Environmental Commission

October 10, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Paul Yarin opened the meeting at 7:32 with the Open Public Meetings announcement and Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Attendance Present: Paul Yarin, Councilman Chris Cho, Krishna Rege, Conway Wong
Absent: Shelagh McCaffrey, Rachel Suter

3. Approval of Minutes (September 12, 2024) Ms. Rege moved to approve, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Carried.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments
Guest: Marie Antonelli, Acton Academy spoke about the Discovery Studio and their plan to bring students to explore the Pollinator Garden next week. She warmly thanked the Commission. It will be on Tuesday 1-3 pm. Ms. Rege will lead the session and invited the rest of the Commission to join.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report A community energy planning grant has been awarded to the Closter Environmental Commission. The Borough will be implementing an Open Space ordinance. Ms. Rege said that some funding has been used for fencing and sprinklers at Buzzoni Park. In the future, perhaps funds could be used for additional plans.

Ms. Rege attended an event at Rowan University and learned about climate weather patterns, Mycoast.org (a new app), and updates on electric landscaping. Veolia paid for her fees to attend.

There are upcoming events: Hike-a-thon, fleet electrification, Marc Gussen speaking at the Library (10/16).

The Shade Tree must reapply for accreditation every 5 years. Mr. Yarin wrote a letter of recommendation. Also, there is usually a member who is on both Shade Tree and Environmental. Anyone who is interested should say so.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Sustainable Gardening Fair recap: The event went well. Many thanks to Ms. Rege for all of her work on the garden. There was live music, a food truck, everyone seemed to enjoy it. Next year, perhaps it could be advertised more.

b. Composting update 14 Earth Machine composting units have been purchased for resale. The payment portal is live. Ms. Suter will add a link to the website. The people who requested them will be emailed. There is a company that can pick up food scraps for composting. A push to get people involved will commence.

c. Buzzoni Pollinator Garden – sprinkler update The sprinklers are operational and remote controllable. Hoses are buried. Anyone digging in the ground should be careful.

d. Grants update Broad support and buy-in from the community will be needed for community energy planning grant. The hope is to develop a set of energy initiatives. The grant that has been received will go toward the analysis and can be charged for Borough staff or outside vendors with receipts. The implementation grants would be applied for after the planning is completed. Ms. Rege volunteered to be involved.

e. Trail maintenance update Certain parks in town are under the authority of the Environmental Commission. Mr. Yarin showed a map of the involved parks. The priority seems to be Hagen Park. Discussion. These parks will be included in Closter Cleanup days and EC members can walk through to see them.

Gladys MacDonald (89) likes to walk through Hagen Park. She said that on rainy days there is a mud pit. Mr. Yarin suggested that a second simple boardwalk could possibly be built, in accordance with town rules. Perhaps Eagle Scouts could help with some projects. Marc Gussen may also be involved.

f. Website and social media update Photos provided to the Mayor's newsletter were used in local press as well. Ms. Suter and Ms. McCaffrey put photos on social media. There is an inbox on the website. A recap of the event and promotion of the 10/16 event would be good. The EC page on the Closter website also needs to be updated. Councilman Cho will work to get a link to the new EC website on the Closter website.

7. New Business upcoming events

a. Marc Gussen/CNC talk at library (Oct 16)

b. Acton Academy Buzzoni gardening unit request (week of Oct 14)

8. Plan Review and Comment

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body Councilman Cho has been working to contact the manager at Target. He will also speak to the Mayor and Council about EV chargers in the parking lot.
b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment) The woman who seemed to be a possible Planning Board liaison was not able to attend tonight.

Ms. Rege spoke about the northern lights being visible from New Jersey.

Mr. Yarin encouraged everyone to speak up about projects and areas that would interest them.

Ms. Rege spoke about the possibility of putting MacBain Farm on the Open Space list. Discussion of pros and cons. Mr. Cho spoke about the possibility of deed restricting it but said that only making the whole farm historical in terms of the state would protect it from affordable housing. Discussion.

10. Adjournment Mr. Wong moved to adjourn, second Ms. Rege. All in Favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marti Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary