

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 15, 2010
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Allan Williams, Council Liaison Jon Erickson

Guest: Joe Smalley

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 21, 2010 meeting were approved.
3. Membership Issues. Joshua Fine, the Environmental Commission's liaison to the Planning Board, has resigned from both boards. Allan Williams volunteered to serve as Commission liaison to the Planning Board. Mike will speak to Mayor Nolan and recommend Allan. Laurel agreed to serve as Commission secretary.
4. Correspondence: None
5. Site Plans
 - a) S.A.M. & Associates, LLC
Docket No.: P10-04
Block 81, Lots 9-12

The owner wants to subdivide the Mansfield Street property into two single-family lots. A waiver from drainage requirements is being requested.

Comments: Replace all trees cut down. All new plantings and landscaping should be native plants, trees, and shrubs. Any stormwater runoff should be contained on the site. The driveway should be constructed of permeable materials.

Councilman Erickson noted that the Borough Council is considering two ordinances that would prevent this type of drainage problem in the future. One would prohibit placing a garage at the front of the house.

6. Old Business
 - a) Environmental Resources Inventory (ERI). Councilman Erickson is receptive to the idea of a joint meeting of the Planning Board and Environmental Commission when the time comes to review the new ERI. We have received an ANJEC Smart Growth Planning Grant to update our ERI and have selected Kratzer Environmental Services of Frenchtown, the lowest of seven bidders for the project and the most qualified one. The contract has been signed and sent back to the Borough Clerk. Deborah Kratzer, a firm representative, came to Highland Park recently, and Steve and Allan showed her some of our environmental sites, open space areas,

and historic buildings. Middlesex County does have an open space map which includes some of Highland Park's open space sites, and they are interested in adding others, such as the Environmental Education Center. Allan will borrow a GPS data collector, which he and Steve will use to take the coordinates of our open space sites for use by the county and by Kratzer as a database. Allan plans to obtain coordinates of architecturally significant sites in town.

Steve and Allan generated text for a press release and for announcements of the two required public discussion sessions on the new ERI. We have submitted the first required quarterly report to ANJEC and plan to hold the first public session between December and February. Councilman Erickson noted that the Shade Tree Advisory Committee has been approached by a Rutgers student interested in mapping the location of borough trees. The Committee has about \$1,400 to fund this project. Allan will discuss this with Committee co-chair Karen Swaine.

The next step is to do stream surveys. To reduce cost, the Commission has committed to providing a lot of the data for the ERI. Steve and Allan will compile a list of needs for the project, will schedule a meeting with ANJEC, and will put existing data into an Excel sheet for Debra. The next quarterly report is due in November.

- b) Environmental Education Center/Native Plant Reserve. Rutgers sociologist Judith Freeman is interested in bringing her freshman seminar students to the Center, but this is uncertain because Rutgers buses no longer stop on River Road. Steve plans to meet with Dr. Judy Shaw of the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative to discuss possible money from an environmental settlement that would be available through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Allan will examine correspondence on the Environmental Center property between former Borough Administrator Karen Waldron and the DEP. We are uncertain as to whether a decision has been made to not do remediation at the Native Plant Reserve.
- c) Meadows Project. We applied for a \$10,000 grant for additional trails through the National Recreational Trails Program but have not heard anything yet. Applicants will be informed as to whether they receive the grants by the end of September. On Sunday, September 12, Steve, Allan, and Tim Coffey did an impromptu cleanup of the meadows area. There is already a trashcan there, and we will request DPW place a recycling bin there as well. There are now five benches along the trail, and Mike recommended their location be added to the trail map. Three new tasks we need to work on within the next month are cutting trees and branches overhanging the trail, bringing in several more loads of woodchips, and leveling up the boardwalk in one or two spots. Since there is a lot of trash by the river, we want to organize a 2-3 hour cleanup on a Sunday morning

by the Ahavas Achim Environmental Committee in mid to late October. They have already done cleanups at the Meadows and Native Plant Reserve. Steve noted that at the end of the season, we should go into the trails with weed whackers and put mulch vegetation into the ground to return organic material to the soil.

- d) EPA Showcase Climate Change Grant. Randy Solomon has interviewed several people for this project and will make a recommendation. A marketing firm in Philadelphia is coordinating the publicity campaign. The goal of the grant is to promote energy efficiency. We might want to promote specific electricity providers who use the least percentage of fossil fuels.

7. New Business

- a) Coyotes in Johnson Park. Allan reported he has seen coyotes in Johnson Park on the field adjacent to the track. Karen Swaine has seen coyotes behind her house, and some have also been sighted in the Rutgers Ecological Preserve.
- b) Goals for 2010. Steve recommended we review our goals for 2010, which we set at the beginning of the year, at our next meeting.

- 8. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 20, 2010 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.