

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of May 4, 2016

Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the April 6, 2016 meeting were approved with minor changes.
3. Correspondence: None
4. New Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) American Properties - The Planning Board approved the site plan application, which calls for 110 units, at its April meeting, with many conditions of approval. The Environmental Commission will receive a copy of the remediation work action plan. The applicant also will provide a Public Offering Statement to the borough, which the Planning Board attorney will review. The Commission will also have a chance to review it. The condos will be slab construction and will not have basements. They will have ventilation systems. Allan will double check on whether the stand-alone homes will have them. American Properties will be responsible for maintaining an active mitigation system for the first few years. After that, the responsibility may be taken up by the condo association. Honeywell is committed to providing the Commission with data on the asbestos cleanup. We noted that Cleveland Avenue residents wanted another traffic entrance and exit to the property.
 - b) ANJEC Grant. Allan spoke to Kerry Miller before she retired from ANJEC and reported she praised our application as “really good” and said it was in the running for the grant. On May 6, we will find out if we received it.
 - c) Volunteer Appreciation Event April 12. Allan was recognized as Highland Park’s Volunteer of the Year. Jon received the Environmental Commission volunteer award.
 - d) Earth Day April 17. The event was well attended; between 400 and 450 people came, which is more than attended last year. We distributed our new brochure; people were especially interested in the photos. Jon reported people were interested in the trail maps accompanying the photos.
 - e) Sustainable Jersey Recertification. Everything needs to be submitted by November 11. Allan is almost done working on the Environmental Commission part while Christina is working on the brownfields inventory. Our action items are a water ordinance, brownfields inventory, and ERI. The brownfields inventory is worth 10 points, and the ERI is worth 20 points. There are three other Environmental Commission areas each worth 10 points. These include an essay, a listing of the site plan applications we reviewed, and memos submitted to both the Planning and Zoning Boards.
 - f) Water Conservation Ordinance. The new and old water conservation ordinances are very similar, with the difference being that the new one deals with automated irrigation

systems. Susie raised the question about how the ordinance will be enforced. Steve said either the Police Department or DPW can provide brochures that will be given to those found in violation for the first time. The brochures will note that second and third violations could result in the violator receiving a ticket. The ordinance requires highly automated systems with sensors to display a plaque stating they are exempt. The sensors in these systems determine how much moisture is in the ground and water the sites accordingly. Approving the ordinance and purchasing these plaques will earn us 10 points for the borough's Sustainable Jersey application. There are exemptions for watering new trees and vegetables, and hand watering is allowed. We unanimously approved a recommendation to the Borough Council to adopt the ordinance.

- g) Cap at the Environmental Education Center. Susie reported that Don Riche looked at this exposed area in back of the EEC and is working on improving it. Clean soil will be brought in.

6. New Business

- a) Proposed Solar Array for Upper Meadows. The Upper Meadows consist of three-and-a-half acres above the Meadows Trail area, which was used as a dump until the 1960s. PSE&G is one of several companies likely to bid for a project to place an array of solar panels there. This land cannot be developed because the borough does not have the money to clean it up. Last year, the borough was offered a \$10,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey to conduct a solar feasibility study for borough buildings. We noted that significant portions of the town lost power for a long time after Hurricane Sandy and again a year later when there was a fire at an Edison substation. The feasibility study showed that borough buildings are too small for solar panels to generate sufficient energy to run them. After Rutgers received a grant to create a solar field, which will have to generate a required percentage of its energy use, the borough decided to pursue this idea and put together and approved a bid spec. The proposal states the solar panels will be placed on top of capping at the site. Ideally, the solar panels will provide resiliency to DPW, but this may not be possible here. The borough will continue to own the site while the company that installs the solar panels will lease it for 20 years for a yearly amount ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000. PSE&G and other interested companies can bid for the project. The company that wins the bid will do the installation and get solar credit. We hope that in the event of an outage, the solar panels will be able to connect to DPW. A stream encroachment permit from DEP might be needed to connect the solar panels to DPW. The solar field will have a fence, landscaping, and a berm. Susie said the bid process will open in about two weeks. The borough will then review all the bids and make a decision. The Council will inform the public about this project at its May 17 meeting. Steve requested that concept drawings accompanying bids be shared with the Environmental Commission. Allan invited Susie to the May 12 Planning Board meeting to discuss the project.
- b) DEP Filing for Oil Tank Removal at DPW Site. Susie informed us that last year, the DEP told the borough we hadn't completed filing a report regarding an oil tank removed from the DPW property between 10 and 15 years ago. In response, the borough submitted the final filing yesterday. Susie has a copy of the report, which she will share with Christina.

- c) Sustainable Raritan River Awards. These are given by the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative. We are considering whether there is anyone we want to nominate for the award.
 - d) Electronics Recycling. The borough approved a new contract with a new vendor. It is a joint contract with New Brunswick and Metuchen. Pickup of electronics for recycling will not be done once a month but whenever we need it. Sheds for storage of these items are on the DPW property.
 - e) Leaf Bags. Somerset is no longer taking the lead on leaf bags. We will obtain the bags at a similar cost from another vendor. There is a cost to the borough to recycle leaves, but it is less than sending them to a landfill.
 - f) EEC Bathroom. The bathroom at the Environmental Education Center is again making a lot of noise and needs to be repaired. Susie will contact DPW about this.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, June 1 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.