Environmental Commission

July 11, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

Paul Yarin called the meeting to order at 7:32 with the open public meetings announcement and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance: Present: Councilman Cho, Sheilagh McCaffrey, Krishna Rege, Rachel Suter (later), Conway Wong

Approval of Minutes (May 9, 2024) Conway Wong moved to accept the minutes, second Sheilagh McCaffrey. All in favor. Carried.

Open Meeting to Public Comments Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg (162 Anderson Avenue) spoke about her concern for MacBain Farm because it is not legally protected. She shared that the Historic Preservation Commission is trying to get the land designated, as the house is already protected, and that they are also writing to the Mayor and Council. She asked the Environmental Commission to share with the Mayor and Council that they are concerned as well. She said that it is organic, necessary for water control, and important for the animals. She asked for their support. She also spoke about the pollinator garden and said it would be nice to name it the Billy Dahl Pollinator Garden in honor of his hard work and help over the years. She also said that when she was on the Environmental Commission there was a junior member and asked that the current EC do that. Finally, she said that just before she retired from the EC she and Steve Isaacson were working on an environmental and historical trail through town. The only problem was that a bridge was washed out between Closter and Norwood that needs to be repaired. She asked the EC to look into repairing it.

Executive & Treasurer's Report No budget update from the administrator at this time. The ANJEC grant has been awarded. The money is being used for Buzzoni updates. The grant for researching community energy needs has not yet been received. The grant for monitoring water sheds and water training is not being sought at this time. Thanks to Councilman Cho for participating in the ANJEC grant reception and photo shoot.

Unfinished Business

Buzzoni Farm Park update Krishna Rege spoke about Buzzoni farm and the spreading of gravel back in May, filling the gap to keep out the groundhog, the purchasing of plants from Cleatus and Metropolitan Farms and donations from Lupardis. Everything has been planted. Thanks were extended to all

helpers. The next project is to get signs and labels for the plants. Help is being sought from ANJEC. Everyone is encouraged to visit the park. An event may be arranged for September 15 for Closter families to learn about gardening and have fun. Rachel Suter attended a similar event in Ridgewood and is willing to share contact information. The Closter event will be at Buzzoni. The sprinkler system now has a prospective vendor. With luck, it will be installed soon. Sheilagh McCaffrey moved to have a sustainable gardening event at Buzzoni Park on September 15, second Krishna Rege. All in favor. Carried. Discussion about the food to have—low waste, possibly vegan. Rachel will reach out to Roots Café to see if they want to donate food. Questions about what permits would be needed. Rachel Sutter will reach out to the Health Inspector.

Composting update Sheilagh McCaffrey brought up the challenge of getting composters to people. The administrator had recommended buying some to have in stock. Sheilagh will gather the details and bring it to a meeting for a vote. Also, Closter Farm does Composting 101. She will reach out to see about collaborating with them and also to see if they want to have a table at the September event. Paul Yarin said that a company in Rahway has composting workshops.

Invasive species update The poison hemlock was still there as of a couple of weeks ago. The DPW had suggested that they would do it. Spotted lantern flies: several people have emailed with concerns. They are probably more of a nuisance than a true health concern. The DPW may remove some of the truly problematic trees. The New Closter Nature Center director is talking to Paul Yarin about how to handle invasive species in the forest.

DPW updates: The DPW is open to having demos or electric landscaping equipment. Paul Yarin is working on this.

New Business

Healthy Community Planning report NJ publishes reports on environmental indicators in every town. The worrisome environmental issue in Closter relative to other towns is air pollution. Discussion about air traffic, landscaping equipment. A link is in the meeting invitation.

Clean Heavy Duty Vehicle Grant opportunity Electric cars in US are approaching 8 or 9% of new vehicle sales. The EPA has a campaign to support electric trucks (medium duty). Closter may not qualify, but Paul Yarin will try.

Closter Plaza sustainability enhancements: Paul Yarin is interested in putting up solar canopies at Closter Plaza and wonders what the EC feels about the idea and whether the residents would care about it. Discussion. Questions arose about who would pay for them and if it is possible to gain support. Sheilagh McCaffrey shared that the Woodcliff Lake Whole Foods has these.

Discussion about how to encourage people to be more green when retrofitting their homes. Perhaps incentives could help. Paul Yarin shared a survey. Councilman Cho recommended having a conversation with the Zoning Board Chair. Paul Yarin asked Councilman Cho to share the workings of the EC with the Mayor and Council.

Plan Review and Comment

Liaison Reports

Governing Body Paul Yarin asked Councilman Cho to share the workings of the EC with the Governing Body.
~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment) Sheilagh McCaffrey's husband is on the Commission. She will talk to him about securing A periodic report.
~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

Paul Yarin suggested talking to the members individually about what motivates Them about the EC and if the EC is meeting those things.

Krishna Rege stated that there are many weeds where the native ground cover has been planted at MacBain Farm. Should they be maintained? Moved? The relationship of the EC to MacBain needs to be discussed. Perhaps PABA World could help.

Comment [MF1]: If this is the wrong spelling, please feel free to change it

Adjournment Krishna Rege moved to adjourn, second Rachel Suter. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission
Recording Secretary