

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 3, 2014
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 11, 2014 joint meeting with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) were approved with minor corrections. There was no July meeting.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Y Property. Conditions of approval for the plan include a 10-foot easement for a greenway at the top of the bank and at the bottom of the cliff. The easement is for public use and runs from the river up the steep slope, past the coastal bluff, plus another 10 feet. The application is bifurcated, and the current plan is a preliminary one, not a final site plan. There are approximately 30 conditions of approval. The DOT owns the retaining wall along Raritan Avenue and will have to give permission for any work proposed by the borough. DOT will not deal with the developer, so if the developer wants to do work there, he/she would have to ask the borough to apply to DOT. DOT said the wall cannot be power washed because doing so will degrade its surface. One proposal is to paint the wall either a light cream color or a slightly blue color and put the Highland Park logo in the middle. The borough and the developer can submit a permit application for work on the wall within 60 days after the last Zoning Board meeting on the application. A cement slab may be added to the wall to seal off the steps on the side.
 - b) Pulte Property Construction. Karen reported gravel, dirt, and sand on Cleveland Avenue. The workers are still digging, and they have started building the retaining wall behind the first three houses. They are not wetting down the area, which they said they would do. Mike said we should contact Scott Luthman about this. Pulte is still sending trucks up Cleveland Avenue, which they are not supposed to do. Some of the monitoring wells on the property will remain, and others will be added. Last night, Allan gave a presentation at the Borough Council meeting about the site remediation project.
 - c) Environmental Education Center and Native Plant Reserve. A subcommittee composed of members of the Environmental Commission and STAC met twice with artist Jonathan Horowitz about the proposed murals on the Environmental Education Center walls. Jonathan Horowitz came up with a revised version that includes themes for the different walls. The Borough Council gave him the go ahead for his third design and authorized him to start working and getting paid. Up to \$5,000 is being spent on this; the money is coming from Pulte. One of the walls will have a historic theme. STAC would prefer planting native shrubs and vines, such as Virginia creeper, to cover the walls. Mike suggested that if we have money in the future, we can use it to add a stone veneer to the walls. The borough has still not put up outdoor lights and motion sensors at the Environmental Education Center although the purchase order for them has been issued. We discussed sending a letter to Padraic Millet, our Council liaison, asking him to follow up on our list of concerns, including the motion sensor, fence repair at the Native Plant

Reserve, concerns about weeds growing on the Center roof, and electric power at the pumphouse. Padraic has told us to get a quote for a ladder, which we can use to open the top windows in the Environmental Education Center. Mary Denver and Belinda Beetham have been planting milkweed and other native plants at the NPR. The bees at the NPR are doing well and making honey. Their care is covered by a contract between the borough and the Shorrs. More wildlife is using the NPR area. Commission members were asked to bring ideas for these sites to our next meeting.

- d) Meadows Trail. Trail use has been up. Steve reported we had two sessions recruiting volunteers to work at the Meadows. One more is scheduled. There have been two work sessions there since the last meeting. Steve organized the work schedule by email. So far, one more person said they are coming to the next work session. At the next recruiting session, all volunteers who signed up will be asked for input and ideas for things they would like to see done at the Meadows in the coming year. These will then go into another proposal we will submit for a Recreational Trails Grant. The proposal is due in February. We will probably ask for repair of the boardwalk going to the riverfront. We are uncertain as to how much money we will request because we don't know what equipment we will need. The borough has a 20 percent match, which can be provided through in-kind services. The lawn mower we bought with money from the last trails grant does not work and DPW is repairing it. We used the weed whacker instead. There is a little graffiti on the benches. There are a lot of butterflies present except for monarchs. This weekend, work will be done to expand the milkweed area along the bike trail. Last time, volunteers cut out the mugwort, and Mary Denver planted white pine trees. The fence needs to be repaired, and that will cost about \$800. We will write a memo to Padraic about the trail, which we will attach to our memo about the Environmental Education Center and NPR.
 - e) Possible New Environmental Ordinances. Under consideration are an ordinance about leaf blowers and one about maintaining stream beds. The main problem with leaf blowers is contractors starting work earlier in the day than the current ordinance allows.
6. New Business
- a) The Environmental Commission has purchased the rights to a new web domain, hpenvironmentalcommission.org. The site is not active because we do not have a server. Leora Wenger will do the technical work to activate it.
7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, October 1 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.