

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of February 1, 2023
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams
Meadows Volunteer: Craige Ambroch
Guest: Mark Lesko

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 4, 2023 meeting were approved.
3. We noted that Philip George will remain our Council liaison for 2023.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Gabrielle Estates at Buck Woods. The Borough Planner has deemed the application complete. The Planning Board will meet with the developer in March or April. The question of who is liable to clean up the site remains in litigation. Completion of the cleanup could potentially be a condition of site plan approval.
5. Correspondence
 - a) We received a \$400 bill from ANJEC for our 2023 annual membership.
6. Old Business
 - a) Avian Flu Update. Avian flu is killing many chickens and turkeys across the country. New Jersey has experienced at least six outbreaks in backyard chickens.
 - b) Cleanup Controls. Phil recommended that anyone who wants to do a cleanup in town contact Harry Glazer to publicize it. Mark has been sending out notices with cleanup dates. Sustainable Highland Park (SHP) holds cleanups on the first Saturday and second Sunday of each month. Both the high school and middle school are interested in participating. The Lower Raritan Partnership has also applied to do a cleanup. There is concern about having untrained volunteers work behind the Native Plant Sanctuary because that area has many sensitive species, and we don't want to disturb them. Craige will supervise Rutgers Day of Service volunteers working in the Meadows removing invasives on March 25.
 - c) Environmental Education Center. Borough Administrator Teri Jover reported there is a lot of junk in the Center and asked us to get rid of anything we don't want. We need to clean up the building. Michael and Allan will spend time going through the boxes. There are also items like shells and pine cones that still have educational value. We just need to figure out the best way to store them. RAICES is in talks with the borough about holding events at the Center. Mark noted Sustainable Highland Park (SHP) wants to do educational activities for kids, and those events could be held at the Center.
 - d) Stormwater Management Rules/Flood Hazard Area Control Act Rules. Councilman Matt Hersh sent a copy of the state's new stormwater rules to the Commission. NJDEP is updating projections for 100- and 500-year storms. Phil will likely ask us to review the new rules. The borough will update its stormwater ordinance to meet the new state requirements.
 - e) Website. Allan put up a blog entry about peregrine falcons in Johnson Park. He also mentioned other birds seen in town.

f) Meadows Update. The Commission put in the request for the Rutgers Day of Service volunteers on March 25, and we expect between five and 15 students to show up. They will remove invasive species and re-line the trail. We noted someone attached two by four benches to all the benches in the Meadows. These will be taken down by the Meadow volunteers. We will be purchasing equipment for a new boardwalk from Home Depot.

g) Trail Cameras. These will be put out in February.

h) Leaf Blowers. Laurel reported that the Board of Health is interested in an educational approach rather than an ordinance prohibiting gas-powered leaf blowers. They plan to demonstrate electric blowers at the Earth Day event, which will be held on the day of the Street Fair. We noted that in NJ, Princeton, Westfield, and Montclair enacted ordinances regulating use of leaf blowers, but those do not ban them but restrict their use to certain times of day and year. Laurel will request the Board of Health address the issue at its next meeting to consider taking a stronger stand.

7. New Business

a) Use of natural gas for heating and cooking. We will discuss this at a future meeting. Jon will research the subject and report back to us.

b) Properties next to the former Red's Marina. We support designating these two lots as open space. The Borough Council's Public Works Committee approved a request to the county to purchase these lots. The request will now be sent to the full Council for consideration.

c) Cleveland Avenue. Karen reported seeing two hazardous waste trucks and police cars at the development off of Cleveland Avenue on January 31 around 10:15 am. If a Hazmat response was necessary, it should be a matter of public record, and the Commission should find out exactly what happened.

d) List of Invasive Plants. The borough does not have a list of invasive plants. There is an URL for the county's "do not plant" and invasives list. It's in PDF form; Karen will email it to us. Mark reported that SHP is working with the library on such a list. Karen will send the county list to him.

e) Earth Day. This year's Earth Day celebration will be held together with the Street Fair on Sunday, May 7. The Earth Day event will likely be on South Third Avenue, as it was last year.

8. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at 8 PM on Zoom.