

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of April 6, 2016
Minutes

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

Guests: Mary Denver, Belinda Beetham, Craige Ambroche

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 2, 2016 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a letter from Menlo Engineering noting that Kaplan and Sons Construction Corporation, 433 River Road, is applying to the DEP for treatment works approval for connecting to the sewer system.
 - b) We received a letter from Middlesex County confirming the renewal of the Agreement for Hazardous Materials Renewal Recovery Cost between the county and the borough.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park/Cleveland Avenue. The mayor arranged a meeting between representatives of Honeywell, 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 by a CEA. The plume at the eastern corner came from offsite. Honeywell is not 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 taken 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 the 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 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. We received a \$2,000 Park Partners grant for plantings in the Native Plant Reserve and Meadows. Mary and Craig will organize this. The money will go to purchasing the plants. A work day will be planned for a Sunday afternoon. The plants will be put behind the pump house and in the nursery area in the Meadows. Steve reported we need to install a few hundred feet of hoses with taps on them along the ground of the NPR as a usable watering system. A rain barrel will also be placed at the site. We need some fencing and anti-predation screens for the plants.

- c) ANJEC Grant Application. Dan reported he submitted the application a week and a half ago. It is an open space stewardship grant; we are seeking \$1,500 for wildlife and bird watching and educational events in the Meadows and in the Environmental Education Center. If we get the grant, the money will be used to purchase binoculars, feed guides, and bird feeders. Some bird feeders will also be put in the Meadows. The project will include a volunteer monitoring program with an open space Google map where people can pin their observations. Steve noted we should replace invasive plants with native species. We will find out whether we receive the grant on May 6.
 - d) National Recreational Trails Grant. The paperwork has been submitted, and the borough is sending the application to the DEP. Steve reported it took a while to put together the detailed budget the DEP requires. We propose to buy a 15-gallon polypropylene tank and water transfer system, so we can take the water to the Meadows for the plants. Also included with the water tank are a pump and hose. We would like to place interpretive and trail-walking signs in both areas; this can be done using a custom sign-making kit. The signs have to say the project is funded through the DEP. We need 18 cubic feet of organic soil because the soil in some areas of the Meadows is very poor. The grant application did not have to include the initial cost for labor and equipment because DPW will use their back hoe to do the grading, and this will make up 20 percent of the match through in-kind services. The borough can be reimbursed for a minimum of \$500 at a time. Steve will discuss this project further with the National Recreational Trails Coordinator. He noted we are redesigning the entrance to the Meadows Trail to be in compliance with the ADA. Steve added money for 10 posts and 12 rails to replace those currently at the bike path. Susie thanked everyone who worked on all our grant applications.
 - e) Sustainable Jersey Recertification Meeting. This meeting will take place tomorrow, April 7. Mary, Belinda, Allan, and Susie will attend. We need a short essay describing what the Environmental Commission does. The ERI is current through 2022. Sustainable Jersey is asking the borough to pass a resolution limiting outdoor water use to twice a week. The borough is reviewing its policy; Allan plans to discuss this with Susie. Christina is writing up a brownfields inventory.
 - f) Earth Day Celebration at the Environmental Education Center. This year's event, organized by Sustainable Highland Park, will be on Sunday, April 17. The Commission will have a table there, as we did last year. Mary will host an open house at the NPR from 11 AM-3 PM.
 - g) Environmental Commission Brochure. Jon got feedback from Karen and Allan on updating it. Karen wants to include more recent photos of the NPR and Meadows. Mary has a lot of pictures. We can also include pictures of the Environmental Education Center and last year's Earth Day celebration. We will make 100 new brochures, which need to get done in time for the Earth Day event. A reporter for the new Highland Park Magazine wants to photograph a gathering of us and volunteers at the Meadows.
6. New Business
- a) Eagle Scout Project. The project to create bat houses in the Meadows will pick up when the weather gets warmer. Eric Young, a new Eagle Scout candidate, wants to do a project either at the NPR or the Environmental Education Center site. Jon came up with about seven suggestions for a project. Scout projects are self-funded, and the Scouts who do them will not spend more than \$500. They usually need more labor than supplies and last between six and 18 months. We could also steer Eric Young to Valley Place Ravine. Several ideas were discussed,

including platforms for birding, a community compost project, a bench at the Meadows, metal tags labeling individual plants, a bird platform on which birds could nest, and trail building and construction of a viewing site at Valley Place Ravine. Susie said the borough is in the early stages of organizing a community garden. We noted there are already bluebird boxes in the Meadows.

- b) Volunteer Appreciation Event. This will take place on Tuesday, April 12 at 7 PM in the Senior/Youth Center. Allan Williams is being honored as borough Volunteer of the Year. Jon will attend to represent the Environmental Commission.
 - c) The cap at the Environmental Education Center is very worn and needs new soil and grass put in. Currently, there is orange plastic mesh at the demarcation line between contaminated soil and clean soil on the top. The latter has eroded over the years, and approximately a cubic yard of new clean soil is needed. Grass should also be planted.
 - d) ANJEC Dues. We authorized payment of our annual ANJEC dues.
 - e) Street Fair. The Street Fair will take place on Sunday, May 1. STAC will be giving plants away. We don't have an Environmental Commission banner; Mary and Allan will research banner prices. The Native Plant Society will share a table with STAC.
 - f) Website Contacts. We need to take off the emails of people who no longer are involved with the Commission. The front page needs to be updated with the appropriate membership. Laurel recommended we put a copy of our new brochure on the website. Jon will put a copy of it on our Facebook page, along with a flyer about the Earth Day event.
 - g) Steve proposed a cleanup day for the Meadows. Steve will be the designated contact person whom people can approach if they want to volunteer for this. The Lower Raritan Water Partnership (LRWP) wants to use the HPHS waiver form. We need to determine whether this covers the borough. The first volunteer meeting for Meadows volunteers will be held on April 21, at 7:30 PM in the Environmental Education Center. Steve put notice of this on the borough's website, and we will also post flyers around town and advertise it at the Earth Day event. We noted that on June 2, a group from the LRWP is coming to visit the Meadows.
 - h) Kerry Miller of ANJEC is retiring after having served as director for about 20 years. We thank her for her service and noted that she was always been very helpful to us.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:54 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.