

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of July 1, 2015

Minutes

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

Guest: Rita Yelda, central NJ organizer, Food and Water Watch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 3, 2015 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) 425 Donaldson Street. The applicant wants to tear down a ranch house and build two houses with garages in front. At least two significant variances would be needed. The application was deemed incomplete by the Planning Board; and we do not have a copy of the plan yet.
5. Old Business
 - a) Buck Woods Update. Allan noted an article was published in the *Highland Park Planet*, but it did not contain much information.
 - b) Pulte II. We are concerned about the lighting issue. Allan looked at the plans and confirmed Pulte put in LED lightbulbs, which the plan specified. Susie reported that Scott Luthman called Borough Planner Alan Schechtel to find out if the lighting installed follows the plan. We need to know the specifics of the borough ordinance on lighting. Karen reported that one light across from her home was changed, but light is still coming out at 90 degrees from the post. We need to determine whether Pulte or PSE&G is responsible for the lighting as well as whether the lighting meets borough code, and are waiting to hear back from the borough Department of Code Enforcement.
6. New Business
 - a) Mosquito Treatment Notification. Borough residents were notified that the county will be spraying for mosquitoes tomorrow (July 2) from 4-7 AM. The county has posted a press release with information on the Mosquito Commission's website. Jon questioned whether we could increase the length of advance notice time since many people may not be aware this is happening with such short notice. Susie responded that the county, which runs this program, does not give towns more advance notice of spraying. Karen noted 4-7 AM is a bad time because birds and bees are active then; a better time to spray would be midnight to 4 AM. Susie noted the issues of insufficient advance notice and the question of whether the borough should be permitted to dictate the spraying time should be raised with the Board of Health. Laurel will discuss this with Board co-chair Diane Heimlich. Steve recommended someone put together a letter discussing the ecological concerns regarding spraying.

- b) Presentation on Fracking Waste. Rita Yelda, central NJ organizer for Food and Water Watch, discussed the dangers of fracking waste in NJ and distributed two handouts with her presentation. She reported there are two kinds of fracking waste: the wastewater that comes back up with all the drilling chemicals and potential radioactivity, and the drill cuttings or rock that has been drilled away. Four places in NJ have accepted fracking waste disposal. Three of them accepted solids, and one accepted water waste. Fracking waste is not currently classified as hazardous waste by EPA. Drill cuttings are usually disposed at landfills. Two pieces of legislation that would have regulated wastewater were vetoed by Governor Christie. Yelda said there is no safe way to dispose of fracking waste, even via treatment plants.

However, counties and municipalities can take action on this. Elizabeth has banned fracking waste, and Edison passed a resolution against accepting it though that resolution doesn't ban use of the waste on roads to melt ice or remove dust. Susie noted the borough passed an ordinance banning fracking in town and adopted two resolutions, one supporting banning the storage of fracking waste and wastewater in NJ, and the other supporting stopping the offshore facility. Rita has a sample resolution from Food and Water Watch banning transportation of fracking waste through the borough; she noted the organization is working with the county Freeholders in an attempt to achieve a county-wide ban. Ideally, we should ban the transport, treatment, disposal, processing, and road spreading of fracking waste in town. Mike suggested banning the use of any hazardous waste on our roads. Rita will send Susie sample resolutions; Susie requested these include environmental concerns such as release of methane and use of fresh water in the fracking process.

- c) New Eagle Scout Project. Jon's son is proposing to build and install bluebird houses to help the bird population in the Meadows for his Eagle Scout project. Allan and Steve reviewed the proposal and will meet on Friday to finalize it. The project has to be done by the end of August. Steve recommended someone from the local Boy Scout troop monitor the use of the boxes from year to year. He also said the platform should be freestanding rather than placed on a tree. We will make sure the project gets the necessary approvals.
- d) Borough's Tear Down Ordinance. This is a proposal to amend the land use code out of concern that people are tearing down houses and replacing them with huge ones. The goal is to prevent out of scale development. The Planning Board will review this proposal to determine if it fits with the Master Plan.
- e) Susie reported that the Mayor received an email from Environment America asking the borough to sign on to a resolution in favor of making trucks more efficient industry-wide. This is part of a national initiative.
- f) The Environmental Commission recently hosted a stream restoration workshop led by Steve for the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. About eight people attended and did stream walking in Donaldson Park. The focus was on stream restoration.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, September 2 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.