

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 7, 2016
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Dan Larkins, Christina Patagna, Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:09 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 1, 2016 meeting and of the July 6, 2016 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a letter from Menlo Engineering regarding Heritage/American Properties, stating they submitted an application to the DEP to hook up to the Middlesex County Utilities Authority.
4. Old Business
 - a) American Properties. No new activity. We noted the developer had said they expected to remove asbestos on the site this summer.
 - b) PSE&G Solar Energy Project. There will be a presentation to the Planning Board tomorrow at Borough Hall. PSE&G will discuss a planned solar energy project to be located at the Upper Meadows. Many trees have already been marked with ribbons and stakes. Susie promised we would have a walk through before any final decisions to remove trees are made.
 - c) ANJEC Grant. Dan held the first birding event in August, and about 20 people attended, both experienced birders and newcomers. He did a brief talk, then led the group on a tour of the area all the way to Johnson Park. The next event will be on September 18 at 9 AM in the Meadows Trail and the one following that will be on October 15. Dan will forward a schedule of birding events to all Commission members. There will be a total of 12 sessions. Some people expressed interest in an event just for kids. The Commission was mentioned in the ANJEC Report for having received this grant.
 - d) National Recreational Trail Grant. Steve reported that the paperwork is completed. We received a notification from DEP that everything is in order. The official start date for the grant is August 28. This means we have until August 28, 2018 to complete the work. The Borough Council passed a resolution to accept the grant money. Borough Administrator Kathy Kovach now has to send an email to the state Department of Community Affairs adding the grant to our budget. Work will begin in the fall to prepare for spring plantings. So far, very little work has been done because of the heat. The next step is for the volunteers to put together a work schedule and outline what we have to buy. We also need more volunteers. There is no new information about the ordinance that would prohibit motorized vehicles along the trail.
 - e) Environmental Commission Budget. We spent \$430 this year and have \$700 left in our budget.
 - f) Merriwald (Castle Property). Many trees on the site were cut down, but Allan said this is in accordance with the plan. The developer will do landscaping at the site. They have not started building the foundations yet. Currently, they are grading the site. There will be runoff down the hill when it rains. The developer is supposed to install silt fences to mitigate this.
 - g) Community Garden. Jon had discussions with Josh Fine, who received feedback from several Facebook groups about this. Jon posted in these groups asking for people interested in a community garden. He also asked Jessica Hunsden of Good Earth Community Garden in Donaldson Park to find out if there are people on the group's waiting list who might be interested in taking part in a borough community garden.

- h) Eagle Scout Projects. The project to build bat houses at the Environmental Education Center and Native Plant Reserve has to be completed by January. The Eagle Scout candidate doing the project is creating a prototype. He will either need a 12-foot pole to attach the bat houses or have to attach them to existing structures. They have to be placed in a sunny area. The other Eagle Scout project is a proposal to do something as part of the community garden project. It will likely be done next spring or summer.
- i) Buck Woods. There is an ongoing lawsuit over this property. The owner wants to dig more test pits, which means cutting down more trees. A court master has been assigned to the project.
- j) Sustainable Jersey Recertification. Last night, the Borough Council withdrew the water conservation ordinance because it involved limiting lawn watering to only two days a week, which was deemed too restrictive. Susie will try to build support in the appropriate Council committee for the ordinance. Christina has completed the brownfields inventory but needs to update it with new information just put on the DEP Data Miner site. The final application deadline is December 4. Recertification is required every three years.

5. New Business

- a) Mill Brook Tributary at Lincoln Avenue. Allan reported that a resident contacted him and reported that the stream at Harrison Avenue turned a reddish orange color last week. Apparently, a property owner on Lincoln Avenue, adjacent to the stream was trying to stabilize the stream bank, and the contractor who did the work did not have the required state or borough permits. This is a stream encroachment violation. Code Enforcement Officer Scott Brescher visited the site and determined the work is completed. However, we need the Code Enforcement Department to do their job even if it is retroactive.
- b) T-Shirt Purchase for Volunteers. The Commission has \$700 left in our budget, and Steve wants to use some of it to buy T-shirts for Meadows volunteers. We could also use some of the money to purchase additional signage for the Meadows. Volunteers will be working at the Meadows every weekend unless it rains. We will discuss possible purchases at the next meeting.

6. The meeting adjourned at 9:29 M. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 5 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.