

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
PALISADES INTERSTATE PARK
NEW JERSEY SECTION**

April 11, 2024

A meeting of the Citizens Advisory Council, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, New Jersey Section, was held on April 11, 2024 at the Alpine Headquarters and via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Chair Daniel Chazin at 1:30 p.m. Participating were CAC members Daniel Chazin, Debora Davidson, Tony Martin, Peter Michalos, Fred Silber and Alan Zimmerman, New Jersey Section Administrative Assistant Mary Anne Carbone, and members of the public Andrew Mikesh and Karen Nickerson. CAC Secretary Martin participated in the meeting via Zoom and requested that the minutes be taken by another CAC member.

1. Minutes. The March minutes were approved, with a number of corrections by Chair Chazin.

2. Chairman's Report. Chair Chazin announced that the next Commission meeting will take place this coming Monday, April 15, at 12:00 noon, at Sterling Forest State Park. He stated that he plans to attend the meeting, and he invited all CAC members to attend. He commented that although he is not aware of any New Jersey action items on the agenda (other than approval of the annual budget), he expected both Executive Director Joshua Laird and New Jersey Section Superintendent Steven Shallop to present informative reports at the meeting.

3. Members' Reports. Alan Zimmerman noted that the minutes of the February Commission meeting included the comment that, to prepare for the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding (the U.S. Semiquincentennial), New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has allocated \$25 million in capital funding for ten New Jersey State-owned Revolutionary War sites, but that the Fort Lee Historic Park did not receive any monies from this fund. Alan Zimmerman questioned why this was the case. In response, Chair Chazin commented that he thought the reason was that the New Jersey Section of the Palisades Interstate Park is not considered a state park for operational purposes, although it is under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. He also stated that he believed that Commissioner Tremble could provide additional clarification regarding this matter. Alan Zimmerman noted that he knows some New Jersey legislators and would be glad to speak to them about funding for the New Jersey Section.

4. Repairs to Park Headquarters in Alpine. Mary Anne Carbone reported that the final inspection of the Park Headquarters is scheduled for next week, and it is hoped that a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued at that time. There was a discussion of the parking arrangements at the Alpine Headquarters, with Mary Anne Carbone stating that she expected the main parking area to remain for employees

only, but that visitors would once again be able to park in the dirt area on the right side of the Alpine Approach Road, which is now used for police vehicles.

5. Fort Lee Historic Park - Repairs and Grants. Chair Chazin reported that, at the February Commission meeting, it was announced that repairs to the Officer and Soldier Huts at the Fort Lee Historic Park are scheduled to begin in April or May 2024, and that Park Staff are actively planning improvements to the entrance of the Historic Park, including new landscaping and signage. He pointed out that both projects have been funded through grants secured by the Palisades Park Conservancy in the amount of \$13,000 each.

6. Damage to Park from Tropical Storm Ida. Mary Anne Carbone reported that the Park has entered into a contract with Colliers Engineering & Design to prepare a proposal for the restoration of the Dyckman Hill Road (Englewood Approach Road). She stated that it is expected that the firm will begin its inspections next week.

7. Maintenance of the Hiking Trails in the New Jersey Section. Chair Chazin noted that he has not hiked in the Park since the last CAC meeting. No report was presented.

8. Closing of State Line Lookout for Film Shoot. Mary Anne Carbone reported that the State Line Lookout was closed to the public for several days in March due to a permit issued for a film shoot at the Lookout. She noted that, due to two rain days, the Lookout was closed for one weekend, but she pointed out that only vehicular access to the Lookout was restricted, and that pedestrians were permitted to walk through the area.

9. Proposed Bike Path along Route 9W; Northern Valley Greenway. No report was presented.

10. New Jersey Camp Alpine. Fred Silber reported that two bridges over the Draw Kill on trails in the former New Jersey Camp Alpine are in deplorable condition and have been closed by the Park. He questioned what plans have been made for the repair or replacement of these bridges, which are important links in the trails that traverse the area of the former camp.

