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Tenaflly Nature Center seeks support to stop Pfister Pond from drying up

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Guests at the nature center look over Pfister Pond during a Mother's Day event in 2013. The Nature Center is asking the Mayor and Council for help in funding work to keep the pond from drying up and becoming woodland.

TENAFLY – The Tenaflly Nature Center is working to stop Pfister Pond from drying up.

Nature Center Director Peter Punzi met with the Mayor and Council on July 13 to get permission from the governing body to begin work to stop the pond's eutrophication and discuss whether the borough could help fund that process.

According to Punzi, eutrophication is when a body of water becomes more shallow and, if the process continues, will start to become marshland and then eventually woodland.

Punzi told the mayor and council stopping this from happening could cost approximately \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

"I truly think you'd be helping your own cause if you come back and say we have a sense that we could raise a significant part, if that's the case," Mayor Peter Rustin told Punzi at the meeting.

Punzi asked in return if the Mayor and Council would be willing to lend a hand in paying for the studies needed for Pfister Pond.

When asked during the meeting by Councilman Mark Zinna how much the studies would cost, Punzi said they did not have specific numbers at that time.

Punzi said if the man-made pond -- which he said was created in the 1890s -- continues on its current path the borough could lose some biodiversity.

According to the director, birds that migrate through the area and other animals depend on the pond. If the pond becomes a marsh or woodland, those animals may no longer appear in the borough.

Punzi said the borough could also lose the Nature Center's pond ecology classes which take place at the pond in addition to the emotional connection some residents have to the pond.

"A lot of people have an emotional connection to open water and to Pfister Pond in particular," he said.

Punzi said since the borough owns the pond, the nature center will need the governing body's permission to do anything to it.

If the governing body grants permission, the borough will need to obtain permits from the New Jersey Department of Environment Protection before work to stop the eutrophication begins.

In order to get the permits, Punzi said the borough will need to conduct various studies on the body of water. The Nature Center is currently waiting for a proposal from Maser, the borough's engineering firm, in order to know what studies and tasks the borough must complete.

Punzi said he based his estimation of \$1.5 million on the costs to address issues with Quarry Pond in Flat Rock Brook and Ruckman Pond in Closter.

Punzi reached out to those boroughs, which have gone through similar experiences, for advice.

"Our pond is larger so I estimated based on its relative size," Punzi said. "The studies [and] proposal from Maser will help take this rough estimate a little closer to what the actual costs would be."

Much of the cost is based on how much material the borough must remove, he said, adding the borough will know which material has to be removed after testing the depth of the pond and testing the sediment in the pond to see if toxic materials are present.

Rustin said the governing body needs more information and it is too early to make any decisions concerning whether the borough will help finance the project.

"Before we approve something we'd like to have something more concrete," said the Rustin.

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