

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 5, 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 8:06 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 6, 2018, meeting were approved. There are no July minutes because we didn't have a quorum.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) PSE&G Solar Farm. Waiting for NJDEP approval. The borough passed a resolution to bid out the cleanup of the site, which includes removal of concrete piles. PSE&G cannot start working until DEP issues the final permit. The borough is funding the cleanup, which will cost \$30,000-\$35,000. The project will probably be completed next spring. It will be the only solar farm on an old landfill that has energy stored in batteries.
 - b) Buck Woods. The stay on cutting down any more trees on the site imposed by the appellate court is still in place. The developer was given 30 days to come back with a more detailed plan showing where their proposed 75 units will be sited and is now at or close to that deadline. If the 75 units will be for sale, 15 percent of them must be affordable. If the units will be rentals, 20 percent must be affordable. The developer should preferably site the 75 units at the northern end of the property, leaving the rest of the natural area in place. A group of opponents to the development has hired a lawyer and set up a Go Fund Me page.
 - c) Environmental Commission Website. Allan reported he created pages for all the past minutes though he still needs to receive copies of minutes from the last two years from Jon. Nicole now has to link the pages to the tabs. After she does this, Mike will send us the link. We can start posting on the new site when we have some content.
 - d) Meadows Update. We received an extension on the grant through August 2019. It cannot be extended after that, and we have to spend all the money by that deadline. The trail crew has constructed about two-thirds of the new observation deck and has been working during the very hot weather. We have access to 12 old benches from Main Street that could be placed along the trail. The next step is invasive plant management. We need to purchase additional trees and select planting locations. We also have a new sign at the trail site. Phil reported he talked to the mayor about rezoning all of the borough-owned lots to a new category, Sustainable Resources. This will be put in the 2019 Master Plan. Sustainable resources means the site can be used for solar fields and wind generation. The Commission would like to see the zone change enacted in both the Master Plan and via borough ordinance. We noted the boardwalk has some rotted wooden planks that need to be replaced. We may receive a donation of materials to replace the fence on the bike path as well as the fence at the Native Plant Sanctuary (formerly the Native Plant Reserve).
 - e) Environmental Education Center. Phil hopes the borough can find money in its budget to work on the sidewalk leading to the EEC. The borough would like to move the green structure, which was originally built to house solar panels, to the side of the EEC and convert it to a solar array. There has been some discussion of putting a community garden at the EEC site. That would require soil

testing. An organization in Somerville that is a branch of the state Department of Agriculture may be willing to do the soil testing for free.

- f) Cleveland Avenue/Midland Ross/American Properties. Allan received three reports from Honeywell on air monitoring conducted at the site since June. No problems were found. Cleanup and development of the site are proceeding. Foundations are being dug on the site next to Cleveland Avenue.

6. New Business

- a) Benches. Three benches were installed near the EEC as an Eagle Scout project. When working on this, the Scouts noticed some damage on one of the EEC's walls, which they reported to the police. Allan confirmed that damage had already been there for years.
- b) Water and Flushing of Fire Hydrants. Many residents are concerned about the wasting of drinking water by continuing flushing of the lines. Phil reported that the DEP requires the Middlesex Water Company to do this in order to obtain certification. Middlesex Water and the DPW are working on this together. The mayor and Phil requested DEP allow us to reduce our minimum water purchase from Middlesex Water since we're buying more water than we actually use. The company requires us to make a minimum purchase to meet emergencies. There are two 10-inch mains that can be connected to supply backup water. We also noted that New Jersey American Water has a main located just three feet from a Middlesex Water main in the center of River Road. A New Jersey American Water main is also located close to our other large main. We used to have another main under Raritan Avenue connecting to New Brunswick, but it has since collapsed.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center at 20 River Road, Highland Park.