

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of July 7, 2021
Minutes

Present: Laurel Kornfeld, Ethan Schoolman, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams

Guest: Craig Ambroch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:11 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 2, 2021, meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None

5. Old Business
 - a) 238 Cleveland Avenue. Two reports were generated by two separate environmental testing companies. The second report said at least two more studies are needed. There was an assumption that the applicant has an LSRP, but they do not. The borough construction office issued a permit for the demolition of the building, which has occurred and the applicant has ground up the concrete from the building. This should not have been approved prior to the required environmental studies. The lot that had all the trees on it was once used to purify tin, and it could be contaminated. Now, a lot of work needs to be done at the site because the location has been significantly disrupted. This project is going before the Planning Board tomorrow. Karen wrote up a list of STAC comments, which she will send to Jen Santiago for distribution, including to the Planning Board.
 - b) Meadows Update. Because of the heat, the only work being done in the Meadows is maintenance of the trail system and installation of some recycled benches. The volunteers want to improve the river spur trail that goes into the flood plain of the Raritan River. Allan is compiling GPS data on the Meadows to create a new map. Craig expressed concern over a possible deer hunt in the Meadows, as it is a sensitive environment. People who are not conservationists could injure some of the newly planted trees, which include some rare species. The Meadows has a total of 39 species of trees. Most are young though there are some old trees, including a very large eastern cottonwood in the middle of the site. Craig also reported that he was asked to review the borough's Deer Management Plan.
 - c) Redevelopment. There are four redevelopment tracts, labeled A, B, C, and D. The Planning Board has determined that the redevelopment plan for sites A, B, and D, including a parking deck, is consistent with the borough's Master Plan, but the plan for site C, the current location of the Farmers Market, is not. They also noted the Master Plan mentions the importance of the Farmers Market site as a public meeting place. The South Third Avenue site to which the plan proposes to move the Farmers Market has only 40 percent of the space the current site has. Also, the Reformed Church functions like a community center. Many groups meet there, and the

municipal parking lot next to it is often full. Tomorrow, the Planning Board will vote to adopt the resolution written by its attorney.

- d) Meadows Trail Cameras. Allan will go through the images, which he has stored on a hard drive, and report in September on the animals seen at the site.
 - e) Cannabis Ordinance. The Borough Council on first reading adopted an ordinance allowing up to six dispensaries selling cannabis in Highland Park. The only uses allowed will be retail distribution and delivery services. A security guard will be required on dispensary sites. The ordinance will now go before the Planning Board, who will determine whether this new land use is consistent with the Master Plan.
 - f) Environmental Commission Website. Meeting minutes are being put up on time.
 - g) Next Meeting. Our next meeting will be September 1, and we discussed whether we prefer to meet in person or continue meeting on Zoom, when the borough reopens. It is not yet clear the borough is ready to return to in-person meetings. We decided that we prefer a Zoom meeting if the weather is hot.
 - h) Environmental Commission Budget. So far, we have spent half of our budget for 2021. At our September meeting, we need to discuss which projects would be useful to spend the rest of our budget for the year.
6. New Business:
- a) Karen reported that songbirds are falling out of the sky in the mid-Atlantic region, and no one knows why. There is suspicion it is a neurologic disease. People are instructed to take down bird feeders to make sure their water is fresh and clean.
7. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, September 1, 2021, at 8 PM on Zoom.