Environmental Commission

July 10, 2025 7:30pm – at Boro Hall and via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Mr. Yarin called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm with the Open Public Meetings announcement.

2. Attendance

Paul Yarin-present
Krishna Rege-present
Shelagh McCaffrey-present
Council Liaison Cho-present
Conway Wong-present

~~**3. Approval of Minutes** (May 8, 2025)~~ (postponed pending minutes preparation)

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments
Sam Layvand (40 Rutgers Street), an NVD student, came forward to discuss making birdhouses. He suggested having students team up with the woodworking and engineering teachers to add these birdhouses into the curriculum. Tree swallows and wood ducks do not make their own nests and could use the help. Ms. Rege said that the species may change and perhaps people would have the houses on their property. Sam also spoke about the NVD Environmental Club.

Michelle Mattics spoke about her interest in joining the Environmental Commission. She also said that her daughter attends NVD. During the day, Ms. Mattics is an executive with a non-profit organization in Bergen County and volunteers in various facilities.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Budget update The budget was reduced, as were the budgets of many departments. The miscellaneous budget is currently negative, as the composters that have been purchased are waiting to be sold. Concerning the Environmental Resources Inventory, there could possibly be funds available from the Closter Open Space Trust Fund. More to come. Ms. Rege asked whether three different quotes were required for this project. As the Rutgers group has a state contract they could be contracted without quotes. They are also a competent group. Mr. Yarin invited everyone's thoughts and participation.

b. Board of Education outreach: Mr. Yarin spoke about his efforts in this area and asked everyone to participate as they wished.

c. NVD “Cleanup Club” Mr. Yarin met with five students who were interested in cleaning up Closter in an ongoing way but had not heard about the Clean Up days. He asked them to write up a plan for their cleanup, which they did, including sites, students, and sponsors. Mr. Yarin discussed with the Administrator to continue the planning.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Buzzoni Pollinator Garden update (K. Rege) Ms. Rege spoke about the growth of the garden in the past two years. There are about 40 species. Some of them are aggressive and have had to be managed. They would be less aggressive in private gardens. Perhaps they could be offered to residents. The ANJEC report is due soon. The remaining funds received last year were expended with purchases from Amazon with help from Leslie Weatherly. Mr. Yarin suggested a social media report on the gardens would be helpful. There was an update in the newsletter.
b. Birdhouses (K. Rege / P. Yarin) Ms. Rege reported that she had applied to the Audubon Society for a grant for building birdhouses. She wanted to involve students and the Nature Center. Decisions are being made about the types of birds and locations. The focus would be on birds that are unable to build their own nests and are suffering from the loss of tree canopy. A prototype was created and put at the Nature Center. Discussion and work are underway. Mr. Yarin spoke about welcoming students’ involvement and enthusiasm and his desire to put monitoring systems in place. Ms. McCaffrey voiced her support for the ideas.
c. Website/social media updates It would be great to post about the Closter Cleanup and Buzzoni. Perhaps the students could create posts. Flynn and Ms. McCaffrey’s staff will work on social media also. Composters will be part of the social media push.

Beekeeping: There are ordinances on the Closter books that seem to be outdated. The Environmental Commission and Board of Health could work together to update the ordinance. Ms. McCaffrey wrote a letter to the Board of Health. Councilman Cho can have a conversation with the Board of Health as well.

7. New Business

a. MacBain farm planting (S. McCaffrey) The native ground cover that has been set up is overgrown and could use a refresh. Discussion. Perhaps the ground cover could be moved to Buzzoni and a pollinator patch created at MacBain. Ms. McCaffrey and Ms. Rege will discuss and collaborate. Mr. Yarin suggested creating educational signage at Buzzoni and offered to work on that.

8. Plan Review and Comment

a. 104 High St. The lot is fairly large; two two-family homes are planned. They are applying for impervious coverage and building height variances. Thirty-nine trees are being removed, and they are required to plant 53 trees or pay for the plantings. The Shade Tree Commission has a list of recommended plants.

b. 9 Haring St. The lot is quite small. Two trees are being removed, and underground electric is being installed.

c. 511 Durie Ave. (The Village School) is being turned into affordable housing. Four buildings are proposed. The larger buildings would have four units, and the smaller would have two. The existing school would have 21 units. The site is planned to be EV ready. The project is currently awaiting FHMA approval.

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body (C. Cho) The Zoning Board encourages environmentally sound practices for every application, including tree planting. Commercial building is directed to be EV ready. On another note, Mr. Yarin will share information with Councilman Cho, who will give input to the Open Space discussion.

b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

10. Adjournment The secretary was not able to hear the motion to adjourn but it was seconded by Ms. Rege. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marti Francis
Recording Secretary