

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 6, 2013
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jon Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams, Councilman Padraic Millet

Guest: Brittany Musolino, intern with the New Brunswick Environmental Commission

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:09 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 2, 2013 meeting were approved with one correction.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a letter sent by Masur Engineering, to Pulte, noting that Masur plans to apply for a DEP permit for the site of the Crossings (Honeywell site).
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Review of Environmental Commission Mission Statement: Our current mission statement was written in 2001. We need to put our mission statement on the borough's web site. Mike will email our current mission statement to all members, and we will carry this discussion to next month.
 - b) ANJEC Congress. Allan and Steve attended last month's conference and brought back literature. The conference workshops were very informative. Allan spoke with a representative of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Fish and Wildlife Services. Chris Abrupta of the Rutgers Water Resources Program spoke at the conference about the difficulties Environmental Commissions have commenting on stormwater management and water recharge in site plan reviews. He put together a presentation on how Commission members can look at site plans and ask appropriate questions on these issues to determine whether the regulations are being met. Steve asked a representative of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to put together a Conservation Management Plan for the Meadows. This involves a representative coming to the site, doing an assessment of it, and creating a management plan. They would do a soil study, vegetation studies, wildlife studies, and measurement with ground penetration radar to determine what is underground.

Allan got links to the New Jersey Land Change Viewer and the New Jersey Flood Mapper. The Land Change Viewer shows aerial photos from 1986 to the present, illustrating how land has been changed by development. The Flood Mapper shows what happens to various sites with various rises in sea level. There was a workshop at the conference on floods and what Environmental Commissions should do on this issue. ANJEC is putting together a brochure with a checklist of things Environmental Commissions can do to save the environment when flooding occurs. It is being written by Kerry Miller, who would be happy to receive our comments. Allan said he also talked with Matt Hersch of the borough's Public Information Commission about our contributing articles to the borough's print newsletter.
 - c) Meadows Trail Update. There was a small work event last Sunday. Volunteers harvested mugwort and opened areas to plant native seeds. Goldenrod and milkweed are coming back. Selective mugwort removal will be done in the spring. Next week, we get new equipment that

will be used to get the area ready for winter. An intermittent stream that runs parallel to the bike path needs to be cleared out.

- d) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Assessment of the Meadows. Allan met with our contact from the agency, Brian Marsh. The department can provide us with trees to replace those lost in the last four years. We have to request them in February and will receive them in early spring. To receive the trees, we have to commit to taking care of them and protecting them from deer. The latter can be done with a plastic deer fence. We have about 200 feet of this. We now need a Conservation Management Plan to tell us where the trees should be planted.
 - e) Planning Board Meeting October 17. The third version of the report, which states that all the lands involved meet at least two criteria for being in need of redevelopment, was accepted by the Planning Board. About 30 members of the public were present. The properties may be preserved or improved and will not necessarily be developed. The next step is that the Borough Council has to accept the report and then pass an ordinance, then work with the Planning Board on creating a redevelopment plan. Padraic said the council will vote on this in December and added certain areas will be designated as recreation only. The report laid out all environmental constraints, including the bike path. The Lower Meadows is on the DEP's Recreation Open Space Inventory.
 - f) Environmental Education Center Signage. Allan will send our sign plans to Padraic, who will share them with the borough's new zoning officer.
 - g) Rutgers Water Quality Mentoring Program. Brittany Musolino started her internship with the New Brunswick Environmental Commission the second week in September. She is doing research on Raritan River water monitoring sites in New Brunswick. Her project is to develop a group of volunteers to do the monitoring. Two sites have been selected, one in Donaldson Park by the basketball courts, and one at Boyd Park by the docks the Rutgers crew team uses. Steve recommended supplying volunteers with kits to monitor a range of parameters. The DEP has a lot of information on volunteer monitoring. Brittany will also contact the schools to set up a monitoring program for kids. She is now looking for adult volunteers to create a schedule and then get a profile of both the surface water and a deeper area because freshwater flows down, and saltwater stays on top. Rutgers is interested in this project. Mike noted that special equipment is needed to do subsurface sampling. We are concerned that the two selected sites are too close to one another. We would prefer a sample be taken from the area under Landing Lane Bridge rather than from Boyd Park. Steve noted samples have to be collected at the same time every month to make the data usable. Allan noted that to get a baseline, it is important to get a surface sample at high tide. Karen suggested checking the plants growing along the waterline and recruiting volunteers who know about plants. Brittany said she is looking into labs that do biological testing. Allan told her the EPA has grants for testing samples for salinity, suspended solids, and temperature. One reason this project is being done is to determine whether the river is safe for swimming. The DEP says there is insufficient data to determine this. Brittany has pamphlets she will distribute to recruit volunteers and set up a group. Steve, Mike, and Allan will read her report and provide comments. In order for the DEP to be able to use the data collected, a Quality Assurance Project Plan will be needed.
6. New Business
- a) Possible Banning of Plastic Bags. Karen noted the borough council banned fracking in Highland Park and said she wants to see plastic bags banned or at least require a 50-cent charge from supermarkets. She will research whether any towns in New Jersey are already doing this. Allan noted that Sustainable Highland Park is also discussing this and the related topic of banning helium balloons.

- b) Talk on Raritan River and American Revolution. Next Wednesday, November 13, there will be a talk in the Senior Center at 7:30 PM by Doug Aumack, who will discuss the Raritan River and the American Revolution.
 - c) Steve suggested sending all Commission members a list of our goals for 2013 so we can review them and start discussing goals for next year.
 - d) We discussed the possibility of inviting Borough Council members to visit the sites on which we are working.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:34 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 4 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.