

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of December 7, 2016  
Minutes

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

Guest: Carol Avelsgaard, STAC co-chair

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:06 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 2, 2016 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received a letter from the office of County Clerk Elaine Flynn to the borough regarding the replacement of Culvert 2-C-238 on Lincoln Avenue over Mill Brook. Allan will find out more information about this from the Planning Board.
  - b) We received the newsletter of the Hackensack River Keeper.
  - c) We received a letter from Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler stating that the Commission will update the borough's brownfields inventory for the period 2017-2021. It will be updated at the end of each calendar year.
4. Site Plans
  - a) Resubmittal of PSE&G Solar Array Plan. The new submission includes a memo from Westons Solutions, consultant for PSE&G, saying they will collaborate with borough officials, the borough planner, and the Environmental Commission. PSE&G made several commitments during their walk through of the site with Allan, Steve, and Craig, which Allan and Steve documented in the memo. They agreed to keep the trees on the western end of the property and to add native shrubs. The Planning Board will discuss the application tomorrow, but Allan noted it will take at least two meetings for the board to approve the application.
5. Old Business
  - a) Community Garden. Carol said there is grant funding for community gardens through the Community Stewardship Incentive Project. STAC received one of their grants for tree maintenance in 2006. There may be another grant available in 2017 with an April application deadline. She suggested we seek a reforestation grant and recommended trees be planted in open spaces at the high school and Environmental Education Center, ideally 100 trees at each site. The high school principal is excited about the idea and wants 150 trees at the high school. Carol also recommended trees be planted near the Environmental Education Center in areas where there is no shade. Karen said she would prefer a small forest of native trees and shrubs in the area on River Road between the apartment building and the Environmental Education Center. A community garden at the site would require raised beds due to potential soil contamination.

A community garden would be both for people to have plots of their own and to grow food for the Food Pantry. Jon said he met with Sustainable Highland Park about the feasibility of planting a garden at the site in the spring. The site already gets little sun because of trees in the back, and putting trees in the front would further block the sun. Also, there will be fencing, so there won't be any place to put trees. He noted there is a privately owned space behind the chocolate factory on Cleveland Avenue that has full sun, as well as another private site near the First Aid Squad building. The Commission needs to let Carol know by February whether we support planting a

forest on the River Road site between the apartment building and the Environmental Education Center. Jon noted he has over 12 people who want community garden plots. We need to know how many plots we can put in at the site if we decide to use it for a community garden. Jon should create a site drawing which we could then overlay on a site map. Allan reported Bruce has a large map of the area but is still looking for it. The garden would start small, about half the size of the community garden in Donaldson Park. It would also need deer fencing.

- b) American Properties/Heritage at Highland Park. Allan reported construction trailers have arrived. He is waiting for an email to find out when they will start working on the asbestos remediation.
  - c) Buck Woods—Zoning Ordinance. There currently is no ordinance to rezone the property, and litigation continues. The developer attached himself to our COAH obligation. We're waiting for a Supreme Court decision on this. Several years ago, the borough bonded \$3 million to purchase properties for open space, especially Buck Woods. Jon will write up a draft resolution for the Commission supporting the preservation of Buck Woods as open space.
  - d) ANJEC Grant. Dan will hold the fifth birding event on December 10 at 9 AM at the Environmental Education Center. The title of this event is "Birding for Writers and Artists," and it will include a short tour. Dan reached out to Rutgers professors about it, and Susie reached out to the Arts Commission and library. An art store in town is interested in donating materials for the event. The last few birding events went well. The November group saw over 15 birds. Allan and Dan are working on a project report for ANJEC.
  - e) National Recreational Trails Grant. We will start ordering supplies in January.
  - f) Meadows Update. Work at the site is done for the year until the spring.
  - g) T-shirts for Environmental Commission members and Meadows volunteers. We decided on forest green for the shirt color, with white letters.
  - h) Eagle Scout Projects. Poles and bat houses will be installed on the next two Sundays. Two will be at the Native Plant Reserve and the rest at the Environmental Education Center. The poles will be cedar pine and need to be installed very deep. The work will be done at 10 AM this Sunday. One bat house might be put on the side of the Environmental Education Center building. There is a water source at the pump house. Jon will contact Mary Denver about this.
  - i) Sustainable NJ Certification. The borough has a total of 482 points, which gets us the silver certification. Allan and Christina's work earned 80 points.
  - j) Commission Budget. We purchased a ladder and are buying T-shirts for Commission members and Meadows volunteers. We will buy 25 pairs of gloves if there is money left over.
  - k) Water Conservation Ordinance. The Borough Council does not want any mandatory provisions for watering lawns. We questioned whether it would be a good idea to have automated irrigation systems in town registered with the borough.
6. New Business
- a) Calendar. We agreed to meet on the first Wednesday of every month in 2017 with the exception of August, when there will be no meeting.
  - b) DPW Tank Cleanup. One more report is due in March; then the next is due in 2022. The remediation is done, and the borough is in compliance. Only testing and reporting is still being done now.
  - c) Graffiti. Graffiti was put on the Environmental Education Center wall that is decorated with blue jays and leaves. There was minor damage. DPW cleaned it up.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:43 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, January 4, 2017 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.