

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of April 7, 2021  
Minutes

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

Guest: Mark Lesko

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:04 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 3, 2021, meeting were approved with some comments. Allan will mail Commission members a copy of the minutes.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
  - a) Stormwater Ordinance. The Borough Council introduced the new stormwater ordinance on first reading. The second reading and public hearing will take place in May.
  - b) ANJEC and Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. ANJEC suggested the Environmental Commission develop two signs, one for the rain garden at the new Teen Center, and the other for Third Avenue. ANJEC thought we could sign at \$750 per sign but we can likely get them at a much cheaper price.
  - c) 238 Cleveland Avenue. A recommendation was made for the Environmental Commission to write a memo noting the applicant must do environmental testing on the site. So far, the applicant has filed two reports with the Planning Board about the soil testing they did. No date has been scheduled for the minor subdivision to come before the Planning Board.
  - d) ANJEC Grant Application. ANEC grants of \$1,500 are available for restoration or maintenance work on borough-owned properties registered as open space. Allan spoke to the Meadows volunteers, who agreed the priority for this year is maintenance. They are interested in placing gravel in areas where wood chips have washed away. Karen noted we are looking into the amount of gravel the volunteers think they will need as well as its cost. The Meadows volunteers would also like to complete the boardwalk closer to the river and add some benches along the trail. Phil said we could use old cast iron benches that have been rehabbed and are stored at DPW. He added that the Arts Commission and Artists' Collective have art benches they want to place along the Meadows. We also noted that one volunteer wants to build benches from downed timber in the Meadows. Work at the Meadows will begin at the end of April. The grant application is due at 4:30 PM on Monday, April 19. The Borough Council has already approved the Commission applying for a grant. We also want to put together a pamphlet containing a map and history of the Meadows.
  - e) ANJEC Annual Dues. Our dues payment for 2021 was approved by the Borough Council last night, and the payment has been made.
  - f) SOLOP Conservation Easement and Path. The borough's construction office has an 11.5 by 17 map of the easement. Allan will drop it off at Mike's house. We noted that the plan includes a path along the river and easement. Phil said the borough can ask

engineers to stake out that path. He also reported that the borough attorney, Planning Board attorney, and applicant's attorney negotiated on this.

- g) Signs for Rain Gardens. Allan suggested the Commission might want to consider placing signs for rain gardens around town later this year.
- h) Trail Camera. Allan sent Commission members three pictures taken by the camera in the Meadows. The camera is triggered by wind and movement of wildlife in the bushes. All three pictures show deer; Craig Ambroch had suggested placing the camera in a location where we would be likely to see deer. Mark reported he saw a turkey, an osprey, and a bald eagle in the Meadows. Another person saw a fox there.
- i) Letters of Appreciation for Meadows Volunteers. Allan received draft of a letter of appreciation written by Harry Glazer, which will be mailed this week to the volunteers who planted 200 trees at the Meadows.
- j) NJDEP Updating Model Ordinances. The DEP is updating flood hazard model ordinances and wants municipalities that have rivers to update their ordinances. Phil reported the borough is looking at the same model ordinance other towns are using, which are concerned with runoff into rivers. Some parts of the DEP's model ordinance may not be applicable to Highland Park, but we are better off adopting the model ordinance as a whole rather than cherry picking parts of it. The DEP ordinance also include a requirement for towns to designate a flood manager as a contact point in the event of flood emergencies.
- k) Website. Allan would like Nicole Wines to make some improvements to the site. These will cost less than \$50. We have a listing of local birds on the site, which needs to remain in a correct order. Allan also wants to give recognition to the Meadows volunteers on the site, including a list of their names. We can also advertise on the website for additional volunteers.

## 6. New Business

- a) ANJEC Events. ANJEC has a few upcoming virtual events. Tomorrow, they are sponsoring a seminar on social media for Environmental Commissions. They will also hold a virtual Earth Day celebration on April 22. Allan plans to attend tomorrow's seminar and one next week about open space.
- b) Earth Day. There have been several changes at Sustainable Highland Park. Tina Weishaus is returning as chair while Hagit Mano has resigned. SHP considered holding a scavenger hunt in either the Meadows or the Native Plant Sanctuary on Earth Day, but there was a lack of interest in doing this. They hope to be able to do an in-person Earth Day type event in the fall. Outdoor activities are gradually increasing. Phil noted the borough signed contract for fireworks to be held on July 1.
- c) Tree Plantings. The late Councilwoman Susie Welkovits had approved the planting a non-native willow near the Environmental Education Center in memory of Sheila Shukla's mother. This tree will be replaced by the landscaping company BRD. Sheila wants a willow oak, which is in the red oak group, but these are under attack in NJ. We would rather plant an oak of the white oak group. We questioned whether we want a willow oak to match the two willow oaks at the location. Karen noted Sheila is open to taking advice from her and recommends planting a black tupelo, which is native, loves wet areas, and has berries that birds eat. Allan will discuss this with Sheila. The planting is scheduled for April 21.

- d) Collection of Wood from Borough Property. Mike reported he has received questions from people about whether they can collect wood from borough property. Phil will look into this. Karen noted that fallen trees are valuable in the woods in that they provide shelter for insects and small animals and should therefore be left there. The situation is different regarding limbs that fall off street trees.
  - e) Clean Choice Energy. Ethan reported that a company called Clean Choice Energy is soliciting people and offering them energy from renewable sources and questioned whether the borough is already buying energy from clean sources. Phil responded that the borough has an energy consultant who does bid specs and bidding. This position is required by ordinance. The borough is receiving energy from sustainable sources.
7. The meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at 8 PM on Zoom.