11. Metered Parking. Chair Chazin reported that he recently received a notice from Cale Web Office that his senior parking permit for the Park was about to expire. He stated that the Park's website contains clear and easy-to-follow instructions about how to renew one's permit, and that he did succeed in renewing the permit, but that (1) he believes that more than one week's notice should be given of a permit's expiration, and (2) the notice of the permit's expiration should provide a link to the Park's webpage on which the permit may be renewed. Chair Chazin also commented that he was informed that he will need to update his permit when the registration for his car is renewed in November, and he stated that he did not fully

understand how this works, as the permit is valid for a full calendar year.

12. Parkway Police. Chair Chazin reported that, at the February Commission meeting, it was announced that the Palisades Interstate Parkway Police are beginning a reaccreditation process. In the absence of Superintendent/Police Chief Shallop, no further report was presented.

13. Staffing of New Jersey Section. Chair Chazin reported that he has been informed by Commissioner Tremble that a new staff member was recently hired at the Fort Lee Historic Park to replace Charlie Dewey, who will remain as a seasonal employee. He explained that it is hoped that the Park will now be able to expand the school visitation program at the Fort Lee Historic Park, which has operated on a limited basis during the past few years.

14. Palisades Park Conservancy. Chair Chazin announced that the Palisades Park Conservancy would be holding its annual gala on Monday, June 10, and he encouraged all CAC members to attend.

15. Public Comment. Karen Nickerson introduced herself as a member of the Palisades Interstate Park League of Naturalists (PIPLON) and as Conservation Chair for Bergen County Audubon. She pointed out that Park regulations do not allow pets in the picnic areas and pathways at the Fort Lee Historic Park and at Allison Park, but she stated that these regulations do not appear to be enforced. She noted that she had been informed by Charlie Dewey of the staff at the Fort Lee Historic Park that the staff is not expected to enforce these regulations, and she stated that there is little patrol of these areas by the Parkway Police. She commented that the Parkway Police generally do not appear to be aware of these regulations, and that when she mentioned to one police officer that the presence of dogs is disturbing to the birds that frequent the area, he responded that she need not worry, as the wind turbines will kill the birds anyway. She also stated that she sent a message regarding this issue to Heather Loebner, former Executive Director of the Palisades Park Conservancy, but never received a response. In some instances, she stated, she has observed more dogs than people at the Fort Lee Historic Park. She pointed out that she has occasionally engages visitors with dogs, and usually receives a rude response.

CAC Member Debora Davidson, who also serves as Executive Director of the Tenafly Nature Center (where pets are not allowed), commented that the mere scent of a dog can scare wildlife and alter their behavior, and that dogs can introduce parasites and diseases to areas which they frequent. She stated that she believes that the no-pets rules must be enforced, and she also commented that it is important to have effective signage that communicates the no-pets policy to visitors.

Karen Nickerson stated that signs stating the no-pets policy are posted at all locations where you enter pathways at the Fort Lee Historic Park and also on the approach road leading into the park. She suggested that the police begin enforcing the regulations with warnings to violators, and then issue tickets to repeat offenders.

Debora Davidson pointed out that, at the Tenafly Nature Center, the staff often has to go out and ask people with dogs to leave. She noted that the Tenafly Nature Center has produced a brochure that explains the no-pets policy of the Center and gives suggestions as to where people can hike with their dogs. She also noted that it is important to know how to respond to the claim that the pet in question is a service animal. She commented that, technically, bringing dogs to places where they are not allowed is consider trespassing.

Karen Nickerson commented that the Northern Flicker, a bird species of concern in the State of New Jersey, regular visits the park, and she stated that these birds will scatter as soon as a dog comes near them.

Chair Chazin stated that he would relay Karen Nickerson's concerns to Superintendent/Police Chief Shallop.

16. Filling CAC Vacancy. In Executive Session, the six CAC members discussed filling the vacancy on the CAC, but no decision was reached.

17. Date of Next Meeting. The next CAC meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 9th at the Alpine Headquarters and via Zoom.

18. The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel D. Chazin
Chair and Acting Secretary