

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2020, AT 7:00 P.M.

**MINUTES OF THE RP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
November 21, 2019**

Chairman Steve Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m., it having been duly noted that this meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., notice of which was published in The Record and sent to the Star Ledger as well as posted on the Village bulletin board. Members present were: Tammy Lavery, Leslie Olson, Mark Olson, Steve Quinn, Guillermo Lopez-Acosta, Asai Maschang. Excused: Linda Quinn, Jin Ah Jong, Gloria Rivera. Absent: Harry Menta, Peggy Conversano, Carolina Espin, Joseph D'Angeli.

Hearing of Citizens: Christian Velez, a Ramapo student, was present to observe a meeting.

A motion was made by Leslie Olson and seconded by Guillermo Lopez-Acosta to approve the October 24, 2019, meeting minutes. All were in favor of the motion.

Payment of Bills:

- PO 39652 - \$59.93 – Stephen Quinn – Postage and thread locker for nature preserve
- PO 39831 - \$36.83 – Barbara DeLuca – UPS fees for crayon recycling boxes

Correspondence:

- Email from Hackensack Riverkeeper Re: Draft Bergen County Parks Master Plan Available for Public Comment
Tammy Lavery attended the meeting and said they went over the Master Plan and she was very pleased they were conscious of environmental protection, wildlife and walking as well as passive things that people want to do in the park. They discussed ways of connecting the park, bike paths, long-term plans. They didn't say who was going to be doing it or how they were going to do it; it was just to discuss the Master Plan. She said the next step is to just watch the implementation and how it progresses. All comments made will go on record as an addendum to the plan. Steve said the main concerns that people wrote in about were privatization of the park for moneymaking venues and the focus really was on creating natural areas where people could connect with nature and walk. They did a wonderful public survey, which sampled over 2,000 people in the county, and it was over 70% of the top priority desires for what a park should provide in the county was a connection with nature, and over 60%, the second most focused on, was walking and hiking in the parks.,
- Email dated 11/13/19 from Christian Velez, Ramapo University student, interested in attending meeting.
Christian was present at the meeting and welcomed by the EC and told if the EC could help him with anything, they'd be happy to do it.

Old Business:

RP Nature Preserve/Nature Trail – The Ridgefield Park Nature Preserve is an approximately a 15-acre nature preserve in RP and the county has granted \$200,000, which the town is matching so there will be \$400,000 to work with. Boswell Engineering has developed this plan, which Steve explained to everyone. It is unique because there is woodland, marshland, wetland – three different distinct eco-systems that you can see in a different time. There is a proposed parking lot that we are now in negotiations with the Board of Ed, which would be a space for eight cars, two being handicapped. A portion of the trail will be handicapped accessible as well as visually impaired. They will make as much ADA compliant as much as they can. The EC has to come up with a list of wildlife beneficial trees and plants and also areas that will lend themselves to environmental education, such as a great area for an exhibit panel that discusses the three ecosystems and that there are plants and animals that adapt themselves to the ecosystems. There are other areas to think about such as one area with a deck and interpretive panels. Another area is a great swampy, woodland area that is relatively flat and would be a great area as well to have interpretive panels on the plants and animals adaptive to that. If anyone has any thoughts, they can send them to Steve or express them tonight. Steve would love to hear everyone's thoughts on this.

Asai Maschang said she was thinking of panels in the woodlands area at the entrance to each different eco-zone, possibly making it its own little world. Tammy suggested possibly color coding it so you can make it easier for young learners to understand and see the differences. Asai asked if local law enforcement would be patrolling this area and Steve informed her that the area would be wide enough to accommodate a squad car or emergency vehicles. This will be one of the primary access points. There are some areas that emergency vehicles would be limited in some areas and then would have to continue on foot. The police probably already have suggestions on how they will handle security of the area.

The floating boardwalk area that rise and fall with the water levels will not be a concern for police because they won't be able to drive on them. Signs should be posted as to hours of the park. Markers in the park so people can identify where they are should be placed throughout the park.

