

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 7, 2022
Minutes

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

Guest: Mark Lesko

The meetings began at 8:30 pm due to a problem with Zoom.

Site Plans:

- a) Route 27 Associates, LLC
130-134 Raritan Avenue
Tract B
Block 13, Lots 6 and 9

The applicant submitted a site plan application to the Planning Board proposing to build a five-story building with 52 apartments, retail on the ground floor, and no parking. STAC already submitted comments on the landscaping and is sending an addendum. The site has steep slopes, and the detention basin in the proposal drains into the borough's storm drain in the street. Water is collected on the roof and channeled onto Raritan Avenue. Phil recommended we report to Borough Administrator Teri Jover that we are reviewing the plan, have significant questions, and need more time to consider the issues involved.

Old Business:

- a) JSM at Buck Woods. The Borough Council had an executive session with the Borough's environmental consultant to determine what the cost of remediating the site should be. JSM wants the borough to pay for the remediation. This remains in litigation.
- b) 238 Cleveland Avenue. A fourth house is being built on the site. There will be a total of seven houses.
- c) Yeshiva Shaarei Tzion, Cleveland Avenue. The builders have excavated areas for piping and are leveling the ground in preparation for construction.
- d) Meadows Update. Alan and Craige will do a tree inventory of the Meadows for the Sustainable Jersey grant application. There will be a volunteers' meeting on Sunday, September 11. Karen reported that the Shade Tree Advisory Committee wants to do a tree walk in the Meadows, likely in the spring.
- e) Demolition Checklist. Teri Jover has not yet reported back to Allan on the status of this.
- f) Leaf Blowers. We noted people are using leaf blowers in all seasons to sweep sidewalks and streets and discussed the possibility of an ordinance limiting gas-powered leaf blowers to certain times of year or prohibiting them entirely. Phil opposes the latter idea. He is concerned with the cost of lawn care services if gas-

powered blowers are outlawed. One problem with battery-powered leaf blowers is they are not as powerful as gas-powered ones and don't last as long. Gas-powered leaf blowers can last up to five years. Since the Board of Health is concerned about noise and air pollution from leaf blowers, we will look into working with them on a general statement to the Borough Council listing what our options are, requesting the borough consider alternatives to the current situation, and making soft recommendations. Laurel will raise this issue with the Board of Health and with the board's Council liaison.

- g) Website. Nothing new.
- h) Meadows Trail Camera. Nothing new.
- i) Budget. We have \$433 left for the year and need to think of projects on which to spend it. Options include building a new bench in the Meadows and/or fixing another section of the boardwalk there. We could use the money to buy materials for these projects and store them in a dry place. Craige will write up a proposal and present it at our next meeting.
- j) Councilman George is donating an electric lawnmower (with a lithium battery) to the Meadows Volunteers.
- k) Barwood Easement. There is a proposed pathway through the easement from Donaldson Park to the former Red's Marina site. Phil will review this with the Council's Public Works Committee. There are currently two vacant lots between Mike's house on Skyview Terrace and the old Red's Marina. Mike wrote a memo to the county asking that they consider purchasing these lots for open space. In the past, the county said such a request should come from the borough. We will make a recommendation to the borough to issue this request.
- l) Spotted Lantern Flies. They are not damaging trees as much as initially thought. They lay their eggs in trees; we can identify what these eggs look like and urge people to scrape them off the trees. We also will continue to recommend people kill all adult spotted lantern flies.

New Business:

- a) ANJEC Awards. ANJEC is giving awards to municipal officials. Allan recommended we nominate Phil, as he has been involved with stormwater activities in town. We need a list of his environmental activities to write up the nomination, which needs to be 200 words or less and is due on September 17. The Commission agreed to nominate Phil.
- b) ANJEC Congress. This year's event will be partly in person and partly virtual. There will be three days of Zoom sessions and one day in person.
- c) New Area in Need of Redevelopment. In light of Stop and Shop's announcement that they plan to close the HP store next year, the borough is declaring the south side of Raritan Avenue between South Fifth and South Fourth as an area in need of redevelopment. While the area includes the bank, post office, several stores, the designation is primarily aimed at the Stop and Shop site.
- d) Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. The borough is updating its flood damage prevention ordinance and held a first reading on the amended version.

- e) Scooters. We discussed whether the Environmental Commission should issue a statement on the new electric scooters in town. We were never consulted about environmental issues relating to them. One option is to add a bike share program and designate bike/scooter lanes on roads.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:14 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 12 (postponed from the usual first Wednesday due to the Jewish holiday) at 8 PM on Zoom.