

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of November 17, 2010  
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams

Guests: Mary Denver and Belinda Beetham, Shade Tree Advisory Committee Members

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:09 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 20, 2010 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
  - a) ERI Project Update. Steve recommended we use the information about historic sites in the new ERI and from all historical studies the Environmental Commission has done over the years to write up assessments and recommendations for potential archeological and historical studies. He also suggested asking the county for possible ordinances requiring archeological studies before a property deemed historic is developed.

Allan reported that Kratzer Environmental received the first payment on the project. We received 28 maps from them. We now have the locations of 95 percent of borough homes built before 1890, which are of historic interest. Allan has pictures of 50 percent of these homes, from which he will select some for the ERI. Middlesex County has an open space map that shows 60-70 percent of sites on our list. Allan will send the coordinates he took to Debbie to update her initial maps. We will have all the data Debbie needs by December 10, and the project team will meet again next month.

We need develop a formal definition of open space. There is a county definition for open space. Allan will check the ANJEC web site to see if ANJEC has its own definition.

Steve and Allan started a stream survey at Mill Brook, with Allan using a GPS unit. On the maps, some streams look pristine, but many have been put into culverts. We know Mill Brook has three branches, but we don't know which is the main one. Steve and Allan are comparing the GPS information with the information on our maps.

We put notice of the ERI on our web site. Allan sent press releases to various media outlets but got no responses.

b) Meadows Activities/Trail Building Update/Eagle Scout Projects. On October 24, about 15-20 people from the Ahavas Achim Environmental Committee cleaned up portions of the trail, collecting six garbage bags and six recyclable bags. Wood chips were spread on parts of the trail that are eroding. Several volunteers expressed interest in developing more projects, and we will work with them to do something in the spring. Mike recommended a cleanup of Valley Place Ravine in the spring. Allan and Steve are still doing weed whacking in some areas to make room for placement of mulch on the ground.

We have not yet heard news about the proposed Eagle Scout project, which is before the Boy Scout Council awaiting approval.

Jon recommended creating a greenway along the river. We need to contact the county to see if there are any restrictions in right of way areas on their property. Currently, there is a good trail from Donaldson Park to the Barwood easement area. That easement is a conservation easement, not a greenway easement. We would like a walking path, a nature trail that connects Donaldson and Johnson Parks.

c) 2010 Recreational Trails Grant. No new information. The deadline for completion of the project is July 2013.

d) Environmental Education Center. We would like to see more use of the center. Currently, the Highland Park chapter of the Native Plant Society meets there. Mary recommended we adopt a model program done in Virginia titled "Adopt A Spot," in which groups establish and care for gardens in designated areas. Karen suggested we buy whiskey barrels and use them to for native plants that last all year. If we get a water spigot at the site, watering these plants won't be a problem. The wood in whiskey barrels will hold the plants all winter because this wood provides good insulation.

Mary did not get much of a response on the Community Wildlife Habitat project. Residents are concerned that keeping a water source in their yards will provide a habitat for mosquitoes to breed. Yet this could be prevented if the water is dumped and replaced once or twice a week.

Karen recommended creating a meadow at the Native Plant Reserve. We could kill the weeds there with roundup, put seeds in, and then have a meadow. It would have to be mowed only once a year. Gradually, the plants would clean up the soil.

e) EPA Showcase Climate Change Grant. Matt Kaplan was hired and has begun working on this and will report on it at the next meeting of Sustainable Highland Park. At some point, we should have him come to one of our meetings.

f) Centennial Park. Karen and several members of the Shade Tree Committee drafted their own potential redesign of Centennial Park. Some of the shrubs and trees planted there are now dead. The site is designed as a retention basin. We need a copy of the

original plan overlay to match with this draft. Steve suggested this is a good project for Main Street. Karen questioned whether DPW could get a water truck to the site.

g) NOAA Grant. Allan saw Judy Shaw of Rutgers, who told him she has no new information about the grant. She applied but hasn't heard whether the application has been successful.

6. New Business

a) Banner to Promote Walking/Biking. A high school student is interested in placing a banner at the athletic fields saying people should walk more, as a means of promoting healthy living, walking, and biking. The student asked whether grant money is available for this. He wants us to help promote it. Steve suggested we ask him to attend one of our meetings to discuss his proposal.

b) Telephone Books. Mike noted that "Waste and Recycling News" reported that Seattle has created a registry allowing residents to opt out of receiving copies of the Yellow Pages. Their ordinance has penalties for Yellow Pages publishers who deliver them to people on the opt-out list. We might want to consider adopting something like this to minimize waste.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10 PM. The next meeting of the Highland Park Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 15 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.