

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of May 6, 2015
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the April 1, 2015 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Buck Woods Tree Removal Application Update. The borough responded to the permit application by April 15, finding it to be incomplete. Any next steps are up to the applicant. Susie noted the Borough Council approved a tree ordinance last night.
 - b) Pulte II Variance. The Zoning Board rejected the application for a variance for the non-conforming porch.
 - c) ANJEC Grant Application. Our application was denied. We noted ANJEC had only \$20,000 in total to distribute, and there were 54 applicants.
 - d) NRT Grant Application. We submitted it, and DEP acknowledged it was received and is being reviewed.
 - e) Y Property/Highland Cliffs. The final site plan was approved, along with a sewer easement. A sidewalk will be built at the top of the property.
 - f) Meadows Trail Update/Purchase of Gator for Meadows. The Borough Council passed a resolution honoring all volunteers and held a volunteer appreciation ceremony last night. The Meadows volunteers have set up a work plan to remove trail debris accumulated along the trail during the winter and put berms on the hill entrance to stabilize the slope. Milkweed shoots are starting to come up, and we have more milkweed to plant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Volunteers worked at the trail last Saturday and Sunday. In two weeks, they will start getting the trail ready for National Recreational Trails Days on June 6-7. Jon recommended putting signs at the trail head calling for additional volunteers. One of the current volunteers is setting up a Facebook page about the Meadows trail.
 - g) Earth Day Celebration. The event was a big success and well attended; there was good food and music. It was also a work day at the Native Plant Reserve co-sponsored by STAC. Trees obtained in March from the New Jersey Native Plant Society were planted.
 - h) Potential Ordinance on Leaf Blowers. Allan received an email along with a Power Point presentation on the problems of leaf blowers. The main issues with them are noise and air pollution. The equipment produces its own pollution because it is gas powered. Karen suggested we support an ordinance restricting the use of leaf blowers to the fall only. We need to look into

leaf blower ordinances adopted by other towns, and we also need to consult with DPW on what effect an ordinance restricting the use of leaf blowers would have on them. Steve said we should address the question of how leaf blowers should be used. Karen noted there is a problem with landscapers leaving “mulch volcanoes around newly planted trees.” Susie asked Karen to write up a paragraph about the issue of “mulch volcanoes” that we can put into the borough’s e-newsletter.

6. New Business

- a) Environmental Commission Budget. Our annual budget from the borough is \$750. The annual cost for ANJEC membership, including the workshop plan, is \$350. Steve noted we need to reimburse one of the Meadows volunteers, who spent \$72 for plants and stakes. We should build a section into our budget for Meadows supplies.
- b) National Recreational Trails Days, June 6-7. DEP has a website that lists all the events commemorating this. We could add our own event to that list. Options for our event include guided tree walks and ecology walks. We would need to advertise these and put notice of them in the borough’s e-newsletter.
- c) Reappointments. We will have Jon, Allan, and Karen reappointed to the Commission.
- d) Donated Bat House - We received an email from someone donating a bat house along with a request to place it outside the library. Jon temporarily placed it in a tree in front of his house. This is an issue for the Library Board to consider.
- e) Recycling bins- A question also came up about placing recycling bins outside the library. Susie noted there are recycling bins inside the library and added that these are very expensive.
- f) Waste Management. The borough had to terminate its contract with the company Waste Management for composting the schools’ cafeteria waste because the company was not doing it. Middlesex County is aware of this and is trying to document it.
- g) School Programs. Councilman Joshua Fine conducted joint environmental programs with the second graders of Bartle School and of Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva in Edison, featuring a talk by Raritan Riverkeeper Bill Schultz.
- h) Potential Solar Panel Ordinance. Karen questioned whether the borough could enact an ordinance requiring all new developments to install solar panels on their roofs. Mike noted this would require an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, June 3 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.