

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of March 2, 2016
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 6, 2016 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) PSE&G wetlands permit, Middlesex Count wetland permit for Buell Brook in Johnson Park, Letter from Hudson River Foundation
4. Old Business
 - a) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park/Cleveland Avenue. The mayor arranged a meeting between representatives of Honeywell Corp, Allan Williams, and Councilman Phillip George. Honeywell summarized their remediation activities and future timelines. The groundwater plume of TCE by the railroad tracks with levels up to 100 micrograms per liter will be controlled administratively by a CEA. The plume at the eastern corner came from offsite. Honeywell will not be responsible for remediating it. The plume came from the property of Mid-Atlantic and they are responsible for the remediation. Their LSRP is generating a remediation action work plan (RAWP). There are 1,400 linear feet of joints with asbestos in the concrete slab foundation. This will be removed and disposed offsite. The asbestos cleanup will begin this summer and take two to three weeks. The slab foundation, which has soil contaminated with heavy metals under it, will be removed and ground up on site. The contaminated soil will be removed and replaced with clean fill. Remediation is expected to be complete between November and the end of this year. Building Units 6-12 are in the area where TCE levels are relatively high. They will have membrane barriers, which are resistant to TCE, under the slab foundation. These barrier membranes will prevent the TCE from entering the units. Building Units 6-12 will also have active vapor mitigation systems. Units 1-5 will have passive radon mitigation systems that will be upgradable to active systems. It was noted that the level of TCE on the property has been decreasing over time. The LSRP for Mid-Atlantic is generating a remediation action work plan (RAWP). The application goes back to the Planning Board on April 14, for further review.
 - b) Park Partners Grant - The Meadows Trail volunteers and Mary Denver's project for work at the Native Plant Reserve both won grants of \$2,000. Volunteers are waiting for a list of species to plant, along with their prices. They want species that provide good habitat value. Karen noted a rototiller cannot be used at the Native Plant Reserve because the area has a lot of fill, so clean topsoil will be used instead. Students Sarah Liebau and Haley Conrad are raising funds to host an environmental film festival. A new Highland Park magazine won an award; they are interested in doing a story on the Meadows trail and environmental projects in town. At the Park Partners voting event, several volunteers signed up to work at the Native Plant Reserve.
 - c) ANJEC Grant Application. We want to apply by the deadline at the end of March. Dan reported that there is an Open Space Stewardship Grant, for which we can apply to fund a series of programs exploring the ecology and wildlife of the Meadows and Native Plant Reserve. He plans to put together a proposal, for a Bird watching program, including binoculars, bird feeders, bird feed and

field guides. This project meets the goal of raising awareness in the community, getting people to use and appreciate the spaces we have, and educating people about our varieties of wildlife. Susie noted the application has to go through the borough. Dan suggested creating a map where people could pin sightings of different birds. This could be put on the Commission's Facebook page. The grant does not require a match. It does have reporting requirements at six and eight months after being awarded. Several other possible grant projects were discussed. Steve suggested re-designing the entrance to the Meadows trail to make it easier for people to enter the trail. This would include making access easier for people with disabilities. A new trail entrance would cost at most \$300-\$400. Another option is a Commission brochure on who we are and what we do. It would have information about the Meadows trails and Native Plant Reserve. Allan noted we already have the money to put a brochure together, and Susie said we could use the borough's color printer for this. Mike will send Susie a copy of our brochure from five years ago, which she will share with the borough's communications department.

d) National Recreational Trails Grant. We were awarded the National Recreational Trails Grant of \$6,500 for work at the Meadows trail. It covers two years of work on the trail, building of bird observation platforms on the site, improvements to the trail surface, and a second trail that leads up to the bike path. We need to find out what PSE&G plans to do in the upper Meadows. We will replace current trail markers and put up at least five interpretive signs, which will discuss different portions of the Meadows. Currently, we need \$825 for plants as well as money for tools and equipment. The volunteers are putting together a plant species list. We also need to rent a jackhammer. There are documents that have to be filled out, including a detailed budget. Steve will get in touch with the DEP about several things we need to change to meet the grant requirements. We also have to obtain wood chips to surface the trail. Steve will find out if Frank Troy can get these for us.

e) Sustainable Jersey Certification. The borough held a meeting of board, commission, and committee chairs on February 18 about renewing our silver certification with Sustainable Jersey. We need to write an essay about what the Environmental Commission does, and the borough needs to update its water conservation ordinance. There is a new section in which the Commission has to list site plans we looked at in the past year. We also need to submit a memo we sent to the Planning or Zoning Boards showing our analysis. Christina said she will take on the issue of brownfields. The Commission can get a total of 70 points. Initial documents need to be submitted by June 1, September 1, and October 1. Sustainable Jersey will evaluate applications in November. The town needs a total of 350 points to obtain the silver designation.

f) Website Updates - Allan sent Leora Wenger a listing of what's on the site and what can be deleted. Under the "about" section, we now have a correct meetings calendar and list of Commission members. Leora can put in small changes. When we switch to our new domain, hpenvironmentalcommission.org, the domain name cost will increase from the current \$13 a year to about \$20 a year.

5. New Business

a) The mayor will meet with the DEP to discuss local environmental issues. This is an outreach effort by the DEP.

b) Path and Courtyard Update. The footpath to the Environmental Education Center and the Center's courtyard, composed of crushed shale, need to be maintained. We could put in green pavers to deal with the muddy path. Noting it is an educational center, Susie questioned whether we could put together a list of products we like, contact different vendors, and ask if they would give us a 10-foot by 10-foot sample of their products. Residents might see these samples and want to use them. Karen noted there has to be permeable concrete between pavers and stones; the path only needs to be four

feet wide. She suggested putting in low growing ground cover for the courtyard, added that stone dust has to be replaced every few years. We will look further into this.

c) Earth Day Celebration. The annual Earth Day celebration will take place on Sunday, April 17 at the Environmental Education Center. Mary Denver will be hosting a volunteer work effort that day at the Native Plant Reserve. The main event will include vendors and musicians. Susie said she reached out to Councilman Joshua Fine to find out if teachers and students at Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva would want to be involved. Jon said he will ask Harry Glazer for ideas about bringing the Orthodox Jewish community to the Earth Day event.

d) Ban on Motorized Vehicles in the Meadows Ordinance. For the second time, a man and his son were seen driving an ATV in the Meadows. These cause erosion. Susie will raise the issue of a possible ordinance banning these vehicles from the Meadows at the next Borough Council Public Safety Committee meeting. Steve will send her a note stating the Commission wants an ordinance banning motorized vehicles there.

e) Solar Panels Update. PSE&G will put solar panels in the Upper Meadows to power the grid. The work has not yet started.

f) Eagle Scout Projects. Several Scout troops want to do projects in the Meadows. The Eagle Scout who wants to put bat boxes there is working with Jon. The Cub Scouts plan to hold another weed busters' day at the Meadows. The Girl Scouts did a cleanup there last year and will probably hold one again in either May or June.

g) Meadows Cleanup Day. Jon will work with Mary Denver on arranging this. Mike recommended we also consider sponsoring a cleanup day at Valley Place Ravine.

h) An ANJEC email noted municipalities are having problems with electronics recycling. The borough's vendor was going to start charging us because he did not get funding for it. Frank Troy found the vendor who is doing recycling for Metuchen and New Brunswick, and we joined with those towns in signing a contract with that vendor. The county has no interest in doing this. Municipalities are no longer getting money for their recycling because the state cut back funding for this. Susie discussed the issue with DPW. We noted that DPW is still a collection point for electronics that need to be recycled.

6. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, April 6 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.