

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of October 3, 2018
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:01 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 5, 2018, meeting were approved with minor corrections. Specifically, in item 5b), “western end” should be changed to “northern end.”
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans:
 - a) Leon Kroll
6 Elbert Court, Highland Park, NJ 08904
Block 3, Lots 37 and 38
P2018-05

This application before the Planning Board is for a minor subdivision on a large property. No variances are requested. The applicant wants to move the border of the lot, subdivide the lot, and likely build another house. The plan shows at least eight existing large mature trees the applicant plans to cut down. There is a steep slope in the back of the property.

Comments: We are concerned about the loss of mature trees, the impact on the steep slope, and groundwater. We would like to see before and after contours for this plan as they relate to the steep slope.

5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. Work on the observation deck should be completed this Sunday. It is 12 feet long, oval shaped, and fits the contours of the site. The widest part is 10 feet, and it will have a four-foot high railing. Craig and Mary are compiling a list of trees to order this year for planting in the spring. We have some shrubs that are still in pots. In November, the volunteers will review goals for the site and a task list for a one-year, three-year, and five-year plan. Discussion will address how far they have come toward accomplishing these goals. Mike suggested that when all the work is done, we create a trail map of the site so people can do their own tours. Jon recommended putting a trail map on the sign board. Phil informed us we can get as many benches as we want for the Meadows from DPW.
 - b) Environmental Commission Website. Honeywell contacted Allan asking if we’re posting their reports on our website. Allan agreed to put them up on both our old and new sites. Several items have disappeared from the old site, but they will be retrieved and placed on the new one. Allan will email Mike requesting copies of minutes that need to be added, and Mike will send them to him. Jon suggested we put current content on our Facebook page.
 - c) Cleveland Avenue/Midland Ross/American Properties. Karen reported that many trucks are traveling up and down Cleveland Avenue. The air at the site is being monitored for particulates and contaminants.
 - d) Stormwater Management. All NJ towns will need new permits starting in January 2019. Obtaining the permit requires members of town councils, zoning boards, and planning boards to watch a one-hour training video. Allan will send a link to Commission members so we can watch it too. The video was developed by Rutgers and ANJEC.

- e) Community Interfaith Earth Art Event. This event was held at the Meadows on September 30. Steve noted Meadows Trail volunteers felt it was inappropriate to bring artwork into the area since it is a recovering ecosystem. He gave a talk about the trail and ecology at the event and spoke to Mary Denver about creating a Highland Park Environmental Coordinating Committee, which would be consulted about any events people want to hold on environmental sites regarding the events' suitability. Phil reported that a group affiliated with the Reformed Church organized this event and approached the Arts Commission about it. The group held a meeting with the Highland Park Artists Collective, which is not part of the borough. Steve and Mary were invited to that meeting and did a walkthrough of the Meadows with the group and the Arts Commission. He and Mary were left with the understanding that the event would not damage anything in the Meadows and would not bring anything in. Phil will address this issue with the Arts Commission. Steve said he and Mary suggested the group tour the Meadows, then interpret what they saw artistically and have an art show depicting that work.
- f) 31 River Road. The former medical office building is currently for sale. It is designated by the borough as an area in need of rehabilitation. The borough planner has come up with possible ideas for a developer. One developer has proposed building residential townhomes on the site. The property is zoned for apartments but has been used as commercial. This developer wants to put up 40 units and met with residents to go over their plans. They can go to four stories if they use terracing. At this stage, the plans exist only as a sketch. Between 15 and 20 percent of the units would be low income, depending on whether they are rentals or purchases. Jon noted a concern with water because the site is low lying. We will need to see the plans when they are submitted and the proposed change in impervious coverage.

6. New Business

- a) Signs Stapled to Trees. We noted that "No Parking" signs were stapled to trees by the Police Department during Arts in the Park. Karen found information indicating staples can cause trees harm, especially if the trees have thin bark. We need to come up with alternatives which the Police Department and PSE&G will accept. Phil said the borough can abandon putting signs on trees and instead use reusable signs that can be placed in the soil with steel frames. We need to put out information telling people not to staple signs to trees and make the Police Department aware of this. DPW puts up signs for the police, and Phil said he will inform them about the change.
- b) ANJEC Congress. ANJEC contacted Allan asking him to give a talk to the October 12 Congress about our ERI, which he agreed to do. David Tulloch, a landscape architect at Rutgers, will give a talk about advances in GIS.
- c) Deer. We questioned whether anything can be done to keep them off people's lawns. Karen recommended two products—Liquid Fence and Deer Off, both of which are sprayed on plants. She also said STAC has a list of plants that are deer resistant.
- d) Plastic Bags. Sustainable Highland Park has proposed an ordinance establishing a five-cent charge for single-use plastic bags in stores. The state is also pursuing a law restricting the use of plastic bags, and we are unsure as to whether the borough can simultaneously enact an ordinance. There are many different ordinances regarding single-use plastic bags. Some establish taxes while others restrict their uses. The borough is interested in enacting an ordinance that would leave a single-use plastic bag fee with retailers and require customers to pay 10 cents for a plastic bag. Six months after the ordinance is adopted, single-use plastic bags would no longer be allowed, and stores would have to switch to recyclable bags, for which customers would also have to pay a 10-cent fee. The ultimate goal is to get people to bring their own bags, as per the title of the ordinance, "Bring Your Own Bag." The borough needs more meetings with retailers about this. It may be adopted in December.
- e) Resolution Opposing Fracking Waste Storage. Fracking waste storage is currently banned in New Jersey, but the law may be changed to allow the storage of this waste from other states at

Kearny's Point in Salem County. DuPont operates a large wastewater treatment plant there. The problem is that contaminants from fracking waste might remain on sites where it is stored. The borough has already banned the transport of fracking waste through Highland Park. We discussed having the Environmental Commission support a resolution banning the storage of fracking waste in the state. No decision was made.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, November 7 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center at 20 River Road, Highland Park.