

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of December 2, 2015
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 4, 2015 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plan
 - a) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park/Cleveland Avenue. The applicant filed a storm water management report and a traffic impact study as part of the final site plan. They mentioned but did not include a licensed site remediation professional report, just an executive summary. They also did not include procedures for monitoring and maintaining a storm water basin. A neighboring site, Block 170, Lot 902, is contaminated and leaching contaminants onto the development site. The developer is required to provide a plan indicating how they will remove the contamination under the slabs and how they will cap the site. CME says the application is complete, but we do not have remediation plan from the applicant. This is being discussed by the Planning Board. Borough Planner Allen Shechtel also says the application is complete but has advised the Planning Board that they cannot make a decision until all the required information is submitted. Mike noted the groundwater flows toward Mill Brook. Karen reported the applicant has to mark the trees they plan to take down; doing this and determining the health of individual trees is difficult when there is no foliage. She also noted there is a discrepancy between the number of trees the applicant plans to take down, those they say they will replace, and those they say are in "bad condition" due to the presence of vines. Some trees are dying or dead while others are invasives, which may not weigh as heavily in the balance when it comes to replacement. Christina suggested we request records from DEP informing us of the location of all monitoring wells on the site. Allan emphasized it is the Planning Board, not the professionals, who decide whether an application is complete. He said he requested all the reports from American Properties, which they can get from Honeywell.
5. Old Business
 - a) Rite Aid Windows. The plan was approved.
 - b) The Borough Council passed a resolution supporting the importance of having a clean water supply.
 - c) Website. Allan asked Leora Wenger to meet with him about this. We want to make sure Jon or Allan can make changes which currently only she can do.
6. New Business
 - a) Capital Improvements and Infrastructure Meeting. On Monday, November 30, the borough held a meeting to discuss capital improvements over the next six years. The presentation featured a Power Point summary; the whole report is available on the borough website under "Capital Improvements Task Force." All borough owned buildings were listed, and discussion centered on the library and the Public Works building. The report was done by a group of Rutgers students working under Clint Andrews. Susie noted the borough anticipates a fair amount of population growth and impact on the schools from new developments. Karen questioned whether we could

require developers to put solar panels on the roofs of new buildings. We also noted that Raritan Avenue is deficient in terms of sewer and water infrastructure.

- b) Park Partners Grants. The borough is again offering grants of up to \$2,000 in several categories, with applications due January 11. The environmental theme this year is Community Stewardship of Natural Resources. Steve suggested we seek a grant to publicize the people who work to make the borough a more sustainable community. Instead, we decided to support the high school students who are submitting a proposal for an environmental film festival.
 - c) Sustainable Jersey Grants. These grants range from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and now incorporate a communications element. Highland Park currently has no open Sustainable Jersey grants, so we are eligible to apply for a new one. Susie is taking the lead on this. The grants are made available twice every year; current applications are due on February 7. An informational webinar about the criteria for applying will be held on December 16 at 1 PM. Karen suggested we apply for a grant for solar panels at the Environmental Education Center. Those interested can find criteria for grants on Sustainable Jersey's website by clicking on "grants and resources."
 - d) ANJEC Grants. A total of 15 grants of \$1,500 will be distributed. Applications will be available in January.
 - e) Radon Testing. Susie received a notice from DEP informing us that January is Radon Action Month; DEP will be distributing Radon Action Partnership Packets. Homeowners who want to determine whether their basements have radon need to purchase their own kits. Radon testing is required for all new homes and property transfers. If people test their homes and find radon above a certain level, they then are required to remediate.
 - f) Toxic Substance Control Act Amendment. Federal regulations requiring the registration of toxic chemicals used in manufacturing are being amended and improved. NJ Senator Cory Booker is behind this project, which has the support of the Environmental Defense Fund. We discussed whether it would be a good idea for the Borough Council to pass a resolution supporting these improvements. In order to make a recommendation, we need more information, including when this will come up for a vote. If we do recommend this, we would have to find or create a sample Council resolution to include with our recommendation.
 - g) Environmental Commission Budget. We have \$23 left in our 2015 budget. Steve reported we have tools that are wearing out and need money to replace them in order to conduct necessary trails management. He suggested we ask the borough to give the Commission a budget of \$1,500, which we will match three to one with volunteer hours. Our current annual budget is \$750. Susie asked us to put together a list of tools we need and will discuss this further with Steve.
 - h) Environmental Commission Membership. When Jim Walsh becomes a Borough Council member in January, his position on the Commission will become available for a new member.
 - i) Meeting Dates for 2016. We agreed to continue meeting the first Wednesday of every month.
 - j) Susie received information from Sarah Malone regarding a survey being done by the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers to determine the public's needs and wants regarding access to and use of parks and public spaces adjacent to the Raritan River and Lawrence Brook in New Brunswick. The survey centers on public understanding of the way climate change may impact rivers and surrounding areas. The research is anonymous. Susie sent a link about it to Allan, and Jon will put information about it on our website.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, January 6, 2016, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.