

**MUNICIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
BOROUGH OF EMERSON  
February 20, 2019**

This meeting of the Emerson Environmental Commission was held in the Municipal Building. Chairwoman Stephanie Clark opened the meeting at approximately 7:35PM. In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act, the Clerk has notified The Record and The Ridgewood News of this meeting and notice has been posted in the Municipal Building.

Roll call was taken:

Chairperson Stephanie Clark	Present
Margaret Boyce	Present
Michael Casey	Present
Pat DiNallo	Absent
Steve Frassa	Absent
Kevin Leeds	Absent
Michael Guarriello	Present
Walter Romanski	Absent
Kate Stutzel	Present
Councilman Ken Hoffman	Present
Katherine Haight, Student Liaison	Present

**BOARD BUSINESS**

Chairperson Clark began by noting that Commission Secretary, Marie Shust, was unable to attend and in her place, she would be responsible for drafting and submitting the evening's notes.

She continued by sharing that while the team would adhere to the agenda submitted, the goal would be to make this particular meeting quick and efficient due to weather – allowing the majority of the conversation to focus on time-sensitive matters, such as electing a Vice Chair and discussing the proposed bylaws for 2019.

**REORGANIZATION – VICE CHAIR**

As the first matter of business on the agenda, a discussion was opened regarding the election of a Vice Chair for the Commission, in compliance with the proposed bylaws. Margaret Boyce was originally identified as a candidate to fill the vacancy, but during the meeting, noted that she could not faithfully uphold the responsibilities of the role due to other commitments and declined the opportunity.

Chairwoman Clark nominated member, Pat DiNallo, per her experience with the Commission and explaining it would be a feasible leadership opportunity for Ms. DiNallo. Despite being absent from the meeting, the Commission held a vote on this proposal, with the intention of confirming this decision with Ms. DiNallo offline.

Chairwoman Clark asked for a motion to name Ms. DiNallo as Vice Chair, which was made by Kate Stutzel, second was made by Ms. Boyce, all were in favor. As a result, Ms. DiNallo is now the current Vice Chair of the Emerson Environmental Commission for the duration of 2019.

## **REVIEW OF PROPOSED BY LAWS**

As discussed at the last Commission meeting held in January 2019, all members were provided a draft copy of our 2019 Bylaws, via email and printed during the meeting. This latest draft was prepared by Council Liaison, Councilman Hoffman, and reviewed and edited by Chairperson Clark. This draft version reflected a standard template, used by many peer Commissions – including our own in years past, with the recent exclusion of Shade Tree responsibilities, which no longer fall within this Commission’s role, as decided at Emerson’s Mayor and Council meeting , that was held the night prior, on February 19, 2019.

Chairperson Clark highlighted her four (5) main edits for consideration to the Commission, which included the following: excluding the “annual newsletter” commitment to lessen workload and to increase real-time communication throughout the year; excluding the Bylaws Committee (Section 9), as the Chairperson and Secretary should generally keep Bylaws up to date and are reviewed at the top of every year, as is; rephrasing the name and definition of the Wildlife Committee (Section 8); including a notation that would allow the Chairperson to call a special meeting, separate from the existing calendar, if needed; and lastly, create three (3) committees to reflect the three strategic pillars of Educate, Engage and Evaluate, given that “leaders” would be appointed to associated projects.

These edits were thoroughly discussed by all members in attendance and agreed, leading to Chairwoman Clark asking for a motion, which was made by Michael Guarriello, second was made by Ms. Boyce, all were in favor. Chairperson Clark will manage all Bylaws edits, as discussed, with Secretary Shust providing at least 10 days prior to our next meeting, for all members’ review.

## **NEW DIRECTION FOR SHADE TREE RESPONSIBILITIES**

To make the most of time, Chairperson Clark delivered a high-level overview on the latest decision to reinstate the Shade Tree Commission in Emerson, which could reallocate all associated responsibilities and activities from the Environmental Commission to the soon-to-be established Shade Tree Commission. The level of work and commitment associated with Shade Tree duties was reinforced, and Chairperson Clark noted that while the Commission would have gladly played a role in overseeing these tasks, with its exclusion, the Commission is now suited to sharply focus on relevant Environmental projects and priorities.

