

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of October 2, 2013
Minutes

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

Guest: Helen Ziucavhe, student at Rutgers Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 11, 2013 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Overview of September 16 ANJEC Workshop in Highland Park. About 25 people from Environmental Commissions in central and northern New Jersey attended. Topics discussed included reviewing Environmental Commission mission statements, examples of high-performing Environmental Commissions, and increasing the skills of Environmental Commission members. Steve discussed the Meadows project and got good feedback. In response to the emphasis on Environmental Commissions needing to have strong statements of purpose, Mike brought copies of our mission statement, which he wrote in 2001, for us to review. We agreed on a few changes, including replacing the term "Natural Resources Inventory" with "Environmental Resources Inventory." We want our mission statement to say we are committed to being a proactive force for an ecologically and environmentally sustainable Highland Park. Commission members will think about possible revisions to our mission statement and share suggestions at our next meeting.
 - b) Meadows Trail Update. Steve and Allan cut down mugwort, cleared the forest floor, and cut vines to get them out of the tree canopy. They planted milkweed, which is now growing, along the bike path. Mary Denver and Belinda Beetham of STAC looked at the plants we were unable to identify and found about six different wildflower species, all native. End-of-season work needs to be done, and this presents a good opportunity to bring in a volunteer group. We will try to arrange for a cleanup in mid to late October focusing on cutting vines and clearing deadwood. We have \$272 left over from the grant, which we will not be able to use. Borough Administrator Kathy Kovach will submit our final grant report to NJDEP. Laurel noted the borough has a new Park Partners mini-grant program to which individuals and groups can apply; she will find out the specific projects these grants can fund and if any are appropriate for us. A list of grant categories is currently on the borough web site.
 - c) Second Walk through the Meadows. This was not well advertised, and only one person showed up. We will hold off on scheduling a third walk.
 - d) Buck Woods/Upper Meadows/Lower Meadows. The third version of the Assessment Report regarding a potential land swap and the appropriateness of these areas for redevelopment will be discussed at the October 17 Planning Board meeting. The report includes the entire Meadows property. Council members received copies of this report on September 23, but the Planning Board and professionals did not. They will receive hard copies and digital versions. The Planning Board can choose to accept it, reject it, or make changes to it. All three sites meet the requirements for redevelopment because they are contaminated from use as a landfill. The Planning Board or a member of the public could propose that areas with environmental

constraints be removed from the equation entirely. We encourage members of the Commission and of STAC to attend and comment. The main difference between the second and third versions of this report is that maps are improved in the latest version, so the environmental constraints are more clearly illustrated. Allan will send digital copies to all Commission members. We want the Lower Meadows protected and not included in any development, which is why we need to question the scope of the report and advocate taking the Lower Meadows out. The developer is suing the borough for \$10 million, claiming the borough is responsible for the contamination. The report discusses how much remediation is needed for each area, and CME did comment on that. Allan filed an OPRA request for all the items referenced in the report.

- e) Environmental Education Center. The bee hives were vandalized sometime between September 11 and 16. Some of the frames with the bees were stolen, and one of the hives was damaged. The frames have since been replaced. Total value of the stolen items is \$100. The police and Sustainable Highland Park suggested putting in motion sensor lights, which cost \$400-\$500. These would not need to be on all the time. Regarding signage for the Center, Karen suggested a type face and recommended we use the same technique and colors as those used on the Centennial Park sign. She gave a mockup to Padraic. We will find out if the new zoning officer has any feedback on our mockup and then design our own sign.
 - f) Raritan River Greenway. The County Planning Board has two interns doing a project on a greenway for our section of the river. Allan walked them through the easement area. They felt that Valley Place Ravine would be a good place for entry to the greenway and will write a report with recommendations. To assist them, we will give them a copy of the Greenway Feasibility Study we had done several years ago. This is a positive development because it means the greenway is seriously being looked at by the County Planning Board. It could be done as a walking trail. Due to security concerns, we could ask the county to provide cameras that would be linked to our Police Department.
 - g) Raritan River Festival. The festival was held this past Sunday. Allan attended as a representative of the Highland Park Environmental Commission. Jon questioned whether a part of the festival could be done in Highland Park next year.
 - h) Co-sponsoring Events. Denise Nickel of the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA) organized several events in the county related to the Raritan River. Most recently, the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission gave a talk about the Raritan River and the American Revolution. We agreed the Commission should co-sponsor such events, which, if done along with a county agency or the borough's Recreation Department, would leave us with no liability issue.
6. New Business
- a) Anti-Fracking Resolution. The Borough Council adopted an ordinance banning fracking in Highland Park and also passed a resolution stating that New Jersey should not accept fracking waste. We are the first New Jersey municipality to pass such an ordinance. Allan will send copies of the ordinance to all Commission members.
 - b) ID Cards. At our joint meeting with STAC last month, we found out that STAC members are getting borough ID cards. Karen said the reason for this is that STAC members go onto people's properties to look at trees. Mike recommended Environmental Commission members also be issued borough IDs. Steve said we should ask Kathy Kovach how to arrange this.
7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM. The next meeting of the Highland Park Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, November 6, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.