

Florham Park Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes Thursday, January 17th, 2008

Attendees: Edward Formichella, Scott Carpenter, Blaine Rothausen, Carmen Pane, Cliff Schaffer, Laura Iandorio, Thomas Gallagher, Mark Taylor

The meeting was called to order 7:30pm by Mr. Mark Taylor Liaison for the Commission to the Borough Council.

Mark reviewed the role of the Environmental Commission (EC) as it pertains to the ordinance for which it was created. He instructed the commission members to nominate a chairman and vice-chairman to head the commission. Mr. Blaine Rothausen was nominated by vote of all members present to fulfill the open chairman position left behind by the passing of Mr. Paul Trautman, former chairman. Mr. Scott Carpenter was nominated and voted into the position of vice chairman of the commission.

Mark placed emphasis on the EC role for a group commitment in conjunction with the counsel's renewed pledge to fulfill, or begin to fulfill, all the tenets of the ordinance and the mission statement that was put forth by Blaine for the EC in December of 2007 (see appendix A below). Budgetary constraints and fiscal information was brought to the attention of the commission members by Mr. Taylor. He made it clear that he did not have a budget available for the commission moving forward. He would have this information upon consultation with council and the Borough administrator. Scott expressed his concerns over budgets and a discussion, with input from all members, commenced over how to fulfill the EC projects that are ongoing. It was suggested that the newly formed grant writing commission be interfaced with the EC to target specific projects such as the Conservation Management Area (CMA) that was created in 2007 – corner of Brooklake Road and East Madison Avenue.

Blaine asked that all the members introduce themselves to the EC and provide details pertaining to their back-ground and skill-sets that might be helpful to in fulfilling the EC mission statement.

Upon completion of this introduction Blaine explained the priority goals for 2008. These included (in order of priority):

- The completion and continuing maintenance of the CMA – much of the meeting involved the CMA
- Web site design and presence on the Florham Park Borough website
- Produce informational material explaining the purpose and scope of the EC
- Update the Environmental and Open Space Inventories
- Begin the process and discuss Spring Garden Lake & Fish Farm Property

Management Plan Design

- Review and make written suggestion to Mayor and Council about the money that is being spent annually to keep Spring Garden Lake weed-free (Princeton Hydro contract)
- Strategize ways the town can become in line with global initiative standards on climate control (Cool City Program and the like), recycling, town center beautification and restoration of land within the Borough's holding.
- Define ways to interface the commission with other committees and commissions in town so that all parties involved in town matters are "in the loop". It was agreed that there is considerable overlap and that if properly informed, secure relationships will act in synergy to achieve the goals applicable to the specific bodies. Blaine suggested that we immediately reach out to the newly formed grant writing committee to help us to secure monies needed to fulfill the ambitions of the CMA.
- Review all site and development plans that come before the Borough. The EC is mandated to make comment involving any new business pertaining to land-use within the Borough. Mark assures the commission that this will be a strictly enforced policy. This assuaged the concerns of inveterate members, Scott and Ed who related to the new EC members that historically this was not the case.
- Water monitoring of all streams and tributaries within the Borough's holdings - water monitoring equipment is available at Mrs. Paul Trautman's home - Blaine volunteered to pick this up before the next scheduled meeting.
- Clean out the small parking area into Spring Garden Lake off of East Madison Avenue - remove trash and general area around the gravel of invasive species of plants

The commission members were in complete agreement that the CMA remaining tasks be completed before all other open space restoration goals commence. The CMA, it was agreed, is the hedge-pin of the present EC. To this end Tom, Cliff, Scott and Ed were going to look into, and try to finish the creation of kiosks, benches and signage for the CMA. Scott and Ed physically worked and devoted countless volunteer hours to make this project what is to date - a success. Ed and Scott re-devoted their pledge to continue with this critically important project. Blaine was adamant that the group reinvigorate all efforts to accomplish as much as can be expected this winter. Scott and Cliff are waiting for natural lumber materials to become available - this material will be donated to the EC. Laura and Carmen agreed to develop a public awareness campaign for the CMA project - including but not limited to the following: kiosk informational, web site design (a priority item for the EC), opportunities with schools, editorial submissions for local media and cable T.V. local network. Cliff was going to delineate a plan that would eliminate the negative aesthetic-look associated with the grass border required for "line of site" that fronts the CMA. Cliff expressed an interest in creating a kiosk that could be constructed and installed within a reasonably short period. Mark is going to reach out to Carl Ganger and see where we are regarding the purchase of a shed. It is the hope of the committee that a shed can be installed before the upcoming spring season. It was agreed

that the shed should be installed near the parking lot area of the CMA and native materials planted around it for the purpose of aesthesis. Blaine will be retrieving all materials (seed, deer repellent, water monitoring, tools, etc.) from Mrs. Paul Trautman. Blaine agreed to prepare a budget for fiscal year 2008 regarding all necessities pertaining to the CMA. Blaine will provide all members with this budget for review and comment via email. Upon review this budget the contents will be provided to the Capital Improvement Committee (CIC). The EC is extremely concerned that our commission is fully funded. Without a budget most of the line items on the mission statement will “wither –on-the-vine”. To this end it was agreed that all EC members work, to the best extent possible, to develop initiatives to fund the committee. Mark vowed to lead in this effort during his duties as liaison to the council.