It was also noted that while the Commission had previously elected member, Steve Frassa, as Tree Inspector, during its January meeting, that matter will now be managed by the Borough, not the Commission, including the management of Mr. Frassa’s pending stipend negotiations and potential resignation. In the interim, all Shade Tree matters will be managed by Emerson’s DPW and Borough guidance, until a Tree Inspector is on retainer and a Shade Tree Commission is formally off the ground.

## **2019 EEC PRIORITIES & ASSIGNED LEADERSHIP ROLES**

Discussion of the Commission budget and current amount was postponed to the next meeting, due to lack of information.

The agenda moved forward with Chairperson Clark revisiting the Commission strategy, 2019 projects and its associated “leaders” and teams. Chairperson Clark read aloud, as a reminder, each of the three (3) strategic pillars and the no more than three (3) projects confirmed under each. She asked whether everyone present was comfortable with their assignments and offered to amend any assignments to best match their interests. No changes were requested, list of projects for the year were again confirmed.

## **TIME SENSITIVE PROJECT UPDATE**

Building off of the project grid and list, Chairperson Clark provided a quick update on the two most time-sensitive projects at hand, the Community Garden 2019 season and the newly proposed Earth Week campaign. She noted that the plot reservation period had opened, with updates made to the application form, the Borough website and the electronic sign in town. The goal is to solicit sign-ups for the 24 open plots, that way participants are confirmed and engaged prior to Opening Day of the Garden, in the spring. Applications and signs up will be managed by Chairperson Clark, and then turned over to Ms. DiNallo and team for seasonal management and engagement.

In regards to Earth Week, which would kick off on Global Earth Day, Monday, April 22, a proposal for a week of activities within the Borough was shared with those present, for their open feedback. All members were supportive on the proposed execution, and clear on their pending roles with relevant activities. Chairperson Clark noted that the week would conclude with our annual Arbor Day Ceremony, which is scheduled for Saturday, April 27. Councilman Hoffman shared a reminder to reserve which park/area for the intended tree and select the tree now, in advance of the ceremony date. For its last day, Sunday, April 28, a town-wide clean-up was proposed, in which Ms. Boyce understood would fall under her area of expertise and would work in collaboration with Chairperson Clark and partner, Hackensack Riverkeeper, to organize and execute. Full update on this campaign will be on the March meeting agenda.

As part of this topic, Chairperson Clark asked Councilman Hoffman to look into whether we could use reserved funds for tree plantings during this time, or at the least, at a later fall date. Confirmation to follow at the Commission's next meeting.

## **OPEN COMMENTARY**

To conclude, Chairperson Clark opened the meeting for open commentary from members, in which the following was shared:

- Councilman Hoffman said that our Ordinance may require an additional edit, regarding Shade Tree and other out of date items -- for example, section 27-3, R-Z, with the exception of Y.
- Ms. Stutzel shared that there is a Facebook Group, created by her, for the Emerson Community Garden, which could be leveraged to help communication open application season.
- Mr. Guarriello shared that during his many voluntary visits to the Emerson Woods he noticed a few unwarranted activities, such as constructed ramps and quad tracks off the walking paths – asking what members should do if they notice such activity? It was encouraged that he, and any other member, share such findings not only at future meetings but the Emerson Police Department for broader awareness.
- In an effort to discouraging unwarranted behavior in the Emerson Woods, and other wildlife areas within the Borough, Ms. Boyce proposed that she partner with Mr. Guarriello to write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor piece to a local or regional paper to generate awareness. The two members will pursue this idea offline.
- Michael Casey asked if a portion of the woods that came up in conversation was owned by Emerson's BOE. Councilman Hoffman advised that they were not, and to clarify similar questions, offered a guided tour offline to anyone interested in better understanding property lines within the Emerson Woods and beyond. ,
- Lastly, Mr. Casey then asked if we could begin the next meeting and those moving forward with a Pledge of Allegiance, which was agreed upon and will be added to future agendas.

## **OPEN TO PUBLIC**

Chairwoman Clark asked for a motion to open the floor to the public which was made by Ms. Stutzel, second was made by Mr. Casey, all were in favor. Since there was no one in attendance, Chairperson Clark made a motion to close the floor, which was also made by Ms. Stutzel, second was made by Mr. Casey, all were in favor. The floor was closed.

Since there was no additional business, Chairperson Clark adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:05 pm.

###