Environmental Commission

December 11, 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 7:34 pm with the open public meeting announcement and the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Attendance

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

3. Approval of Minutes (November 13, 2025) Ms. McCaffrey moved to approve the minutes, second Ms. Rege. All in favor. Approved.

4. Open Meeting to Public Comments Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus) suggested dedicating the pollinator garden to Bobbi Bouton-Goldberg. He also suggested this to the Mayor and Council.

Lois Kraus, ATL-NJ, spoke about gas leaf blowers after an introduction by Mr. Yarin. Mr. Yarin has also spoken to people from the DPW and administration, as well as other Environmental Commissions about this problem. Ms. Kraus explained that ATL began during the pandemic, meets quarterly, and includes 40-45 towns. Their focus is on sustainable landscaping, which goes beyond the type of equipment. Everyone needs to give a little. She said that education is key. She explained that the use of gas and oil equipment is a health issue (e.g., particulates, noise, low-frequency waves, soil erosion), not just a nuisance. Two bills are being re-submitted; the authors believe more towns need to join before the bills can move forward. She suggested that a partial ban is an easier first step. The conversation was opened to the public. Discussion. Ms. Kraus suggested reaching out to the Board of Health and health professionals. She also suggested that people could call their landscapers saying I don't want gas blowers used on their property or saying don't use them except at specific times. She said many people need to be involved in the effort. Councilman Cho asked about the possibility of a muffler of some kind. Discussion.

5. Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. Special announcement and personnel changes: Ms. McCaffrey has decided to resign and focus on MacBain Farm. Marina Layvand has agreed to join the Commission in 2026.

A member of the Planning Board will join the Environmental Commission as the Planning Board Liaison as of January.

b. Budget update none
c. Upcoming events: Rutgers Enviro Stewards class is highly recommended to all. Ms. Rege will take the course. Everyone was in support of the EC covering the fee for Ms. Rege. She stated that she would like to pay it but perhaps the EC could support projects that require funds.

6. Unfinished Business

a. Buzzoni, ERI, CEPG, NVD updates
b. Birdhouse updates The Nature Center director wants the birdhouses to be able to be moved if fishing lines get caught. Mr. Yarin is working on a design for a moveable house.
c. Board of Health/ Beekeeping updates Mr. Wong visited the meeting; one of the Board of Health members is a beekeeper. There seems to be movement on removing the ban from the books. Councilman Cho sent an email to the Board of Health to help them move forward.
d. Website/social media updates
e. Green Challenges: perhaps there could be a new challenge every couple of months throughout the year. Prizes could be offered—experiences (maybe movie tickets)

7. New Business

a. Gas Leaf Blowers – Presentation from Lois Kraus, ATL-NJ
b. Rat Poison campaign – Message from Joel Rudin, Closter Nature Center: The black boxes that you see in gardens are intended to kill rats. When a rat eats the poison and the rat is eaten by a raptor or other predator the raptor or predator can also die. Perhaps there are other ways to kill rats that would not hurt other animals. There is a useful flier from raptorsarethesolution.org. Discussion.
c. EC / MacBain Farm Committee relationship There is a lot of opportunity for coordination and cooperation. Discussion.
d. Environmental Commissions in other towns: Mr. Yarin showed a list of ECs in other towns and discussed the importance of coordinating with neighboring towns. Perhaps there could be an event set up to allow for meeting other Commissioners.

8. Plan Review and Comment

a. Dec. 3 Planning Board meeting recap Mr. Wong attended the meeting. A subdivision was discussed—the owner will need to return with a better plan. The soil movement application was approved.

9. Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body (C. Cho) Anna Maroules will take over in 2026 as the Environmental Commission liaison. Councilman Cho can then join as a member.
b. ~~Shade Tree Commission~~ (postponed pending new appointment)
c. ~~Planning Board~~ (postponed pending new appointment)

Closter has a Green Team. This team needs leadership.

The Northern Valley Mayors Association meets once a month; Mayor Glidden invites the Council members to attend. Perhaps the Environmental Commission could make a presentation.

10. Adjournment Ms. Rege moved to adjourn, second _____. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:57 with a wish for a Happy New Year.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Recording Secretary