

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of February 5, 2020  
Minutes

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

Guests: Erin M. Connolly, Johnny Malpica, and Howard Swerdloff, all members of the New Brunswick Environmental Commission

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 8, 2020, meeting were approved with one correction. Item 5f should read Sunday, February 16, not Sunday, February 17.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received a letter from ANJEC recommending Highland Park adopt a ban on single-use plastic bags. The borough has already done this. We will forward the letter to Tina Weishaus, chair of Sustainable Highland Park.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
  - a) Reforestation Grant from Sustainable New Jersey/The Nature Conservancy. We received the grant, which amounts to \$2,666. This is for the Meadows. Steve reported the trail committee hopes to start ordering trees to plant between late March and mid-April. We have to complete the project by July 1. We will order the equipment, which will be delivered to DPW. The work will be done by trail volunteers. We explained the process of applying for a grant to our guests from the New Brunswick Environmental Commission.
  - b) PSE&G Solar Farm. The solar farm is up and running. The shrubs have been planted. Phil said he did not see the signage when he was there two weeks ago. The borough has a long term lease with PSE&G and hopes to change the zoning of this area to sustainable resources. PSE&G will complete a final report to the state on the project, and the borough will receive a copy of the report. The next step is establishing the micro-grid. Highland Park might be able to get an award for the solar farm. DPW did some minor cleanup of the property, but most of the work was done by PSE&G. STAC gave them a list of native plants. We got Sustainable NJ credits for this project.
  - c) Meadows Remediation Update. CME met with the contractor. Steve reported the trail crew will spend a lot of time remediating the remediation. The trail crew will hold a meeting to review the Master Plan for the Meadows and decide what if anything in the plan should be changed. They appreciate any suggestions for improvements to the plan. Work by the trail crew will start around mid-March. The site has to be cleared for the 200 trees and shrubs that will be planted. We have a good crop of milkweed in the Meadows. This year's focus will be to create better opportunities for wildlife. The Environmental Commission and STAC are seeking a Park Partners grant to purchase two trail cameras that can image in daylight and low-glow infrared. We noted that on occasion, people start bonfires in the Meadows even though the borough does not permit fires in open areas. The cameras might catch those who start these bonfires.
  - d) SOLOP Project. We have no idea when the required draft conservation easement will be submitted. Allan noted the borough engineer had a lot of things he wanted changed in the concept plan.

- e) Park Partners Grant. Our project is a joint effort with STAC. All Commission members should attend the February 23 voting session and vote for it.
  - f) Environmental Commission Website. Allan noted we have put up more information on winter ducks. We also put information on the site about the grant we received for the Meadows. Mike said it would be good to know the number of visits our site gets. Johnny recommended using Google Analytics for this information. The cost of using it for a website is \$135 a year. He also noted the New Brunswick Environmental Commission is interested in establishing a website of its own.
  - g) Master Plan Re-examination. Allan reported that the Planning Board has approved the new Master Plan though the information about it is not yet on the borough website. The pedestrian and bicycle report was also adopted as part of the plan. It is essentially a vision statement. We noted the borough held several community meetings before adopting the new Master Plan. We have an open space list that needs to be revised; that will be done this year. We noted the Master Plan influences the zoning process, and the ERI is the environmental guideline for the community.
  - h) Proposed School at 433 Cleveland Avenue. Allan reported there is a draft redevelopment plan that has a girls' school on this site and a parking lot across the street. There is a third lot in the plan for which no specific use has been listed. Three other lots on the block are not included in the plan. Phil noted the redevelopment plan for this area has been adopted by the Council on first reading. The Council passed a resolution referring this redevelopment plan to the Planning Board for modifications and recommendations. Allan noted there is a 50 X 100 section further down the street that might be owned by the borough. There are no other borough-owned properties at this location. Because the property is greater than one acre, the applicant is required to submit an environmental impact statement. The applicant offered to install sidewalks as long as the borough gets right-of-way for them. We agreed we should request a Phase I environmental impact statement for the site.
6. New Business
- a) Gateway Redevelopment Plan. Allan reported that the borough's Gateway redevelopment plan includes the Rutgers Gun and Boat store, the parking lot to the right of the store, and two lots on Dennison Street that face the gun shop. All these properties are currently in a Phase I environmental study. The borough recently received funding from DEP to conduct the study.
  - b) Sustainable Highland Park Earth Day Event. Sustainable Highland Park will hold its annual Earth Day event on Sunday, April 19, at the Environmental Education Center. The rain location is the Community Center. We agreed to send a letter to SHP's chair noting that the Environmental Commission would like to co-sponsor this event.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center, 20 River Road, Highland Park.