

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of February 6, 2019
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Allan Williams

Guest: Brian Weeks, member of the Metuchen Environmental Commission

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a request JSM sent to the DEP for a Letter of Interpretation for Buck Woods regarding freshwater wetlands. The letter is dated January 31. JSM included a topographic map with their letter along with a request that interested parties submit comments to DEP within 15 days. A copy of this letter was also sent to property owners and easement holders within 200 feet of the property. We discussed whether the Commission should send any comments. Steve noted the area has some intermittent pools and an underground stream. There is a lot of drainage at the west side of Buck Woods, along with pooling during storms. Jon suggested we request more time to comment since we don't have access to the site. Allan will contact Marsha Goldberg, a member of the group objecting to the potential development, to find out whether they are submitting any comments. We questioned whether there are any advocacy groups who could provide experts willing to examine the property free of charge. We also need to find copies of reports from previous years in which signs of wetlands were seen. Allan and Steve toured the site several years ago and found hydric soils and other characteristics of wetlands. We can send a comment letter to DEP based on their findings back then.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Rohan and Dawn Gandhi
349 Graham Street
Block 80, Lot 14
Docket Number: Z19-01
The applicant wants to remove a deck and build an addition to the home. They are requesting variances, as lot coverage will increase from 42 percent to 48 percent. The maximum lot coverage allowed by borough ordinance is 40 percent, which is already exceeded. Building coverage will increase from 25 percent to 30.2 percent; the latter is slightly over the ordinance limit of 30 percent. No Comments.
5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Remediation and Solar Farm. An RFP for the removal of concrete from the site has gone out. Bidders have until this Friday to submit. Work on the solar farm is now scheduled to start in the spring.
 - b) Environmental Commission Website. Allan put new information up on the site today and plans to post four more stories. Jon recommended we put links to these articles on our Facebook page. We are waiting for a link to our site to be added to the borough's website. Our old site has been taken down, and our new site is now public.
 - c) Remediation on Cleveland Avenue. Honeywell has completed remediation of the site. The borough has received a report on the remediation, which Allan put on a DVD. Reports filed by Honeywell during the cleanup regarding progress made have been placed on our website and are public documents. We will note on the website that the remediation work is done, that the report has been submitted to the LSRP, and that a copy of it is available at Borough Hall. Construction

can now begin. American Properties reported they want to make some changes to their plan. The number of units will stay the same. The Planning Board has requested they come back and present the revised plans.

- d) Buck Woods Update. JSM is challenging two things. First, they want to build more than 75 units, the amount negotiated in an agreement between Fair Share housing and the court. There will be a hearing about this in February. They are also challenging the stay on cutting down more trees. A court hearing on this will be held in March.
- e) Deer Management. A meeting was recently held to discuss deer management; it was attended by the mayor, Council liaison Philip George, and two representatives of the DEP's Fish and Wildlife Department. We have a map provided by the borough administrator documenting all calls to the borough regarding deer. The DEP representatives walked around town looking for deer and determined the biggest problem is the deer population coming from the Meadows and the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. Several options for dealing with the deer problem were discussed at the meeting. These include sterilization, transportation, and hunting. The DEP representatives suggested having three bow and arrow hunters come in at three separate times during the winter to kill some does. The mayor wants to hold a public meeting on this issue. We feel this issue is best handled at the county level.

6. New Business

- a) Recycling. Brian Weeks, a member of Metuchen's Environmental Commission, reported that Metuchen once paid for its own recycling facility, which was eventually closed due to cost. Today, Metuchen is spending as much on recycling as it is on sending waste to a landfill. Its recycling is now being sent to a commercial facility, which charges the town for the service, which is why the town is looking for new ideas about recycling. The main problem is single stream recycling. Metuchen officials are interested in meeting with the people who run the commercial facility to see if they can come up with ideas that are more cost-effective. Middlesex County used to do separate streams of recycling, but this required a lot of labor. Highland Park went back to recycling just ones and twos, a policy the county decided on, and we are still paying the county for this. Metuchen is still recycling ones through fives. Steve suggested the borough meet with the businesses that collect recyclables for a discussion on what we can do better together. ANJEC could be a good resource for this. We also noted that shredded paper is no longer recycled by either Metuchen or Highland Park. Brian reported that other members of his Commission are reaching out to other local Environmental Commissions about this. If Metuchen's Commission issues a final report, we would like to see a copy of it. Mike said we should contact Rutgers to find out how they handle their recycling.
- b) Girls' School on Cleveland Avenue. There was a public meeting last Thursday regarding a proposal to build a private school on a vacant Cleveland Avenue property. The property is a former industrial site and is zoned light industrial. The applicant would have to obtain a variance from either the Zoning Board or Planning Board for using the property for a school. Because the developer associated with the project threatened to sue the borough if he did not get a variance, the borough decided to address this under its redevelopment plan. This gives the town somewhat more control over it. The biggest issue is traffic, as Cleveland Avenue ends in a dead end. Traffic could be problematic when parents drop off their children, which occurs during morning rush hour. The Environmental Commission's concerns are traffic issues and the question of whether the site is suitable for a school.
- c) Park Partners Grant. Steve put together a proposal to buy equipment that will take photographs at various locations during both day and night to monitor wildlife activity. A vote on who will receive grants in each of five categories will be held at the Senior/Youth Center on Sunday, February 17. Jon recommended we put information about this on our Facebook page.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:34 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, March 6, 2019, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.