

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of June 1, 2016
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Christina Patagna, Allan Williams, Councilwoman Susie Welkovits

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 4, 2016 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a Flood Hazard permit application to DEP by Kaplan for the Castle property, 433 River Road, dated May 23. This is for the Buell Brook area. A permit is needed because work will disturb a flood hazard area.
 - b) We received a copy of a letter dated May 16 to the county Parks Department from the Freehold Soil Conservation District confirming the cancellation of county plans to do improvements at the Mill Brook Pond.
 - c) We received notice that the Freehold Soil Conservation District approved the soil erosion and sediment control plan for the Crossings (Pulte II) development.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park. The borough received three reports on the remediation plan. The reports describe the remediation plan for the whole site and include an interim report on the plume from 303 Cleveland Avenue as well as the final report confirming the contamination came from that address. The Planning Board will next meet on June 14. At their last meeting, they approved the plan with conditions.
 - b) ANJEC Grant. We received the \$1,500 grant for birding. The Council will pass a resolution to spend the money and put it in the budget. Dan will manage this project. Once we have the money, we will buy gear, such as binoculars and birding supplies. Susie said we can store the equipment at Borough Hall. If we have a lockable cabinet at the Environmental Education Center, we would like to store them there.
 - c) Upper Meadows/Solar Farm. Susie reported that the RFP was issued, and the bid closed on May 26. The only response received was from PSE&G. The borough experts are reviewing it; the borough will make a decision by June 14. PSE&G did not propose a backup for the DPW building. The proposal calls for a 20-year lease. The borough will receive revenue of \$25,000 the first year and the amount will increase each year until it reaches \$50,000 in year number 20. We questioned whether landscaping could be put in to improve the appearance. Steve said it would be good to see a concept plan to make sure this doesn't end up looking like an industrial site. He also noted that since the solar panels are solid, there will be runoff from them. Water will gather in local places, and there will be gulying if the site is not graded correctly. We questioned whether PSE&G will do anything about runoff into the lower Meadows. We would like to see a site plan and a description of the construction. We need to know how much of the site will be covered, the size of the panels, and how they will be laid out. Steve noted the diagram on the PDF looks like it covers some of the area of the bike path, where we plan to extend the Meadows Trail through the Recreational Trails Grant. Susie will send a copy of the RFP to Allan, who will circulate it to us, so we can see a larger version.

- d) National Recreational Trails Grant. We have been approved for a grant, but there is no money to spend because no contract between the state and the borough has been produced by the DEP. The grant is for \$6,500. It could take up to six months for the contract to be completed. We are allowed to begin work on the project in absence of an agreement. We will get paid in increments of at least \$500. If we buy equipment now, we will be reimbursed as long as the equipment is within the scope of the project. From the date the agreement is signed, we have two years to complete the project. We have a list of requirements we have to meet. Steve will get back to Brandee Chapman, NJ State Trails Coordinator, regarding the question of liability for the borough and the time frame for the funding. It is already too late for spring planting.
- e) National Trails Day. This will take place on Saturday, June 4. We were asked to do something to commemorate it and have a flyer announcing events on June 4 and 5. Craig, Steve, and the Meadows volunteers will conduct tours for the public, and there will be a scavenger hunt for kids. We will try to get new volunteers to sign up. The event begins at noon at the trail head by the information center. Jon will put the flyer up on our Facebook page.
- f) Meadows Update. Steve reported the trail is scruffy looking because DPW's lawn mower broke in the winter, so they couldn't mow at the site. They will repair it, and meanwhile, we might be able to borrow one of the borough's mowers to trim the grass. Craig planted wildflower seeds and transplanted more milkweed, which is now up. We have a lot of new plants at the site. Mugwort control is allowing grasses to grow in. HPTV is interested in doing a show on the Meadows. We would like them to show volunteers at work. This will have to be done on a weekend, probably from 9-11 AM. The Cable TV Committee needs to get in touch with Steve about this. We also noted the discovery of two very large American elm trees, both of which are in good health.
- g) Sustainable Jersey Recertification. Allan informed us that no changes to the ERI are needed. Christina is completing a brownfields inventory, which she will give Allan when she is done. Everything the Commission is doing for recertification should be completed by our next meeting with the exception of the water conservation ordinance, which needs to be sent to the Borough Attorney. Susie noted the ordinance required by Sustainable Jersey is completely different from the one we have now. Allan wrote up a comparison of both ordinances, which he will send to Susie. If the borough adopts a new ordinance, it will have to go through a first and second reading by the Borough Council.
- h) Lower Raritan Watershed Project. The director of the LWRP informed us that the group wants to have a picnic in the Lower Meadows tomorrow night. They asked us to put together a summary of the Meadows project, which Steve agreed to do. He will include best practices in the summary. The LWRP wants to put this document on their website as an example of a good project.

6. New Business

- a) Jon received an email sent to the Commission from a member of the public asking that recycling bins be placed outside the Library. This person said she attended one of our meetings several years ago and expressed this concern but never heard back from us. Susie said the decision to put a recycling bin there is up to the Library Board of Trustees. Jon said we should have recycling bins in front of all borough buildings. One of the projects of Sustainable Jersey is a recycling education campaign. We noted there is no recycling bin at the Environmental Education Center, but there should be. We will consider this issue and put it on the agenda for our next meeting.
- b) Community Garden. Jon is meeting with Councilman Josh Fine and a member of Sustainable Highland Park on June 14 to discuss a Scout proposal to do this. The garden would be at the Environmental Education Center and would be the Community Food Pantry Garden. There is water here, which is why this is a good site. We have outdoor spigots and can run a hose. Someone involved with the project would need a key to the spigot. We need a project description, a budget, a plan for post-project management, and a concept of how much space it would take up. We also questioned who will use the garden and how it will be used. Susie said there is a question of whether to have it at the Environmental Education Center or at Borough Hall. If we have it at

the Center, we could possibly get the neighboring apartment dwellers involved. We also questioned how big a plot the Food Pantry Committee would need. There are issues of fencing and soil. Raised beds would be needed at the Center site because the soil is contaminated. Josh is looking into getting grants for this project.

- c) Bird Boxes. Nine were put up in the Meadows last August—three for bluebirds and six for wrens. All three bluebird boxes have nests inside them. The wren boxes are too high in the trees for anyone to see inside them, so we might want to use a ladder to get a look. Jon noted he has not heard from the Eagle Scout candidate who proposed building bat houses in the Meadows.
 - d) Signage for the Meadows. Susie asked us where we want the sign and what we want it to say. The ordinance prohibits vehicles and several other things from entering. Steve said once we have the equipment, we will put up a sign that says “No Motorized Vehicles” and cite the ordinance that specifies this. Mike questioned whether we should also put up a sign at Valley Place Ravine, which is a Green Acres site but has no sign indicating this, only a “No Dumping” sign.
 - e) Susie asked whether the Commission is doing any projects in June or July that we would like HPTV to videotape.
 - f) Facebook Highland Park Ecology and Environmental Group. This group is run by Mark Lesko, who organizes site cleanups that involve collecting tires at streams. We should invite him and his group to help out in the Meadows. The Commission has its own Facebook page, [highlandparkenv](#). Jon will post trails information on our page.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, July 6 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.