

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of May 3, 2023
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Mark Lesko, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams, Council liaison Matt Hersh

Guest: Craige Ambroch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 29, 2023 (official April 2023 meeting) were approved with minor corrections.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. The trail crew mowed and weed wacked last Sunday. A new volunteer will begin working within several weeks. Materials for the new boardwalk have been delivered to DPW. The trees from the Nature Conservancy/Sustainable Jersey grant are growing well, and those in the flood plain look good. There was some tree loss due to last summer's drought.
 - b) Skyview Terrace. The landowner seems open to the idea of having the Middlesex County purchase the section of his property with the conservation easement and adjacent two lots for open space.
 - c) Earth Day. Craige and Allan will be there. Craige will bring several display items, including a Virginia Creeper as an example of what residents should plant. He will also bring three lawn mowers—one gas-powered, one electric-powered, and a push mower. Karen will bring informational pamphlets. The table will be provided by DPW.
 - d) Invasive Plants. Allan did not find any resolutions supporting invasive plant legislation, but we can draft a resolution of our own. The borough code currently has very little about invasive plants (riparian buffer), but the borough can pass an ordinance against planting these as well as an ordinance against mulch volcanoes.
 - e) Gabrielle Estates. Last month's Planning Board meeting was carried over to next Thursday. A petition signed by around 100 people opposing the granting of variances was presented, but the Planning Board ignored it. JSM has committed to providing a copy of its mitigation plan and mitigation final report to the Environmental Commission when the plan and report becomes available. The public portion of the hearing on the application has not yet occurred. The likelihood is the application will be approved with a long list of conditions attached.
 - f) Website. The minutes of our last meeting were uploaded, as was Karen's list of invasive plants put out by the Native Plant Society.
 - g) Spotted Lantern Flies. An article about these was published in *USA Today*. Allan will send us copies of it. They have been reported in New York. Currently, they are concentrated in the east but moving west. Blue jays and other birds might be eating them. Irene Riegner of SHP will have a table on spotted lantern flies at the Earth Day event. Mike suggested we sponsor a public workshop on how to build a spotted lantern fly trap.

h) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.

i) Leaf Blowers. Electric leaf blowers will be demonstrated at the Earth Day event. Jon plans to attend a Board of Health meeting to discuss leaf blowers. Laurel will give him the Zoom link.

j) ANJEC Grant. We submitted our application, and ANJEC has acknowledged it and the accompanying support letter from the Borough Administrator. A decision will be made by May 17.

k) Rezoning of the Meadows/Solar Farm. Nothing new.

l) Thomas Edison County Park. The public comment period ended April 12. All public comments opposed the current plan. The *Home News Tribune* ran a story about people pushing back against it but said the park is now deemed open space. The park was closed in December, and work has already started.

m) Riverfront Trail (Greenway). We have a grant to study this and need to find out the latest developments.

n) Recycling. Matt supports our idea of scheduling a visit to the recycling facility where our recyclables are taken. This needs to go through the Council's Public Works Committee. We need to find out when the facility is available for tours and whether they will give us a tour.

6. New Business

a) Membership. Mark Lesko was appointed to the Environmental Commission at last night's Council meeting. Craig has resigned because he no longer lives in Highland Park. We still have one alternate position open.

7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, at 8 PM on Zoom.