Tom Gallagher was commended for his exemplary work with last years Arbor Day event and his uniquely effective initiative “One Day, One School”. To this end he agreed to continue, and expand upon this effort in 2008, promising to make the event more inclusive for the adult community while still maintaining and augmenting his efforts with children and young adults. We all agreed that we would help in his efforts and support any initiatives that he proposes to the greatest extent possible. Tom will be working hard on this and present to the EC his “game plan” at the next upcoming EC meeting.

Mark talked about the tree ordinance and tree bank. We discussed the EC role in potentially managing, and at the very least, commenting on the placement of forestry materials available within the Boroughs holdings. Mark will be updating the EC on the status of the tree bank at the next meeting.

Mark provided the EC with a map of Spring Garden Lake outlining all pertinent land use covers: streams, Lake boundary, houses, paper roads, etc. Much comment ensued as to how best to manage and maximize this very important public asset for future generations. All EC members have planned to comment and start the process of developing a management plan for this valuable resource during the upcoming months. One immediate initiative will be to create a sound and safe public access directly off East Madison Avenue. Talk of a platform creation was imminent. This infrastructure would allow the public an immediate access point for anyone who wishes to fish at the lake.

Mark ended the evening’s discussion with a proposed grant that was written by the town engineer, Mr. Mike Scaramella, regarding the construction of a trail proposed to be implemented on the newly acquired Fish Property. The EC was asked to review this document and provide comment.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20pm

Appendix A

Mission Statement

2008 Florham Park Environmental Commission Initiatives and Goals

The following is a list of recommendations and objectives that BR Environmental, LLC has put forth on behalf of the Florham Park Environmental Commissions (EC) remaining members. They have reviewed and made comment before this final draft was completed. We look forward to your comments and suggestions before a final version is created. Such a master plan would act as a blueprint for initiating these goals in the upcoming year.

Restructure the commission. Review the terms of present members. Blaine Rothouser, Ed Formechello, and Scott Carpenter will interview and make suggestions to the Mayor and Council for new membership. We will present names of those who are interested in committing the time necessary to fulfill the tenets of the ordinance that created the commission, §- 32-1. Members will be chosen by the evaluation of member qualifications. Potential members will be those who possess the skills necessary to achieve part and all of the initiatives as set forth by the Commission. We will present a team that is **committed** to the goals of the Environmental Commission, interviewing people who will willingly participate, endowed with a historical and contemporary perspective of town issues. Special emphasis for enrollment will be placed upon the person's knowledge of current land use laws, recreational and open space needs. Potential members will be those who have lived in town for a minimum of ten years (preferably) and are able to demonstrate a general knowledge of the towns remaining open space in addition to the present circumstances surrounding those areas water resources, ecology and build-out potentials.

Upon restructure the newly formed commission will begin to aggressively reinstate the powers and duties invested under the ordinance § 32-3. The EC will then begin the process of advancing past successes and build a new format to forward the new initiatives stated in 6 through below.

Determine, with aid from the EC liaison to council and township administrators, the upcoming EC budget and potential for funding the initiatives stated herein.

Budgetary constraints from past administrations have always been echoed as the biggest stumbling block to the powers and duties of past commissions. Without a re-commitment from the new administration all of the stated goals herein will be rendered mute. It is of supreme importance that the new administration becomes an active partner and support, to the best of all members' ability, the target objectives set forth herein.

To this end we would suggest that a special meeting be arranged between the new administration and restructured EC as soon as can be arranged to discuss stated initiatives and ways to ensure that these recommendations move forward.

With the newly formed Grant Writing Committee it might be suggested that one of its members be assigned or even part of the EC. Initiatives stated herein will clearly need funding and one of our members will be assigned the daunting task of finding and creating adaptive measures to assure they are procured.

Created an internet presence that becomes part of the town's website. This site will be maintained and updated monthly to allow for public participation and updates to the progress of stated goals. This will be a priority responsible for one of the members of the EC.

Prepare, print and distribute informational materials, such as books, maps, plans and pamphlets which in its judgment it deems necessary for its purposes, within the limits and funds appropriated to the Commission and with the approval of the Borough Council, as stated verbatim in § 32-3 C. This information should be part of the town's website and easily accessible to public scrutiny.

Continue to study and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council in areas of conservation and environmental protection. The commission will review the Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan and advise the council and the public on how Florham Park can assure compliance now and in the future. Special emphasis will be placed on conservation programs designed to educate the public on water conservation and Florham Parks place in the watershed in which it resides. An educational program should be created that can be presented to our local schools which teaches them about the importance of our local towns role in maintaining water quality and the proper use of our water supply.

