

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of January 4, 2017
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Dan Larkins, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams, Council liaison Jim Walsh

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 7, 2016 meeting were approved.
3. Borough Council Reorganization Meeting: Jim Walsh is now our Council liaison.
4. Correspondence
 - a) We received a bill from ANJEC for our 2017 dues.
 - b) We received a Green Infrastructure Guidance Manual published by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Project.
5. Site Plans
 - a) 321 Donaldson Street
Donaldson Street, LLC
Block 79, Lots 24-27
This is a minor subdivision of a 100 X 100 property with one house, now before the Planning Board. The applicant wants to divide it into two 50 X 100-foot lots, tear down the existing house, and build one house each on the new lots. The site has steep slopes in the front yard. The main issue here is impervious coverage. Borough ordinance allows a maximum of 40 percent impervious coverage. With the new houses, one of these lots will have 49.8 percent impervious coverage, and the other will have 59.6 percent impervious coverage. This includes a long, shared asphalt driveway
Comments: The applicant should conform to borough ordinance regarding building size and impervious coverage. Keep storm water on the property. Use pervious pavements for the driveway.
6. Old Business
 - a) PSE&G Solar Farm. PSE&G changed the plan to save the forest on the western end. The eastern end has been widened. They agreed to put in more attractive fencing with a height of six-and-a-half to seven feet. The back will have steel, chain-link fencing while the front will have coated chain-link. Signage will be placed explaining solar power. PSE&G also agreed to assist the Meadows trail volunteers with reinforcing steep slopes affected by construction of the solar farm. The utility agreed to have members of the Environmental Commission and Meadows trail volunteers present when they trim the trees. The project has been approved; work is expected to start in April and be completed by June.
 - b) American Properties. The asbestos remediation has begun. Trailers and a water truck are on site. No air quality reports have yet been sent to us. When we get them, we will post them on the Commission's website.
 - c) ANJEC Grant. The most recent event was on December 10, and about six people attended, kids and parents. It was a very cold day. Dan is changing the date of the next event, Wintering Waterfowl to January 29. It will take place at 9 AM in the Environmental Education Center and include a walk in Johnson Park. Dan will reach out to the schools and local businesses about it. We also noted that two eagles were reported seen in Johnson Park during the Audubon bird count.

- d) National Recreational Trails Grant/Meadows Update. No money has yet been spent. Craige compiled a list of plants to purchase which are native, indigenous, deer resistant, and have both food value and community value; they will arrive in March. The nursery area is ready for plantings. Purchase orders are needed to buy supplies. A new trail segment will be created along the western edge of the Meadows leading to the bike path. PSE&G will stake out an outline of their fence. The volunteers discussed organizing a large event in the spring to do the plantings. They also need a day to dig holes. The grant has a provision requiring interpretive signage and directional markers. We will put up a heavy duty wood sign mounted on posts anchored in the ground. Printed signs will be covered in plexiglass. Volunteers are currently monitoring the trail on a weekly basis.
- e) Budget. We spent all but \$3.90 of our 2016 budget. Allan plans to pick up the T-shirts tomorrow and bring the ones for Commission members to our next meeting. ANJEC membership will cost \$420, the same as last year. We are requesting \$1100 from the borough, the same amount we received last year. The Commission needs to draw up a wish list for how we will spend that money.
- f) Buck Woods. The property is still in litigation. Jon is working on a draft resolution stating we want to see this property remain open space. He will bring the draft to our next meeting. Laurel remembers Buck Woods being described as having many environmental sensitivities during the last development application, and she will try to locate the list.
- g) Community Garden. Jon is planning a meeting with Hagit Mano of Sustainable Highland Park and Becky Chen of the Donaldson Park community garden. He will have more information at our next meeting.
- h) Bat Boxes. Four bat boxes were installed. They were doubled up on posts because it wasn't practical to put them on the Environmental Education Center structure. Pea gravel was used instead of concrete. We need to make sure they hold up well during the winter. Since holes could not be dug at the Native Plant Reserve, all the bat boxes were moved to the EEC site. The two poles are 16 feet high, and each has two posts. The Eagle Scout who did this project is Jacob Kleinmann. Another Eagle Scout candidate is looking for a project. It would be a good idea for us to draw up a list of suitable projects.

7. New Business

- a) Master Plan Re-examination. A re-examination will be done in 2017, led by the Planning Board. The process usually involves establishment of a committee made up of representatives of different organizations. The Commission may be asked to have a representative on the committee.
- b) Environmental Education Center Upgrades. The Center is getting a new toilet, and we requested a new lock because the keys are difficult to use. New keys will come with the new lock.
- c) Sculpture Garden Project in Donaldson Park. Jim reported that the Arts Commission is working with Rutgers University on a sculpture garden project in Donaldson Park. He questioned whether the Environmental Commission could help the Arts Commission figure out how to create this. The Arts Commission has a long-term goal of having six permanent sculptures in the park. They plan to start a pilot program in May with temporary sculptures that will be kept in the park over the summer.

8. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, February 1 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.