Yarin spoke about the importance of teaching young people and encouraged any interested parties in getting involved. Spoke about several ideas for schools, including solar installation, EV chargers, composting, encouraging student volunteerism. Ms. McCaffrey said that there is a garden club at Hillside School and that her husband and daughter are involved. She also said that she wished there were public transportation to school. Chair Yarin spoke about state restrictions and other ideas. Ms. Suter spoke about bike days. These areas will be discussed more in the future. Chair Yarin asked for help in understanding how the Board of Education works.

Plan Review and Comment

Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body Councilman Cho said that he is waiting for a recommendation for a liaison from the Planning Board. Discussion of his roles and responsibilities.
b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment) Mr. Wong shared what the Planning Board liaison does and the kinds of environmental issues that might relate to the Environmental Commission.

Discussion of the idea of John McCaffrey's offer of donating daffodil bulbs at Buzzoni and how it could relate to the pollinator garden. The Commission will discuss this with Ms. Rege. It would be good to get bulbs into the ground soon. More discussion will take place.

Adjournment Ms. Suter moved to adjourn, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Commission Secretary