

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of January 6, 2021 – Via Zoom
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 2, 2020, meetings were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received an annual letter from PSE&G informing us they will be performing maintenance work in their right-of-way areas in Highland Park.
 - b) We received a letter from ANJEC regarding our annual dues of \$375 for 2021. ANJEC will soon hold an Environmental Commissioners' course online.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business:
 - a) Park Partners Grant. Applications for the \$2,000 grant are due on January 18. Anyone with ideas for a grant project should email Allan. He will ask the Meadows Trail volunteers if there is anything specific they would like to apply for.
 - b) Proposed Girls' School on Cleveland Avenue. The mayor discussed the benefits that the borough will receive from this project through the redevelopment plan. Sidewalks will be placed on the north side of Madison Avenue as far as Lincoln Avenue. Three trees will have to come down for these sidewalks. There will be discussions with residents who will have sidewalks built on or in front of their properties. The redevelopment plan requires green infrastructure to handle stormwater, but this infrastructure is not shown in the actual site plan the applicant submitted. Menlo Engineering will come up with a proposal that meets NJDEP requirements for sediment removal and for a stormwater plan. The Planning Board has approved the application with the finalization of the stormwater plans as a condition of approval. Bruce Koch the Borough engineer will make the decision as to whether the proposal is acceptable. Allan informed us that the school will put in several groundwater-monitoring wells on the property.
 - c) Environmental Commission Goals for 2021. Ethan noted the importance of environmental justice, emphasizing NJ has a strong environmental justice law pertaining to industrial sites. Karen reported STAC has plans for mass plantings in specific neighborhoods, a project that will benefit both physical and mental health. Approximately 100 trees will be planted in the Triangle during the spring. STAC also wants to plant trees on South Seventh, South Eighth, South Ninth, and South Tenth Avenues in 2022. Residents will have the right to refuse a tree; STAC has received approximately 20 percent negative responses. Last year, STAC planted trees along Cedar Avenue and side streets in that area. We will carry on discussion of 2021 goals to our February meeting.
 - d) Meadows Trail and Cameras. Allan collected some of the equipment from Steve. Craig has been monitoring deer and other wildlife in the Meadows. He will install the cameras within the next few weeks. There currently are between eight and nine volunteers who continue to work in the Meadows while social distancing and wearing masks. Starting in March, they will take care of any trees that need to come down. We may need a new starter for the vehicle the volunteers currently use, which is on loan from the county. Phil will discuss this with Frank Troy.

e) Environmental Commission Website. The site is up to date in terms of meeting minutes. Allan changed the language to clarify that our current meetings are on Zoom. He would like to add a link showing improvements in the Meadows, including all the new trees, as well as information on how to volunteer. Mike questioned whether we can help DPW communicate with the public about recycling. Phil noted there is an app called Recycling Coach, which people can install on their phones. The app sends a message informing users when trash and recyclables are being collected. It was purchased by the borough for Highland Park. When people download it, it asks for the town in which they live in order to provide appropriate information. The Environmental Commission can also do public outreach via our website and Facebook page. Mike noted that people often ask him about how to dispose of compact fluorescent bulbs that contain mercury. Phil will ask DPW about this.

6. New Business

a) Redevelopment. Ethan said he has gotten questions from people in town regarding the next step in the borough's redevelopment plan. Phil said no plan has been adopted, and another public hearing will be held about this. The Borough Council has designated itself as a redevelopment agency, for which they have a steering committee. He reported the borough started looking into buying up properties along Raritan Avenue and last year asked a professional to come up with a vision of what could happen on the avenue. This is a visualization of what could be done on Raritan, including how to fine tune zoning and redevelopment laws and a look at the town's capacity for bonding. It is not an approved plan but a redesign of the current redevelopment plan to show what can be done.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:11 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, February 3, 2021, at 8 PM on Zoom.