

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of October 7, 2020 – Via Zoom
Minutes

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

Guests: Rory Berry, Jimmy Yeh

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 4, 2020, meeting were approved.
3. We welcomed new member Ethan Schoolman
4. Correspondence: None
5. Site Plans:
 - a) JSM at Highland Park, LLC
Block 47, Lots 27-75
Docket No: P2020-01
JSM submitted a site plan proposal for Gabrielle Estates on the Buck Woods site. Allan sent Commission members digital copies of the site plan. It is reasonably complete and includes a traffic plan, EIS, stormwater plan, stormwater maintenance plan, topography map, and waiver for a tree removal plan. The borough's Emergency Management chair says the plan is unacceptable because the entrance is only 16 feet wide. A major fire truck is 18 feet wide. There is no second entrance where the Fire Department could get a truck in. The proposed building is four stories. The borough is litigating responsibility for cleaning up domestic waste on the site. The existing utilities go right down the middle of the site. JSM proposes to relocate the utilities, but that would require all trees on one side be removed. More trees would have to be cut down on both sides for this revision. Borough ordinance requires all trees with eight-inch caliper or larger be replaced in kind on the site or that the developer pay into a tree replacement fund. The storm water plan takes over all the areas we hoped to have as public park areas. The borough's planner and engineer will incorporate all comments into discussions with JSM to get them to work out the problems in a cooperative manner. The Planning Board has 60 days to respond; Allan said they will address this plan in either November or December. He will prepare an official Environmental Commission response, which will be sent to the Planning Board, Borough Planner, attorneys, and applicant.
6. Old Business
 - a) Reforestation Grant. The grant is for a mix of 200 trees and shrubs to be planted in the Meadows. We received the trees and shrubs in July, and all have been planted by volunteers. The final grant report has to be in by November 14. The volunteers will follow up and check the trees for damage every six months. New trees have been planted along the river. The plants were placed in white plastic protected tubes.
 - b) Meadows Trail. Volunteers are maintaining the trail. The tree planting was completed two weeks ago. There wasn't as much maintenance or placement of woodchips as would normally be done.
 - c) Deer. The Environmental Commission is divided on the issue of a bow hunt in the Meadows. The Board of Health opposes a hunt, noting deer are not a major carrier of Lyme Disease and that they may have wasting disease, which would make them not ideal for eating. Volunteers at the

Meadows Trail want to get rid of the deer because they are damaging the understory of the forest. Last night, this issue was on the Borough Council agenda. Phil reported that the Council passed a resolution to have the Borough Administrator prepare a comprehensive deer management plan. No hunt or other methodology was approved. The Council expects to see the plan within the next 30-45 days. It will be available to the public once it is completed. He added the plan is not a done deal and will have to be approved or modified by the Borough Council.

- d) Stormwater Management Ordinance. The borough has to adopt a new stormwater ordinance by March 3. ANJEC held a seminar on this topic, in which speakers discussed what was changed. Green infrastructure is now a requirement. The new ordinance will apply to any new development or redevelopment larger than 5,000 square feet. Allan downloaded the DEP model ordinance and the Water Institute model ordinance. Towns are allowed to enact stormwater ordinances that are stricter than what the DEP requires. The Borough Administrator would like the Environmental Commission's input into the new ordinance. Ethan noted this could be an opportunity to educate the public and encourage people to add rain gardens and wildflowers to their properties. Phil said we can list these as types of stormwater runoff control.
 - e) Animal Cameras. The Borough now has new cameras, obtained through the Park Partners grant. The plan was submitted by Steve Barnes and Mary Denver. The cameras are there to document what animals are present in the Meadows. We have two cameras, which together can hold up to 80,000 images. They will be placed in the Meadows within the next month. We noted they are typically attached to trees and can be easily moved around.
 - f) 2020 Budget. We still have funds left. The cutoff date to spend them is December 15. Allan asked the Meadows volunteers if there is equipment they can use. We need to think about this and make a decision.
 - g) Tree Ordinance Revision. Allan and Karen will re-send copies of this to all Commission and STAC members.
 - h) Proposed Girls' School on Cleveland Avenue. The borough planner said we are likely to see a plan for the proposed school in early November. It will go to the Planning Board and will likely be what we saw at various town meetings where the plan was presented. There is a parking lot on the right hand side, which they would have to redo. There will be parking adjacent to the school. They may need to add a roadway, so a firetruck can get around three of the four sides of the school.
 - i) Environmental Commission Website. We transferred our contact information on the site to Allan's credit card and paid for this year. The hosting fee is approximately \$130 a year, which we will pay annually out of our budget.
7. New Business
- a) Plastic Bag Ban. No decision has yet been made as to whether the borough should resume implementing its plastic bag ban. The state legislature passed a plastic bag and container ban, which the governor has not yet signed. The question is whether we should wait for the state to act or be more forceful in enforcing the ban with local merchants. If the governor signs the bill, there is an 18-month period over which it will be implemented. Allan noted that early studies indicate the COVID virus can live on plastic for approximately nine to ten hours.
 - b) ANJEC. Mike received an email acknowledging we have paid our ANJEC dues for 2020. This year's ANJEC Congress is being held online, and we have been invited to participate. The sessions are spread throughout the month of October, and recordings will be available afterwards. There will be a session on stormwater management.
8. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, at 8 PM via Zoom.