

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 6, 2019
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:08 pm.
2. The minutes of the October 2, 2019, meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Solar Farm. Construction of the solar farm is moving along. Installation of the solar panels is being done by a PSE&G contractor and will likely be completed ahead of schedule.
 - b) Meadows Update. A contractor hired by the borough removed a lot of concrete and asphalt from the site using heavy equipment. In the process, some plants were badly damaged. A lot of work will have to be done in the spring to compensate for this damage. Phil reported that work on the boardwalk area has been completed and there is now access to the river via the new boardwalk. More will have to be done in the area going towards the river in the spring. Some trees that had fallen were removed. CME will now have to certify on behalf of the borough, to NJDEP that all the appropriate items that needed to be removed from the Meadows have been removed.
 - c) Solop Project. The applicant has not submitted a draft conservation easement to the Planning Board. Allan asked for an interpretation from Planning Board attorney Roger Thomas, who told him submission of the draft easement will occur when the applicant decides to do something with the property. This application had only a mock site plan. The Planning Board will next meet this Thursday, November 8. The initial subdivision was approved, but the conservation easement is a condition of that approval.
 - d) Grant Opportunity. Sustainable New Jersey and the Nature Conservancy have a grant program to fund planting trees in flood plains alongside rivers. Allan discussed applying for this grant with Borough Administrator Teri Jover, and she was supportive of the idea. The goal is to seek funding for tree planting in the Meadows. We need input from the Shade Tree Advisory Committee and Sustainable Highland Park in the application. The deadline to submit an application is December 15. There are areas in the Meadows where we lost trees and need to plant new ones. We will likely apply for \$3,000-\$4,000. All trees planted with grant money must be native. The Environmental Commission voted unanimously in favor of pursuing this grant. It has a matching component, but that is in labor rather than money. The actual plantings will be done by the Meadows trail volunteers and members of the Environmental Commission. We plan to get a resolution of approval for the application from the Borough Council at their December 3 regular meeting.
 - e) Environmental Commission Website. The borough website now directs people to our new site.
 - f) Improvements to the Environmental Education Center. Teri applied to Sustainable New Jersey for a grant of slightly over \$30,000 to replant the EEC roof with native plants. Allan suggested that we take videos of the plantings being done if we get this grant. We will also have a volunteer day and public cleanup inside the building. The heat is currently not working well; DPW will look at this tomorrow.

- g) Master Plan Re-examination. Preview presentations were held for the public on changes proposed to the borough's Master Plan. The revised Master Plan will rezone the Meadows area from residential to sustainable resources.
 - h) The borough has applied for a DEP grant to fund the installation of chargers for electric vehicles. The DEP grant is for \$6,000, but there is an option for towns to obtain \$10,000 if they install a charging station in a public area. The Community Center has a hard-wired connection for a charger station. Two electric vehicles will be purchased for borough inspectors, and two hybrid vehicles will be bought for the Police Department.
 - i) Environmental Commission Budget. Allan will use remaining funds in our 2019 budget to purchase supplies for the Meadows. We could also use funds to purchase shelving, better storage containers, and lithium batteries for the EEC. Graffiti was written on the EEC sign and message board; Allan will contact DPW and ask them to remove it. Our 2020 budget request is due on December 2. We will request \$1,050, the same amount we got this year.
 - j) Problems with Reimbursement for Expenses. Reimbursement has become more complicated. People have paid for items out of pocket and need to be reimbursed. The borough wants credit card receipts as a means of preventing phony transactions. Allan wants to confirm the new policy applies to everyone. He will ask Teri to send information about it to all boards and commissions.
6. New Business
- a) Calendar for Next Year. We will keep our meetings on the first Wednesday of every month.
7. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at 8 pm in the Environmental Education Center, 20 River Road, Highland Park, NJ.