

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 2, 2022
Minutes

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

Guests: Danielle Cadet and Jessica Garris of All of Us from A to Z We Are One (ASEZWAO), Mark Lesko

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:01 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 12, 2022, meeting was approved with minor changes.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence
 - a) We received an email with a copy of a letter by resident Rita Polos sent to Richard Lear, head of the county Parks Department, about spotted lantern flies. Her letter said many trees have been destroyed by these insects, but STAC has not heard this. The flies are actually not as destructive to trees as previously thought. Polos asked the Parks Department to cut down the tree of heaven, where spotted lantern flies congregate, which we approve of since this tree is a non-native invasive species. After the trees are cut down, herbicide needs to be applied immediately to make sure the roots don't send up new shoots. We noted the county has a tree replacement program for Johnson Park.
5. Old Business
 - a) Trail Cleanups. Sustainable Highland Park (SHP) is now doing two cleanups per month in Highland Park, one on the first Saturday of every month and the other on the third Sunday. The November 20 cleanup start at the Meadows Trail and will continue into the woods around the trail and possibly parts of Donaldson Park. The group ASEZWAO, which stands for All of Us from A to Z We Are One reached out to the SHP about doing larger cleanups in town. They can bring a lot of volunteers and have a lot of ideas about cleaning up the Meadows Trail. Several other groups have also joined the cleanups. On November 19, the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership will do a cleanup in Donaldson Park. We noted DPW needs to be called the Fridays before these cleanups and be told to pick up the trash. We can distinguish trash from recyclables by putting trash in black bags and recyclables in clear bags. We also noted DPW will not pick up recyclables in bags.

There will also be a cleanup in Karsey Park this week and two December cleanups in town, locations TBA.

With the Park Partners grant, we can purchase equipment for up to \$2,000. Things like gloves, bags, and grabbers have to be purchased by a volunteer who is then reimbursed by the borough. Mark will talk to Tina Weishaus of SHP about doing this.

The Commission unanimously agreed to be a co-sponsor of all these cleanups.

- b) Climate Action Plan. Phil and the mayor want the Commission to work on this. We need to come up with an outline of what we need to do and who will do what. Karen noted outdoor lighting should be yellow, as warm lighting does not attract insects the way brighter lighting does. The borough should change its street lights to yellow ones. Karen will send us a link to information about this, including the question of whether yellow lights provide less illumination for drivers. We noted the town of Madison, NJ, hosted a talk by Doug Tillamy, author of the book *Nature's Best Hope*, which is informative and available to watch as a recording. Harry Glazer will put a link to this talk onto the borough's website, and Karen requested the link be sent to STAC. SHP will also be working on the Climate Action Plan.
 - c) Meadows Update. Allan submitted a purchase order with information detailing the items Craig wants. We're still shopping at Home Depot because the borough uses Ryobi equipment and batteries, which aren't compatible with Lowe's equipment. Craig will work in the Meadows next week.
 - d) ANJEC Congress. Phil won the ANJEC Municipal Leadership Award, for which we nominated him, and met with the DEP commissioner. Virtual presentations from the Congress are available for viewing on ANJEC's YouTube channel.
 - e) 2023 Budget. Phil reported that every borough board and commission will get the same budget they got this year. We need to send a letter requesting a budget of \$1,050.
 - f) Stormwater. The borough has submitted a stormwater utility phase 1 study grant application to DEP. New Brunswick, Piscataway, and Edison have signed on to the application. The project will study the concept of a regional stormwater utility to manage the stormwater problems these towns have. DEP will distribute a total of \$10 million in grant money for this across the state.
 - g) Website. There is a post on the site announcing Phil's winning of the ANJEC Municipal Leadership Award, along with a picture of him and the DEP commissioner.
 - h) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
 - i) Leaf Blowers. Phil met with representatives of the Board of Health, SHP, and other groups on this. Tina Weishaus noted we need to educate residents about the benefits of switching to electric leaf blowers. No one is interested in passing an ordinance. Tina's husband has an instrument that can measure sound levels, and there are also apps that can do this. Laurel will talk to the Board of Health about sending memo to the borough about this as a health issue, as gas blowers cause hearing loss for workers as well as air pollution. The goal is to have the Board of Health and Environmental Commission agree gas-powered blowers are a problem and ask the Borough Council to address this problem. It is important for residents to have input into this issue.
6. New Business: None
7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, at 8 PM on Zoom.