

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 5, 2014
Minutes

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

Guests: Heather Fenyk and Vince Rifici of the New Brunswick Environmental Commission; Jon Dugan, NJDEP AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 1, 2014 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. We welcomed Heather Fenyk and Vince Rifici, representatives of the New Brunswick Environmental Commission, to the meeting.
5. Site Plans
 - a) Abraham and Bessie Hahn Charitable Foundation, Inc.
114 Johnson Street
Block 16, Lot 5, 6, 7
Docket No.: # P2014-2

The applicant wants to subdivide the property and build two identical houses. They will have parallel driveways leading to detached garages, for which they will use pervious pavement. They will put in dry wells to address runoff and agreed to adhere to our tree ordinance. No Comments.

6. Old Business
 - a) Kaplan Castle Application. The Planning Board approved it in a 7-2 vote. Kaplan complied with everything requested of them, including making a change to the retention basin and moving the sewer plant out of the steep slope area. Instead of following the borough's tree ordinance, they want to plant larger trees but fewer than the ordinance requires. The Planning Board agreed this will be resolved in the developer's agreement. A total of 800 trees are being taken down. Kaplan is proposing to plant replacement trees over a five-year period but is unclear about who will choose the trees and the locations where they will be planted.
 - b) Illuminating Experiences. The Borough Council is likely to sign a Litigation Settlement Agreement for this site at its November 11 meeting. The agreement covers remediation of the property, water mains, and storm sewers. The developer will submit a plan for capping the property to the Borough Engineer. Honeywell has already removed contaminated soil from the site and replaced it with clean soil. The borough has to change zoning for this property from light industrial to planned unit residential development (PURD-2). The application was discussed at a special meeting on Monday, November 3, that was well attended. It calls for 110 units on 7.5 acres, a density of 14 units per acre. Six units will be affordable. If the development becomes rentals instead of owned units, there will be a total of 100 units, five of which are affordable. There are about 80 trees on the site with diameters greater than three inches. The developer initially requested exemption from the borough's tree ordinance, but STAC submitted a document opposing this, and they agreed to follow

- the ordinance as a result. The applicant also asked to be exempt from having to submit an EIS; in response, the Planning Board asked them to submit a summary report from their LSRP. The date for submission of an actual site plan is unknown. The settlement agreement will likely be approved by the Planning Board at its November 13 meeting. There will then be a first reading of the ordinance by the Borough Council on November 12 and a second reading and vote on adoption on December 2.
- c) Pulte Property—Planting Survey by STAC. STAC submitted this report to the Borough Council in 2012. The Council is now considering whether to return the performance bond to Pulte. We don't know if they have replaced the dead trees (trees they planted, which subsequently died), so the Council agreed to hold off on a decision until they get this information. Many of the shrubs they planted have also died. If these were in their landscaping plan, Pulte could be asked to replace them as well as the trees before being granted the performance bond.
 - d) Environmental Education Center and NPR Mural Project. A public unveiling of the murals was held on October 26. About 25 people attended. The artist is continuing to paint murals on walls at the site. A historical mural will be painted in the spring. We also noted the door of the Environmental Education Center building was fixed.
 - e) Meadows Trail Update. Volunteers put in another 100 hours of work on the trail and trailside area. By mid-November, they will have seeded about 2500 square feet with native seeds. The stream along the bike path was cleared of grasses and plant overgrowth; vines were removed from trees, and trash and debris were removed, especially dead branches that pose a danger along the trail. There will be one more work day this season; after that, Steve and Allan will do weekly inspections of the trail until March. Steve is compiling a list of the volunteers, so they can be recognized with a commendatory resolution by the Borough Council. We are still waiting to find out whether funding will be available through the National Recreational Trails Grant this year. We will submit a grant application. Steve reported that a conservationist and a wildlife biologist from the Natural Resource Conservation Services will look at the site and put together a conservation management plan for all 16 acres of the lower Meadows.

7. New Business

- a) Resolution Supporting Lower Raritan River Watershed Partnership. Allan circulated a draft resolution to commission members, and a majority approved it. The resolution notes we are interested in this project to maintain the river area. Heather Fenyk noted the project started as a partnership between the Environmental Commissions of New Brunswick and Highland Park. Signage from ANJEC identifying all access points to the Raritan River was placed in Boyd Park, New Brunswick, but was subsequently removed them due to safety concerns. We have the same sign, which faces the river. Both Commissions have mutual concerns regarding water quality issues. The Rutgers interns attended a visual assessment habitat training sponsored by the New Brunswick Environmental Commission. More partners are interested in this, including the County Freeholders and Duke Farms. There is a need for habitat and water quality assessment of the Raritan River as well as its streams and tributaries. Progress is being made in establishing a viable non-profit organization that can address these

- concerns at the watershed level. These assessments will inform the community as to how we can best use these water sources. Graduate students in Rutgers University's landscape architecture program are helping identify priority areas for restoration. Steve noted the goal is to put together a plan of goals and objectives for one, three, and five years. Heather reported there is a data gap for this area; this will be addressed through the establishment of a citizen science website and interactive database that can be accessed by mobile devices using GPS coordinates. The program's overall goal is to give municipalities the data they need to take action to mitigate the effects of climate change. The LRWP is working with DEP to establish protocols for stream assessments; they are also registered with the EPA Water Quality System and will share any information learned through this project with DEP.
- b) Anti-Idling Campaign. Warnings have already been issued under the borough's anti-idling ordinance. There already is a state statute on this that regulates enforcement. The New Brunswick Environmental Commission is doing a survey of municipal vehicles there and plans to ask city agencies to make sure their vehicles are not idling in non-emergency situations. New Brunswick does not have its own anti-idling ordinance. Laurel will find out whether the Highland Park Board of Health passed an anti-idling ordinance as well.
 - c) Plastics Recycling. The borough does single stream recycling; our recycling coordinator is Frank Troy at DPW. Vince noted New Brunswick recycles only plastics numbered one and two. The borough recycles all numbers plus electronic equipment and fluorescent light bulbs. The New Brunswick Environmental Commission will try to get the city to recycle all plastics, noting this is done in other towns.
 - d) Possible Joint Grant Opportunities with New Brunswick. Heather reported that millions of dollars in grants for arts projects in municipalities are available through the Bloomberg Philanthropies Grant. A series of sculptures was installed at the Raritan River Festival site, and the New Brunswick Commission would like to make this a river-wide project. Plans for an application will be discussed at a meeting tomorrow; New Brunswick's mayor is expected to sign off on the application. It also has support from the County Freeholders. The deadline to apply is December 10, and the New Brunswick Commission already has written a draft proposal and is interested in gathering partners. We are interested in participating.
 - e) Open Space Constitutional Amendment. This was approved by NJ voters yesterday.
 - f) Memorial Plaques on Trees. Karen reported that Steve and Allan will attend the next STAC meeting to discuss the issue of putting memorial plaques on trees. The goal is to do this through donations by residents.
 - g) Budget. Allan reported we have \$250.54 left in our 2014 budget. Steve proposed we allocate \$150 to purchase additional tools including safety equipment. We agreed to this and also agreed to allocate \$100 to Leora Wenger to upgrade our website so we can handle everything under the new URL.
8. The meeting adjourned at 9:43 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 3 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.