

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of February 3, 2021
Minutes

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

Guest: Heidi Yeh, Rutgers University graduate student

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:08 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 6, 2021, meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) 238 Cleveland Avenue. P2021-01, Block 169. Lot 31-33. This is an application for a subdivision. The applicant wants to tear down buildings on this property, subdivide the property, and build seven single-family homes with attached forward garages on 5,000-square foot lots. The site is zoned for professional offices, but single-family residences are permitted. There will be no on-street parking. There are many trees on the site; the application includes a tree removal plan and a landscaping plan for the proposed new homes. Karen will look into the tree removal plan and write notes about it. We noted that this application is only for the subdivision. Once this is approved, the applicant will come back with another application for the development. Allan noted the building on the site has been there since at least the 1930s, and its history is unknown. This means a Phase I study has to be done. There could be underground storage tanks present, so the property needs to be carefully looked at before any digging starts. Comments: We are concerned that we do not know the complete history of the area. This will have to be dealt with.
5. Old Business
 - a) Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. The Partnership MS4 project will be reaching out to public schools to increase awareness of stormwater rules for municipalities. Participating would cost the borough \$6000. The program involves placing tags on all inlets warning people not to contaminate them because they go into the river. Phil noted that while the Partnership encompasses 12 municipalities, only a few partner with them. Some federal and state stormwater changes require public outreach. The Borough Council is enacting some of the required ordinances to comply with these changes. Phil noted the borough is eligible for CDBG funds for this outreach, adding that this is on the Council's agenda for its February 18 meeting, and it would be helpful for the Environmental Commission to support it. The ordinances should be available for public view by the middle of next week and will be on the agenda for adoption in March. We agreed to come up with a statement supporting engaging in a partnership with the LRWP on stormwater outreach.
 - b) Park Partners Grant. Just one environmental project is proposed for this grant, a project by Mary Denver for maintenance of the Native Planet Sanctuary (formerly the Native Plant Reserve). Voting day is February 21, and voting will be done on Zoom. Information on grant proposals should be up on the borough's website by tomorrow.

Commission members will support this proposal. We will place notices on the various Highland Park Facebook groups reminding people to vote for the project on February 21.

- c) Goals for 2021. Allan reported that he will complete the environmental section in the borough's certification application with Sustainable NJ. He also said he hopes to put together another open space list this year. Mike sent him a copy of the Commission's open space list from 2001. The Meadows Trail now has several additional loops, and the map needs to be upgraded via GPS. Jon suggested the Commission promote active discussion on the proposed greenway connecting Donaldson and Johnson Parks. Jon will give Phil a hard copy of the February 1995 Greenway Feasibility Study, which Phil will scan and email to Commission members. Jon also suggested promoting walkability and bike-ability on shared streets as has been done during Covid-19. Phil reported the borough wants to promote the river as part of a walking community and emphasize the importance of the river as a recreational and focal point. Another important issue is examining the viability of the borough's tree canopy, including county parks.
- d) Meadows Trail Cameras. The cameras have not yet been installed and are still in Allan's house. Craig will contact Allan with recommendations on the best locations to place them. He is paying special attention to deer and wildlife in the Meadows. The cameras will be at a height of three to three-and-a-half-foot level. They will have a locking device that will help keep them on the trees. We agreed they should be turned off during snowstorms. It is currently too cold for the volunteers to work outside in the Meadows.
- e) Conservation Easement on Polos Property. Allan sent Mike the information on this. Polos is supposed to provide a conservation easement through the rear of his property on Parkview Terrace. He gave a proposal to the Planning Board, and there was some negotiating on the path's exact location. Menlo Engineering has a map showing where the path crosses the property. The path is five feet wide and cannot be a boardwalk. It seems to go from Donaldson Park to the old Red's Marina property, which is now owned by the county. Further discussion is needed to determine where this path really is. Phil noted the borough will maintain the path.
- f) Environmental Commission Website. Meeting minutes are now up, and Jon will put the latest meeting minutes up tomorrow. Allan will write an article about the changes in the Meadows, including the new trail loop.
- g) Meadows Volunteers. Jon received an email from someone interested in volunteering in the Meadows. He will forward the message to Allan. Phil will talk to the mayor about recognition for the volunteers.

6. New Business

- a) Electric Vehicle Amendments. Phil informed us he is moving forward with a third round of proposed electric vehicle ordinance amendments to make the borough more friendly friendlier for electric vehicles. He plans to seek grants for two additional charging stations along Route 27. There are already two charging stations at the Community Center available for use during the day.

- b) Solar Farm. The solar farm is now fully functional. The borough will be changing the zoning for the site to sustainable resources. All seasonal plantings on the site have been done.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:22 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, at 8 PM on Zoom.