

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of June 5, 2013
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:08 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 1, 2013 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) ANJEC Open Space Grant. We did not get the grant. Sixty applicants applied, but only 20 grants were awarded.
 - b) 27 Brookdale Court— This item has been postponed to the Zoning Board's June 24 meeting.
 - c) Pulte—The Crossing at Highland Park—Honeywell Property. At the last Planning Board meeting, Pulte displayed new exhibits that had been shown to board members, the borough planner, and the borough engineer. These plans were forwarded to us. They show the roads that garbage and fire trucks will use and how the trucks will turn around in the development. Pulte also added some sidewalks on and a lot of trees, as STAC recommended. They are in the process of adding many native species of trees as a result of their meeting with STAC, and they provided a tree plan. They gave us a copy of a Phase I environmental study done on the property. The current proposal calls for 95 units, five of which will be affordable. We noted that some streets still have sidewalks only on one side. Pulte is planning to regrade the entire property and to remove over 900 trees. Allan will write a memo in response to Pulte's Phase I environmental study. The Planning Board will decide whether to grant Pulte a waiver on submitting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). So far, Pulte has not provided a DEP notice confirming a need for no further action to the Planning Board. Steve will bring the list of recommendations we originally made to our next meeting. We need to look at our recommendations for the first Pulte application to determine whether any were incorporated into the revised proposal. We also want to see some of the letters about remediation of the property. The issue of the detention basin has not yet been resolved, and Pulte also has not provided a final landscaping plan. We need to see if they provided a lighting plan. The next Planning Board meeting is on June 20.
 - d) Environmental Education Center. Karen is working on the signage. Allan presented council liaison Padraic Millet with a draft of the signage Karen is creating. Randy Solomon of the College of New Jersey informed Allan that he has an associate who can examine the site and determine what it would take to install the solar panels, then come to a meeting to discuss his findings. The structure for the solar panels has been scraped and painted. The water fountain now works, and there is a spigot for connecting to a hose. We need to look at the list we put together for things that need to be done at this site. We also noted that the 2 beehives are now

- in the Native Plant Reserve, under a contract in which the Shorrs will retain a small amount of the honey and give the majority of it away.
- e) Meadows Trail Update. The landscaping contractor worked around the trail head entrance. Using our remaining funds, we submitted a request for an invoice to purchase several items, including wood for a structure at the trail head entrance. That leaves us with about \$200 of the grant, which we will use to purchase a shed from Home Depot. Allan and Steve will buy it and put it together next week. The shed is big enough for us to store all of our equipment plus everything currently in the pumphouse. It will be placed on DPW property. Once the money is spent and the work outlined in the grant proposal completed, Allan and Steve will write up a final report, which will be submitted to the DEP. They will send copies of the report, due July 1, to Commission members. There is still some maintenance work that needs to be done around the trail, including putting down more woodchips. DPW will help spread the remaining woodchips next Wednesday. The panel on the billboard at the trail entrance was vandalized and needs to be replaced. Allan and Steve will enter the trail data into a GPS to create a more accurate map depicting the changes we made with the grant. On July 23, David Siegman is organizing a walk in the meadows from 6:30-7:30 PM as part of the borough's wellness campaign.
 - f) Change in Land Use Ordinance. The Castle, currently part of the Kaplan property, is zoned for townhouses. The borough wants to change some of the requirements for the zone in order to allow buildings up to five stories high. Our steep slopes ordinance applies to the buffer with the Rutgers Ecological Preserve wherever steep slopes are present. Our riparian buffer ordinance applies to the area adjacent to Buell Brook. Council held a first reading on this ordinance on May 7. The Planning Board met on May 9 but has not reviewed it yet. It is on the agenda for public discussion at tonight's council meeting, but no vote will be held then. It will be discussed at the next Planning Board meeting.
 - g) Buck Woods Land Swap. Padraic is not here, so there is nothing new.
 - h) Sustainable Jersey Silver Certification. For us to attain the Silver Certification, Sustainable Jersey wants us to commit to redoing the ERI every 10 years. Historically, the Commission gets grants to do this. We also need to link to the Highland Park Code confirming the town has an Environmental Commission and submit a 150-200-word paragraph about what we do. Sustainable Jersey needs a copy of the first page of the ERI and links to the whole document. Every two years, we need to update the ERI noting any changes regarding open space properties in town.
 - i) Recycling Report. The borough has submitted its 2012 Recycling Tonnage Report to DEP. We get money for everything recycled. Public outreach is needed to inform people that items picked up for recycling are actually recycled and don't end up mixed with regular garbage. Jon recommended we display a graph showing the tonnage of each item recycled along with the tax money that is saved by recycling. People need to see via a visual display that the more we recycle, the more money we save. This graph should be on the borough web site and in the borough newsletter. Jon suggested we get recycling tonnage reports from previous years; he will create a pie chart and graph along with an explanation.
 - j) Future Long Term Management of Meadows. Steve wrote up and distributed a plan listing what needs to be done to maintain the trail along with five maintenance options. One option

is that the borough and the Environmental Commission could share in managing the area; however, we are doing this now, and it isn't working. It takes 3-4 months to get 1-2 DPW employees to work there. Mike suggested the best option is long-term management by another organization. Ideally, a crew of eight to twelve people is needed to do this though we could manage with four to six people. But we need a commitment from that crew to do it on a regular basis. Maintenance requires about 15 work days per year, twice per month in warm weather. Steve suggested we think about the different options and vote on them at our next meeting. We agreed that someone from the Commission should approach DPW and see if a management plan can be arranged with them; Padraic is the logical choice. Steve feels the best long-term option is to get a group to take on the tasks outlined and possibly manage other projects such as Centennial Park and the Native Plant Reserve. Borough employees would work only on logistics and not do onsite work under this option.

6. New Business

- a) Center School has been sold to a doctor in Ohio. Landscapers were seen cutting trees that currently screen the parking lot and everything overhanging the edge of the property. Karen told Scott Luthman to get in touch with the owner and was told that the work has already been done even though it clearly has not been completed. Jon recommended STAC issue a memo to Kathy Kovach and the Borough Council informing them about this issue.

7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, July 3 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.