

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Joint Meeting with Shade Tree Advisory Committee
September 11, 2013
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Allan Williams, Council liaison Padraic Millet STAC members Carol Avelsgaard, Roseanne Baruh, Belinda Beetham, Mary Denver, Harvey Klee, Michael Ross

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the Environmental Commission's July 3 meeting and of STAC's July 10 meeting were both approved with minor corrections.
3. Old Business
 - a) Buck Woods/Upper Meadows/Lower Meadows Possible Land Swap. Padraic informed us that there has been progress on a potential land swap. So far, no redevelopment proposal has been submitted. The borough hired a planner to determine whether these properties meet the criteria for redevelopment, and we have copies of their report. Because the borough may have played a role in disposal of waste on these properties, we could have some responsibility for the cost of cleaning them up, and that cost could be considerable. The borough is now looking into the possibility of having a development in the Upper Meadows as part of a swap agreement with the developer who currently owns Buck Woods. Padraic noted that the cleanup cost for the Upper Meadows will be a lot less than for Buck Woods. At the August Planning Board meeting, a representative of Clark, Caton and Hintz, discussed the reasons these areas could be designated as being in need of redevelopment. Steve Barnes noted that about three years ago, the Environmental Commission did a study on the feasibility of putting a trail in Buck Woods. The Commission is starting to get a lot of questions from the public about what will happen at these sites; if the borough keeps the Commission up to date on what is happening, we can then tell people whether or not we know what the plans are. Padraic emphasized that the borough is in the beginning stages of agreement that these areas meet the requirements for redevelopment. Any actual deals with a developer would be negotiated by the Redevelopment Agency. The next Planning Board meeting will be on Thursday, October 17 at 7:30 PM, and a representative of Clark, Caton and Hintz will be there to answer questions. They will also discuss revisions made to the plan in response to previous Planning Board comments. The Planning Board will then either agree or disagree with the planner's proposal. In response to Allan's question about why the Lower Meadows are also being considered in the study, Padraic said the borough wants to look at the entire area in case a slight adjustment is needed.. Allan noted we have riparian buffer and steep slopes ordinances in effect. Everyone was encouraged to attend the October 17 Planning Board meeting.
 - b) Rezoning of Castle Property. The borough needs to pass the ordinance designating all of the Castle property as residential, under the new RMT-H zone. Approval of this zoning for the property will also emphasize that streams and steep slopes there will be retained.
 - c) 27 Brookdale Court. The application has been withdrawn.
 - d) Meadows Trail Update. The period of the grant has ended, and the grant requirements have been met. Garden State Landscaping has been paid for their work. We still need to address issues of long-term management and work that needs to be done at the site, such as cutting down invasives

along the bike path in order to do wildflower seeding. Some weeding also needs to be done at the trail head. We want to put down wood chips but have been unable to get the necessary equipment to do so, so we decided that some areas will be grass instead of wood chips. This is why we purchased a lawn mower. Jon suggested we have a work day in mid-October. This would require about 10 people to do the work; we need to reach out to groups that could send people to do this. Water Watch previously recruited fraternity members to do this kind of work. Brian Marsh of the US Fish and Wildlife Service will come to check the area in late September and make recommendations on how to proceed from where we are now. We also need to write up a final report for the project and include site photos with the report. The Mayor's Wellness Committee held a walk in the Meadows on July 23. About 35 people attended, and we got rave reviews. People who took part in the walk recommended setting up educational programs in the Meadows. The Meadows will now be put on a regular schedule for these public walks.

- e) ANJEC Workshop in Highland Park. ANJEC is conducting a workshop on how to increase Environmental Commission skills on Monday, September 16 in Highland Park at the Senior Center. Steve Barnes will do a 15-minute presentation on the Meadows trail.
 - f) Signage for Environmental Education Center. Padraic sent our mock-ups to the new zoning officer for feedback.
 - g) Rutgers Scholars Program: Water Monitoring of the Raritan River. The New Brunswick Environmental Commission now has a Rutgers scholar working on a proposal for monitoring of the river. They asked us to participate in this project, and we agreed to do so. Allan will assist with the technical aspects. We agreed to invite the Rutgers scholar to come to one of our meetings and give him/her a stipend of \$50. The goal of this program is making the Raritan River healthy and suitable for various water sports. The student will propose a project to get funding for testing the water. A water advocacy group in New Brunswick is also participating in this.
 - h) Historical Plaque promised by Pulte for the Cenacle site – Padraic will follow up on this item to ensure completion.
4. STAC Issues
STAC members addressed issues on their own agenda, including the pump house and trees impacting it, ID cards for STAC members, doing a tree management plan for the borough, the need for an agreement with the homeowners' association at Overlook about trees on the site, replantings on the mall along North 8th Avenue, and scheduling of a town wide tree walk.
5. Correspondence: None
6. Site Plans: None
7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 2 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.