To this end it is the hope of the EC that one of its members be primarily responsible for outreach and education regarding all EC matters.

Continue to expand on the great job the EC has done with the restoration of newly

formed Conservation Management Area (CMA) located at the corner of Brooklake Road and East Madison Avenue. This includes but is not limited to: additional native planting; deer control system and installation; trail extension into the Passaic River Floodplain; Education kiosks installation; trail guide creation; bench construction and installation; war memorial installation. The EC would utilize this property in conjunction with its newly formed outreach and educational programs. The EC has already created relationships with the Florham Park Garden and Gun Club to fulfill some of these management goals. The success of this one project will be the hedge pin for any further success in restoring other open space holdings within the Borough;

Establish a conservation management plan for the newly acquired "Fish Property" upon final entitlement. This plan would include but not be limited to the following: Trail establishment and creation; general garbage cleanup; parking lot creation for public access; kiosk creation at trail head; invasive species removal; native planting installation. Any success on this property regarding ecological restoration will be doomed for failure unless an intensive deer control system is established. A deer enclosure fence will probably be the only practical solution for this areas scope and size.

Establish a conservation management plan for the under utilized and environmentally sensitive Spring Garden Lake. This plan would include but is not limited to all the tenets in 11 above. Additionally a small dock platform for public access to fishing and canoe launching could be established. Public access and passive recreation would be a priority target for the Spring Garden Lake site.

Continue to review and construct methodologies that can ensure that the greenway connected Board of Education property remain open space. This area is clearly a finger of the tangent Passaic River Floodplain. Ecologically sensitive land is a rare commodity in Florham Park and the EC should take a very good look at its potential for acquisition and stewardship. In the future this land could connect-up with the newly acquired Fish Property to create Florham Parks first ever Public Park. The "Fish Brook Park" could be utilized for education and passive recreation. Strategies should be developed by the EC and presented to the Borough Council as part of a priority initiative in 2008.

All of the initiatives in 10 through 13 above are mandated by ordinance under § 32-3 F. Therefore the EC would respectfully request that the new administration fully back such efforts and help to the best extent possible, the means and funding such a master plan may impose.

Monitor water quality of all streams and tributaries within the Borough. Six major tributaries should be monitored and assayed for coliform, total suspended solids,

phosphates, and nitrogen loads Any data we collect on the health of our waterways would allow the EC to make informed advisement on all future and present land-use issues within the Borough.

Review and comment on any future plans to expand recreation areas within the borough. This includes, but is not limited to a review of all demographics pertaining to existing and future recreation sport programs; require input and discussion from the people who are recreation heads, on site inspection of existing fields with building and ground personnel. The EC would input to the mayor and council its review of alternative sites and suggestions that would aid in any future discussions on fulfilling the Boroughs recreational needs. § 32 – 3 (A) of the ordinance requires that the EC study and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council regarding outdoor recreational needs.

The EC would review and update our boroughs open space inventory. Upon such a review the EC could develop and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on how to manage these remaining parcels. An example of this would be the borough owned floodplain section of town behind Cherokee Drive. In a town where passive recreational opportunities are at premium areas such as this could fulfill the need.

In addition, the EC would review privately owned areas where potential future acquisitions could be strategize. Many incentives exist today for private individuals to create deed restrictions, easements, land trusts, etc. upon properties whose open space has become burdensome. The EC may act in bringing the necessary vehicles for land conservation and the parties involved together. Both 16 and 17 are mandated in the ordinance under § 32 – 3 (D) and specifically § 32 - 4. In recent past, The Morris Land Trust has been a help in this regard. The EC would continue this partnership to help fulfill these stated goals.

Begin the process of compliance with state mandated energy reduction goals. Specifically the Energy Master Plan (EMP) awaiting final draft and approval in Trenton along with the Cool Cities initiatives adopted by municipalities throughout the country. All of these strategies are setting limits on green house emissions. These targets can only be reached with a concerted effort between the borough, local businesses, and residents. The EC can play a major role by inviting local businesses to allow voluntary energy audits and provide them with tools that allow them to reduce consumption, with limited investment, that would in all likelihood benefit their future bottom-line. The EC would be responsible for developing a long term strategy to reduce its own “in house” emissions, working hand –in-hand with the borough administrator, council, mayor and public works officials.

Create public days of Environmental awareness. Met with much success the Arbor Day celebration was one such day in 2007. This initiative would be expanded upon in 2008. In addition, potential other events could be designed to help educate our residents on the environmental issues of the day. These events would be geared on issues that we all take for granted but have major implications for future generations. For instance a water conservation day might be arranged where the public is invited on a tour of the towns water resources and treatments, i.e. sewage treatment facilities, well heads, Passaic river floodplains, major streams in town, etc. Such an event might culminate in a short canoe trip along the Passaic River.

The primary function of the EC will be to contribute to the Township Council by researching topics of environmental concerns, and, as requested by the Council, conducting hearings and forums on local environmental issues and investigating matters related to local environmental issues.