

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 2, 2016
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 5, 2016 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) PSE&G Solar Farm. PSE&G conducted a walk-through of the 3.4-acre solar farm site, along with Allan, Steve, and Craig two weeks ago. The utility agreed to preserve the black locust forest on the west end of the property. The RFP and bid documents had the wrong lot numbers. The lots are 42-55, not 41-56. PSE&G also agreed to look into moving things around so they could save the west end and still have the same number of solar panels. They are requesting a waiver on implementation of the borough's tree ordinance. They are still uncertain about the number of trees they will take down with the revised proposal. Agreement to comply with the tree ordinance will likely be a condition of site plan approval. They also have not yet determined where the gates and the soil erosion fence will be. The fencing is being changed to make the front more decorative. More security will be needed at the location of the charging station, which will be enclosed. The revised site plan is on the November Planning Board agenda, but the issue will be carried over to their December meeting. PSE&G provided notice of it being on the agenda in local newspapers.
 - b) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park. The developer was going to start asbestos remediation work on October 19 and use Cleveland Avenue as their construction entry point. They are waiting for PSE&G to finish installing new gas pipes on River Road. A sign was put on the gate of the property stating that remediation is going to occur there. The start of the remediation was postponed to November. Construction will start in the spring. There will be a water truck on site that will spray water to prevent dust from escaping into the air.
 - c) Buck Woods. The borough is considering an ordinance rezoning the property. We expect to get information about ongoing developments about this site from the Borough Council. We discussed that Buck Woods should remain as open space. Jon suggested we ask the county to buy it for open space. We will write up a resolution stating our position, adopt the resolution, and post it on our website and Facebook page as well as send it to the Council. The resolution will be written up for passage at our next meeting. We will note the borough should pursue purchase of the property through the county or other funding sources.
 - d) ANJEC Grant. Dan held another bird-watching session, which was attended by about 10-12 people, and plans to produce a flyer for the following session. He wants help in promoting the event.
 - e) National Recreational Trails Grant. Allan reported the volunteers are continuing to maintain the trails. The gator needs new tires. DPW purchased them but hasn't yet installed them.
 - f) Meadows Update. We need more volunteers. Jon suggested we schedule a cleanup day there.
 - g) Eagle Scout Projects. Jon has not heard from the student interested in organizing a community garden since the summer. The bat house project, which is being done by another student, will be

completed either in November or early December at the Environmental Education Center and Native Plant Reserve sites. The paperwork needs to be completed before the student turns 18. Allan has a map showing utility lines on both properties, but it dates from before the Environmental Education Center was built. He asked Bruce Koch for an updated map. We would like to keep a map at the Center. Allan noted the borough's Digital Task Force is moving forward with getting borough records digitized. Bat houses will be put in the back of the Environmental Education Center. There is an East Brunswick water transmission line on the site. We can't hang bat houses from trees; poles need to be used because the bats need to be in the sun. Spots for the poles have already been chosen. There will be two or three at the Native Plant Reserve and three or four at the Environmental Education Center. Jon will send out an email to us when the bat houses are put up asking if we would like to be involved.

- h) Community Garden. Jon met with Becky Chen of Good Earth Garden to discuss this, and she had a lot of good ideas. Good Earth Garden is being expanded; the county is allocating land from the park for this. Our garden would be a secondary plot. There is an empty lot next to the First Aid Squad building, which the owner is interested in using for a community project. Karen noted that site is near an auto shop. Becky will look at the site to see if it is appropriate for a garden. She told Jon that a lot of people who have plots at Good Earth Garden do not use them but continue to pay the \$15 annual fee for them. She also referenced a community garden in Monmouth County where half the lots are used by individuals and the other half by groups that have plots. The Food Pantry would be the recipient of food grown in the community garden. We haven't directly approached the Food Pantry Committee about this yet. Karen asked if the gardeners doing the work deserve some of the bounty. We could give them an incentive to garden both for themselves and for the Food Pantry. We would need one high fence around the garden and might ask the county for assistance in putting it up. Jon noted Good Earth Garden has two fences, one of which is a deer fence. He will contact Janice Ballou of the Food Pantry Committee about the project. Other possible interested parties might be Sustainable Highland Park, Who Is My Neighbor, Inc., and Main Street Highland Park.

6. New Business

- a) Drinking Water Issue. Routine monitoring showed above standard levels of trihalomethanes (TTHMs) in the borough's drinking water. They come from the chlorination process. Residents were sent letters about this. The problem usually occurs in the winter when roads are salted. The solution is to clean up the pipes and flush them. Jon said this should be discussed by the Board of Health. We noted high levels of TTHMs are a problem if they are present in the water for a long time.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:18 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, December 7 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.