Environmental Commission

March 14, 2024 7:30pm via Zoom

Minutes

Paul Yarin called the meeting to order 7:33 pm with the Open Public meetings announcement and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance

Present: Paul Yarin, Council Liaison Chris Cho, Krishna Rege, Conway Wong, Shelagh McCaffrey, Rachel Suter (at 7:40pm). Absent: none.

Mayor Glidden joined the meeting to express his gratitude for the work of the Commission and to swear in Shelagh McCaffrey and Conway Wong.

Approval of Minutes (Nov 15 2023 & Feb 8 2024)

Ms. Rege moved to approve the minutes of November 15, second Ms. Suter. All in favor. Carried.

Ms. McCaffrey moved to approve the minutes of February 8, second Mr. Wong. All in favor. Carried.

Open Meeting to Public Comments

Anna Schwartz (61 Cedar Lane, Closter) is an NVD student and shared that she is passionate about the environment and wants to help. She is a sophomore. There were no other comments. Mr. Yarin said that there would be comments about volunteering later in the meeting.

Executive & Treasurer's Report

a. **Student volunteer coordination** There are quite a few opportunities but not a lot of students involved at the moment: Possible areas are the pollinator garden, MacBain Farm. Also educating the public using social media is a possibility or work with the Nature Center. Sustainable Jersey has a special program just for schools. Mr. Yarin asked Anna Schwartz to write an email about her areas of interest or timing constraints. He asked her to CC a parent on her email for safety purposes. Anna said that there is a garden at NVD that

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is full of weeds. She asked the person in charge at the school but has not yet heard back.

b. **Joint Land Use Board Meeting (Mar 2, 2024) Review**: There was a debate about how much impervious coverage should be allowed. There was also a presentation about the Greenway (along the former train line). Mr. Yarin presented to this meeting about green building practices and the Environmental Resources Inventory that the Environmental Commission needs to complete.

c. **NJ BPU Community Energy Planning Grant Update**: The application has been sent in, but the deadline has been extended. A grant from ANJEC will be applied for. The Commission was asked to be on the lookout for other grants. ANJEC has training sessions; Commission members are encouraged to take them online or in person. Any costs can probably be reimbursed.

d. **Budget update:** The Boro's budget work is still underway, but the EC has submitted their part. Councilman Cho believes this will be complete around May.

Unfinished Business

a. **Daffodil planting at Buzzoni Farm Park** There is a plan, and planting will start soon. Areas of planting have been chosen. About 1500 bulbs will be planted. The question of who will plant is still open. Ms. Rege has reached out to John McCaffrey and will report when she hears. Volunteers are needed and some are most likely available. Ms. Suter asked participants to take pictures and videos for the website.

   Ms. Rege said that she wanted to plant some plants and trees outside the pollinator garden fence to make the area more presentable. The DPW has been extremely helpful. Cleatus Farm will also help. Funds are needed. Volunteers are always helpful.

b. **Closter Cleanup Day Planning** Scheduled for April 6. All members are encouraged to participate. Last year's signs will be repurposed with donated adhesive from Minuteman Press. Mr. Wong is looking into placing the signs around. Mr. Yarin will look into advertising at the school. Ms. McCaffrey suggested a social media push. Ms. Suter is handling Instagram. Ms. McCaffrey will focus on other social media. Maybe a FaceBook page could

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be created. Steve Isaacson said that he would post notices on his website and also suggested putting notices at this weekend's Library book sale. Ms. Rege said that supplies needed to be picked up and dropped off. Mr. Yarin and Ms. Rege will coordinate. Ms. Rege asked whether volunteers would be sent to the trails outside the Nature Center and noted that there is still a lot of water on the trails. Mr. Yarin shared an email from Mr. Yammarino about the Pancake Breakfast on April 7 and suggesting that both be promoted by suggesting that if you post photos from the cleanup you get to go to the Pancake Breakfast. Maybe a photo contest. Ms. McCaffrey suggested doing it by having people hashtag. Discussion of how to judge the photos. Maybe it could be more of a raffle that you enter by submitting a photo. Discussion of what kinds of photos are acceptable to post. Ms. Rege suggested not taking real closeups. There should be a member taking photos. Snacks will not be provided because it was too complicated. Also, snacks tend to create litter. A sign explaining the raffle will need to be created. The members will gather at 9:30 on the day of the event. The various tasks were volunteered for. There will be a contact at the Senior Center at all times, and perhaps at the Nature Center. Anna suggested asking the Nature Center, Borough, and other places to post the event as they have more followers.

New Business

a. **Composting concepts**: Food waste is a large source of carbon emissions, and we throw away a lot of the food that we buy, which is a shame when there are so many hungry people. Different methods are backyard composting, milling (in the kitchen), community composting, and processing centers. Ms. McCaffrey and Ms. Suter spoke about how to incorporate a backyard composting program in the community. Perhaps there can be a display at the MacBain Farm. The website can contain information about why to compost, a link to an interest form, what can be posted, and some frequently asked questions. Ms. Rege suggested bringing information to the Cleanup Day. Mr. Yarin suggested focusing on local, neighborly information and practical tips. Ms. McCaffrey suggested keeping a counter of how many backyard composters have gotten started. Also, to ask people about their issues or misconceptions. Mr. Yarin also suggested checking in with the Board of Health to get them on board from the beginning. Mr. Conway offered to bring his backyard composter. Discussion of composting bins and how and if the EC would subsidize the purchase. Ms. McCaffrey suggested a three-bin system for the display at MacBain. She also suggested asking people to either weigh their compost or say how many bins they're filling a week. At MacBain, people can put any rotting fruit in the bins. The Farm Committee

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and farmer would, of course, be consulted, as well as the Mayor and Council. Mr. Yarin said that some towns do subsidize bins. Mr. Yarin also said that maybe, at some point in the future, if there is enough composting that it reduces the amount of solid waste the Borough has to pay for, perhaps there could be some kind of financial incentive.

Steve Isaacson suggested some kind of time-lapse photography to show how the compost progressive. He also said that he likes the rotating composter. He suggested contacting companies to see if discounts could be given for bulk sales. He also said that the Keurig cups are recyclable.

b. ~~EV transportation network concepts~~ (postponed due to lack of time)

Plan Review and Comments

Liaison Reports

a. Governing Body Councilman Cho said that he would like to do an asset inventory in view of eventually replacing gas vehicles. Mr. Yarin said that this was done and will send him a copy. Councilman Cho spoke about the plan for moving the Police station. Mr. Yarin said that a lot of work was done on this last year and he will speak to Councilman Cho about the work. Councilman Cho said that a new Borough website will be created soon. He wants to have Ms. Suter work with the IT director.

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

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

Adjournment Ms. Rege moved to adjourn, second Ms. Suter. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Francis
Environmental Commission Secretary

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