

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of February 4, 2015
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Allan Williams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine,
Council liaison Susie Welkovits

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 7, 2015 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received information from ANJEC about the Environmental Commissioners' course being offered at three different locations. The course is titled "Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions."
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Buck Woods Update. Susie informed us that the Borough Council approved on first reading a bond for \$1.8 million in the event the borough decides to purchase Buck Woods.
 - b) Susie asked Scott Luthman about the gas line by the Raritan River. He informed her this is a backup line. PSE&G is putting in a secondary line.
 - c) The Borough Council approved the resolution supporting the Lower Raritan River Watershed Partnership last night, but the resolution needs to be edited. Councilman Phil George will look into the issue of the area north of the bike path currently being zoned as residential and how that might be changed.
 - d) Proclamation for Volunteers. The borough is interested in bringing back the annual Volunteer Appreciation Night in the spring. Meadows volunteers will be recognized at this event.
 - e) Food and Water Watch. Susie met with Jim Walsh of Food and Water Watch. He recently moved to Highland Park and wants to become involved with the community. We might invite him to a future Commission meeting.
6. New Business
 - a) ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant. The Commission is working on applying for a \$1,500 ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant. We are still working on the details of the proposal. We will need a resolution from the Council and a letter from Borough Administrator Kathy Kovach expressing approval of the project. ANJEC offers these \$1,500 grants, which we can use for work in the Meadows, such as plants, signage, trail improvements, and general upkeep. Steve discussed the grant with the Meadows volunteers. The Commission unanimously approved applying for this grant. The deadline to apply is April 1.
 - b) Natural Recreational Trails Grant. The governor has not released the grant money awarded to states for recreational trails. There is no word from the DEP as to when applications will be accepted. The DEP website says the grants will be announced. When the money is released, we want to apply for money for work in the Meadows. At this time, we don't know how much will be available. The amount we request will depend on several things such as how much work the volunteers want to do there and the potential for additional Meadows trails. We also noted that Mary Denver is interested in doing work at the Native Plant Reserve. The Commission will vote to approve a grant application if and when the funds are made available.

- c) Eagle Scout Project. Jon Abrahams' son wants to do an Eagle Scout project and asked us for suggestions. We came up with several possibilities, including placing bat boxes and birdhouses in the Meadows with the stipulation that one of the birdhouses be for bluebirds. Jon's son has to submit a proposal to the Boy Scouts and to us.
 - d) Meadows Volunteers. The Natural Resources Conservation Services had milkweed seeds delivered to one of the Meadows volunteers. Steve will call a meeting of the volunteers the first week in March, give them an update, and ask them to look at the ANJEC proposal. There are three new volunteers, and Allan knows one more person who is interested. Susie recommended we promote the work of the volunteers in the borough e-newsletter when the weather gets better. Some of the volunteers have gone down to look at the trail during the winter.
 - e) Susie reported that George Stafford, Outreach Director for the Highlands Coalition, approached her and the Borough Council last night to ask if the borough can issue a statement of support to groups opposing a proposed development in the highlands. If the Commission approves, Susie will put this on the Council agenda.
 - f) Raritan River Festival. The festival is held in Boyd Park. We questioned whether Highland Park would be invited to do anything from our side of the river other than having a table. Susie agreed we should look into having participation from this side of the river. Allan will find out who coordinates the festival and speak to him or her about this.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be a joint meeting with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee on Wednesday, March 11 at 8 PM. Given the cold weather and the lack of heat in the Environmental Education Center, STAC will let us know if they want the meeting here or in Borough Hall.