

Members Fill Outdoor Pavilion for TNC's Annual Meeting

TENAFLY, NJ, October 11, 2013— A crackling fire cast a warm glow in the Nature Center's outdoor pavilion as TNC members and Trustees gathered over homemade cookies for TNC's 52nd annual meeting on October 10. Board President Michael Neus reported to the members on the status of the proposed new Education and Discovery Center. The current 52-year-old building no longer serves the demand for TNC's programs, nor is it universally accessible.

Environmental Education Update

Debora Davidson presented members with an overview of TNC's school and public programs, highlighting the doubling of environmental education programs during her ten years as TNC's Education Director. For the last three years, TNC has reached a maximum number of program participants--close to 23,000 annually. Physical limitations of the existing building and parking lot prevent TNC from meeting increasing demand from school, scouting and other groups.

Education & Discovery Center Project Update

After a year of multiple public meetings and hearings, Tenafly's Borough Council recently authorized the new Center as a Borough sponsored project, and entered into a 24-year lease extension for land stewarded by TNC. TNC's new lease limits construction to a single, less than 2 acre site in the Lost Brook Preserve — or under one half of one percent of the 400 acres stewarded by TNC. TNC also completed the New Jersey DEP's Green Acres Change of Use process which will permit the project to move forward after confirmation by the appropriate federal agencies. These actions will facilitate fundraising, as TNC has committed to raise the funds for the new Center from individuals, corporations, and foundations - without using Tenafly taxes.

Mr. Neus reviewed the Board's unanimous decision, following years of study and advice from leading environmental advisers, to relocate the Center to a site off East Clinton Avenue.

Advantages of Clinton Avenue Site

- Flat plateau site minimizes rock removal
- Site improves visitors' access to 7 miles of trails
- Reduces runoff by capturing and redirecting stormwater to Hudson River watershed
- Deep site (with a 600-foot setback) preserves forested view from Clinton Avenue
- Sufficient parking protects residents' tranquility
- TNC's programs uninterrupted during construction

Mr. Neus also reviewed the environmental drawbacks that led the Board to reject a comparable expansion at the current building site at the top of Hudson Avenue:

Disadvantages of Hudson Avenue Site

- Ruins Pfister's Pond views
- Requires massive rock blasting and bulldozing to flatten steep site
- Steepness increases stormwater runoff to adjacent residences
- Increased foot traffic overtaxes Main Trail

- Dead end access increases traffic congestion for Hudson Avenue residents
- Requires offsite relocation of programs during construction

TNC's Board recommends maintaining the existing parking lot, pavilion and restroom at the top of Hudson Avenue to preserve visitors' traditional approach to Pfister's Pond. TNC also recommends razing its current obsolete building and reforesting the surrounding one acre, thereby ameliorating the overall impact of trees removed for the new site.

Personnel Changes

At the Annual Meeting, TNC also announced personnel changes, including the departure of its Executive Director, Jennifer Kleinbaum. Mr. Neus noted that Ms. Kleinbaum is "a dedicated and committed person who cares deeply about the environment and the natural world. During her tenure, work on each of our foundational elements has positioned TNC to initiate a new capital campaign to replace and relocate our outdated visitor center." He added, "As a passionate advocate for open space preservation and environmental education, Ms. Kleinbaum built strong relationships with local officials, regional environmental groups, and volunteers in our community. On behalf of the entire Board and staff of the Tenafly Nature Center, we thank her for her 7 years here and we all wish her the best in her future endeavors." The Board of Trustees is forming a search committee to fill the Executive Director position. Education Director Debora Davidson and Director of Special Projects Ellen Kuhn will handle Ms. Kleinbaum's administrative duties in the interim.

After serving for nearly a dozen years on TNC's board, Mr. Neus announced the end of his term as President. He will remain Chairman of the Capital Campaign Steering Council for the New Education and Discovery Center.

Tony Martin was elected President of the Board at a Board meeting following the Annual Members Meeting. Mr. Martin first joined TNC's Board in 2007 and subsequently served as a Vice President. After a career with PricewaterhouseCoopers and Mellon Financial, he now runs the Montessori House in Tenafly with his wife, Maria Morningstar. Long term board member Risa Rosenberg, who will continue to serve as a Vice President, welcomed Tony to his new position, saying, "Tony's managerial experience and proven commitment to education and conservation are a perfect fit for the Nature Center."

Mr. Martin thanked Mr. Neus for his steadfast dedication and service to TNC and said, "Under Mike's leadership, The Trustees and staff of TNC have laid a strong foundation for future improvements to make Tenafly Nature Center an even more engaging location for people to enjoy open space and appreciate nature. I'm excited to work together with the TNC Board to strengthen Tenafly's singular environmental resource," Mr. Martin noted. "We are moving forward in an exciting and environmentally sensitive way and look forward to another successful year."