

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of January 3, 2018
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Allan Williams, Council liaison Philip George

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 6, 2017, meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) PSE&G Solar Farm. The DEP wants the concrete completely cleaned up by March. Phil met with DPW representatives when DEP called, and they discussed a borrowing agreement with Piscataway to get the larger machines needed for this work. The borough may also get machines from the county through a similar agreement. The work will likely be done by April. Allan noted there are areas replanted with native plants that we do not want the trucks to go over. The borough is trying to arrange for the remediation to not go into the wooded area. We would like to see a copy of the final report on the cleanup when it is submitted to the borough.
 - b) Buck Woods Settlement Agreement/Tree Removal. Phil reported that developer, who owns Buck Woods, had a separate lawsuit against the borough that was consolidated with the affordable housing lawsuit. Fair Share Housing reached a settlement with the borough on this. Part of that settlement gives the developer up to 75 residential units on Buck Woods with 20 percent being affordable for low and moderate incomes. This means a zoning change will be required because the area is zoned single family residential. It needs to be changed to PDI, which allows moderate density. The developer was granted a permit to clear the existing right of way and is removing trees to conduct environmental testing. The settlement is subject to a fairness hearing before a judge.
 - c) Pulte Development/The Crossing. Pulte is required to monitor the inside of the houses for soil vapor. Some vapors were found coming up from below. Additionally, some materials that do not come from the ground were found in some of the houses. In response, Pulte activated a passive system of fans running from the slab to pull the materials out. Honeywell will pay for the electricity to run the fans.
 - d) Meadows Trail Update. Work has been shut down for the winter. More plants were put in before the deep freeze. We are looking into deer repellents, including deer repellent fences. Steve and the volunteers will put together a strategic plan for the Meadows by next month. They have a report about and pictures of the new trail entrance.
 - e) Environmental Commission Website. We had \$250 left in our 2017 budget and encumbered this money to pay Nicole Wines, who manages Sustainable Highland Park's website, to work on our new one. Allan and Jon plan to meet with her about the new website.
 - f) Bee Hive Fences. These black chain-link fences were supposed to be installed during the first week of 2018, but the work has been postponed due to the extremely cold weather.
 - g) Proposed Rules for Beehives—Department of Agriculture. The state Department of Agriculture is proposing new rules to govern beehives. A law was passed two or three years ago allowing municipalities to have their own bee hives. The new regulations would restrict apiary culture to working farms and rural areas. The state legislature can overrule them. They have been drafted,

and the comment period on them ends January 19. Nicole Wines asked Councilwoman Susie Welkovits to have the Council pass a resolution opposing these new rules, noting Ridgewood passed such a resolution. Either Sustainable Highland Park or the Environmental Commission would have to make this request. The proposed new rules grandfather any hives installed before June 1, 2015, but we are not sure whether ours meet that criterion. Allan has a copy of the Ridgewood resolution, which he will customize for Highland Park. It will need to say why we oppose the new rules. He will send the revised resolution to Phil, who will put it on the agenda for the Council's January 16, meeting.

6. New Business

- a) Eagle Scout Project. There is a Boy Scout interested in doing a project at the Meadows, possibly a cleanup, for his Eagle Scout project. We discussed ideas for projects he could do. Mike suggested he create a new entryway for Valley Place Ravine with signage and benches. Phil recommended he coordinate testing for contamination at the Environmental Education Center site and added he knows a group that would do this for free. Jon noted that the Eagle Scout has to be the project manager but doesn't actually do the project work. If he coordinated and prepared a report on contamination of the EEC site, that would inform us whether or not it can be planted. If it cannot be planted, it could be used for another solar farm. Jon came up with several possible projects. The first is taking all the old benches removed from Raritan Avenue by Main Street and placing them at the EEC site and at Valley Place Ravine. Phil can help the Scout get in touch with Siobhan at Main Street about this. The next is the report on the EEC site's suitability for plantings/gardens. A third possibility is establishing a community garden. There is a site that is privately owned next to the liquor store on Woodbridge Avenue that could be a good garden site if the owner agrees to lease it. Jon has a list of names of people in town interested in participating in a community garden. The borough is still interested in having a community garden where we could grow crops and connect with the Food Pantry.
- b) We submitted our list of 2018 meeting dates to the Borough Clerk. Allan will ask Monica to invite Environmental Commission members to the borough's online calendar.
- c) Allan noted that China is no longer accepting any additional materials for recycling from the U.S. Phil reported that this issue has been resolved domestically.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, February 7, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.