

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of March 1, 2017  
Minutes

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

Guests: Carol Avelsgaard and Mary Denver of STAC, Christopher Satch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 1, 2017 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received notice that the annual Street Fair will be on Sunday, May 7. STAC will have a table there, as will the Native Plant Society, who will promote areas in town, including the Meadows. We decided not to have a separate table of our own.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
  - a) PSE&G Solar Farm. We do not yet know when construction will start.
  - b) American Properties. Honeywell sent additional air monitoring data (dust and particulates) for the site. No asbestos fibers have been detected. The data has been posted on our website. Demolition and site preparation has begun.
  - c) ANJEC Grant. The application deadline for the new round of grants is April 7. Dan continues to hold birding events funded by our most recent grant. About eight people attended the event last Saturday, and they looked for gulls in the park. Upcoming events are March 11, with the theme of migratory birds, and April 22, which will be an event for kids.
  - d) NRT Grant. Purchase orders are being completed for a water tank, water transfer pumps, and two templates for sign construction.
  - e) Meadows Update. Steve reported the volunteers walked the site two weeks ago. The trail and side areas are doing well and have no downed trees, very few downed branches, and no trash or litter. There is some junk near the river that is washing up. The message board at the front is droopy. Steve will talk to Frank Troy of DPW about fixing the weed whacker. Steve will also speak with DPW about using the bobcat on an area near the new entrance site. Construction of the new entrance will begin in the spring.
  - f) Community Garden. Jon will follow up with the representative of Good Earth Gardens. Allan received a report from CME about contaminants under the cap at the proposed site between the Environmental Education Center and the apartment building on the corner of River Road. There are high concentrations of contaminants, so we need the borough to determine whether there is a liability issue. That may require a letter from DEP. This needs to be clarified before any work starts. There really are no other appropriate alternative sites for a community garden. Karen questioned whether we could lease a privately owned site on Cleveland Avenue, and Jon reported there is a privately-owned sunny region on Woodbridge Avenue. In either case, we would need to

approach the property owners about this. At minimum, Karen recommended we encourage residents to grow front and back yard vegetable gardens on their properties. Gardeners could meet at the Environmental Education Center and exchange ideas. We could print brochures about this for distribution on Earth Day or even run a session on gardening at the Earth Day event, which we could publicize in advance. Karen noted there already is a Highland Park Gardeners Facebook group. Christopher recommended we grow a flower garden at the Environmental Education Center site, as some flowers are very good at bio-remediation. Another idea for the site is planting a small forest. Jon reported that the Good Earth Garden in Donaldson Park is expanding, and Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen has taken it over from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

g) T-shirts. Allan distributed T-shirts to Commission members.

## 6. New Business

- a) Sculptures at the Environmental Education Center Site. Steve and Allan met with the Mason Gross professor of sculpture, who listed areas where his class wants to place the sculptures. One location is in Johnson Park, across from The Crossing/Pulte development. The Highland Park Arts Commission has approved the project. Carol noted that one sculpture would be put in the space between the Environmental Education Center and the Native Plant Reserve, and that all sculptures will be temporary, displayed for several months. The borough can choose the sites they on which they are placed. STAC is concerned because they were not informed of the project. We need better communication between the Arts Commission, Environmental Commission, and STAC. There are environmental concerns, including the fact that sculptures could pose a danger to birds. Steve said any environmental impacts on the sites will be minimal. The sculptures will be held in place by posts, will be placed around early May, and will be there two to three months. Mary showed us sculpture photos sent by the class. STAC is concerned about the impact of the sculpture that will be installed near the Native Plant Reserve. Two of the sculptures may require cranes for placement. Allan said he will make sure someone from the class consults with STAC about anything done, including when the sculpture will be put up. There should be someone from STAC or the Environmental Commission to supervise the work. Karen emphasized we need to inform the professor that we do not want sculptures that use fishing line or parachutes. It is important that no nylon fishing line be used on the sculptures in the parks.
- b) Rutgers Sensor System Grant Application. Allan reported that Rutgers Engineering wants to place smart sensors along Raritan Avenue and Magnolia Street. These would measure air quality, temperature, humidity, vibration from heavy traffic, and ultraviolet levels, and would be connected to servers at Rutgers. Rutgers is applying for a grant and wants to implement it in Highland Park. We need to know where these sensors will be mounted and whether Rutgers needs permission from DOT to put them up, as Raritan Avenue is a state road.
- c) Meadows Cleanup. . A cleanup of the Meadows by students from the Highland Park Middle School and from the Willow School in Gladstone is scheduled for April 21.
- d) Earth Day Celebration. The event, run by Sustainable Highland Park, will be on Sunday, April 23, from 11 AM-3 PM. STAC and the Native Plant Society will have tables and STAC will incorporate Arbor Day and the borough's Tree Certification program. We will display Environmental Commission brochures, flyers about the birding events, and aerial photos of the Meadows.
- e) Broken Fences. The fence in front of the Native Plant Reserve is in bad shape, as is the one at the bike path. Half of the fence at the bike path is down. STAC has stopped working near the NPR fence, assuming it will be repaired. We noted the fences are the borough's responsibility.
- f) DPW needs to cover a small floor opening under the table at the Environmental Education Ctr.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, April 5 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.