Steve asked the members if they had any ideas as to types of plantings. Tammy questioned what type of maintenance plan there was for the nature preserve because they would kind of dictate what would be planted. There are issues with invasives that you don't want taking over the nature preserve. There is a group, the Weed Warriors, which was formed to eliminate the invasives. We hope to develop a Ridgefield Park Nature Association, a group of volunteers who would work on maintaining the trail and eliminating the invasives and maintaining a butterfly garden, pollinator gardens and things like that. It is in the works. At the Village Street Fair there were over 50 people that signed up as members of the RP Nature Association and we are hoping they will volunteer to serve. The Bergen County Audubon has been contacted and they want to take part in this effort to develop the native plantings in the area and have offered to purchase those plantings for us and that will be a part of the plan. Before Thanksgiving, we will send the application to the DEP for the building of the boardwalk in the nature preserve. Before you do anything in a wetland, you must have DEP approval. As soon as DEP approval is achieved, we will then send out for bids for the actual construction of the trails, etc. Tammy said she volunteers over at Overpeck and they did an inventory of the native plants they have and there are already over 110 species. Tammy said she will try to think of things that offer a lot of activity and educational opportunities; those you might want to put closer to the observation areas.

The open field with full sun might be good areas for butterflies, meadows, pollinator. This area might want to be managed to keep those species attracted to that native area. Steve told Tammy that if she has any ideas for natural species, she should send it to him. She knows what really works and that would be great. The area is mostly fill but there is a natural waterway where things like ducks are habitating. If there are any suggestions for trees, Steve would like to hear that too. He hopes to be able to tap into the group that signed up for the RP Nature Association. There are information kiosks that have already been purchased. They are waiting to be installed. There are signs waiting to be installed such as: nature preserve, no pets, no alcohol, etc. If anyone has any ideas for signs, that would be great as well. Multi-lingual signs should also be installed.

Steve showed the group another satellite photo. We are at the point where we are about to send the application into the DEP. The engineers told us any ideas we have about education or handicap accessible or multilingual signs, for example, should be sent in. The EC thought people might want to walk or continue on the bike path but the path ends and bikes are not accessible in certain areas. People should try to send their thoughts to Steve as soon as possible so they can be incorporated in.

Green Business – No new information at this time. There are a couple of businesses that Leslie has identified that she will be reaching out to them.

Newsletter – The next deadline is February 14. Members should think of articles for the next newsletter. Articles to be written:

- Leslie Olson – Green Business Program
- Steve Quinn – BYOB (signs will be hung by then)
- Earth Day – schedule date by next meeting and include in next newsletter
- Spring – getting your garden ready, gardening for wildlife (Steve)
- Native Species Bees – Asai Maschang will research this.
- Native Plants – Linda Quinn

BYOB – Signs are ready to be hung. Leslie will work on getting a group together to hang the signs. She has been in touch with Jin Ah about this. Leslie has been deciding on areas she wants to hang the signs. Steve said he would be happy to help. Tammy said if she is available, she will help out as well.

Environmental Club at high school – Steve Quinn needs to talk to Eric Koenig about this. He will send an email to Eric Koenig about this. Asai Maschang offered to supervise the club on Mondays.

Reusable Straws – A discussion was held on ordering more reusable straws but the members decided to table it. There are some concerns about cleaning them. The EC decided they might want to investigate other sustainable options for now.

Winter Bird Count – The count is scheduled for December 7. A flyer was sent to the schools and it was on the website and community message board as well. There will be two locations in Ridgefield Park to observe and count the local bird

population. The starting point will be at 7:00 a.m. at McGowan Park followed by the Amphitheater at Overpeck Park at 9:30 a.m. The count is held from 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon.

Crayon recycling – Only two schools participated but the first boxes were sent in for recycling. Total weight was 59 lbs. The EC got a certificate for being a participant.

New Business:

Earth Day 2020 – Mark Olson checked the tides to select Earth Day. On June 13, high tide is 4:40 p.m., low is 10:30 a.m. which means fishing would be good all afternoon. On May 30, 4:25 p.m. is high tide and low is 10:30 a.m. Steve will work on selecting a day for Earth Day 2020 but May 2 is not a good day and Mark Rust can be told to book the other event for May 2.

Meeting Dates set for 2020 as follows:

JANUARY 23	JULY 23 (IF NECESSARY)
FEBRUARY 27	AUGUST 27 (IF NECESSARY)
MARCH 26	SEPTEMBER 24
APRIL 23	OCTOBER 22
MAY 28	NOVEMBER 26 (THIRD THURSDAY)
JUNE 25	DECEMBER – NO MEETING

Elections will take place at the January meeting.

The next regular meeting will be January 23, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Steve Quinn and seconded by Mark Olson adjourning the meeting at 8:10 p.m. All were in favor of this motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara DeLuca