

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of September 6, 2023  
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Mark Lesko, Allan Williams,  
Council liaison: Matt Hersh, Councilman” Philip George

Guest: Craige Ambroch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:04 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 5, 2023, meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence: None
5. Old Business
  - a) Meadows Update. The volunteers did maintenance work over the summer. They added a wildflower garden that is protected with fencing to keep out deer. Spotted lantern flies have been seen in the Meadows. The Highland Park Conservative Temple plans to do a cleanup along the riverbank on September 10 AM from 10 -12 PM.
  - b) Open Space/Greenway Feasibility Study. Mike attended a meeting last week at Borough Hall with Teri and a representative of ETM, the company doing the feasibility study. ETM surveyed the area along the riverfront, identified the property owners, and determined the trail cannot go under the Albany Street Bridge. The exact path of the trail and its steepness remain uncertain. They want the trail available to bikes as well as pedestrians, meaning it has to be 10 feet wide. The Raritan Avenue entrance will have an ADA accessible ramp. Matt noted the meeting discussed a conceptual design and access points but did not address who will be responsible for trail maintenance. The county might take up that responsibility since the greenway would connect the two county parks.
  - c) Skyview Terrace. The borough is waiting for the county to indicate whether they want to purchase these properties for the conservation easement.
  - d) Website. A new article has been posted about the ANJEC grant we received. Allan needs the June minutes so he can put them up.
  - e) Spotted Lantern Flies. Some have been seen in the Meadows, but very few have been seen around town.
  - f) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
  - g) Leaf Blowers. Mark set up a Zoom meeting, which was attended by people from several towns, including Edison, Highland Park, North Brunswick, and New Brunswick. People from Milltown and South River are also interested in this. It is a county-wide group who want to get rid of gas-powered leaf blowers. They plan to contact companies that make electric leaf blowers and invite them to demonstrate their products at a public event, probably in a park. They also want to see the police switch to electric equipment. Getting landscaping companies to switch will be most difficult because their costs will increase. The current focus is informational, on promoting alternative lawn equipment. The group will next meet on September 13 at

7 PM on Zoom. Mark will send Commission members the Zoom link. Matt suggested we get copies of sample leaf blower ordinances other communities have enacted. Montclair, Westfield, Princeton, and Maplewood have adopted ordinances restricting times of day or year they can be used. We can also reach out to ANJEC for sample ordinances.

- h) Environmental Education Center. The Gene Young dedication sign has been put back up. Some new outdoor furniture has been placed at the site, and the site has been cleaned up.
- i) ANJEC Grant. Allan, Craige, and Mike will go to Home Depot to buy the equipment and get started. We have the purchase order.
- j) Tour of Recycling Facility. Mike spoke to Frank Troy of DPW about this. It will be limited to no more than 12 people, starting with Commission members. The center is not an MCUA facility but a private company called Colgate located in New Brunswick. Frank will talk to his contact at Colgate and arrange for us to have a tour.
- k) Rezoning of Meadows and Solar Farm. There are a number of areas we want to rezone. Mike suggested we put together a list of areas in town we want to rezone, including empty lots that could be used as pocket parks. The county has money to purchase open space and can assist with restoring these areas. Matt said he and the mayor identified small parcels of borough-owned properties, which the county will be asked to purchase at 50% of cost. It is better if this list comes from borough boards and commissions. Mike will look for the open space list we created in the late 1990s as a starting point to come up with a new list.
- l) Solar Panels at the Environmental Education Center. Teri said this is not happening due to lack of funds.
- m) Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. Emma is working on getting the use numbers from the stations at the Community Center. We know their utilization is very good. We discussed asking gas stations in town to install charging stations. Matt is looking into subsidies available to businesses to do this.
- n) County Parks. The courts in Donaldson Park will be completed before the winter. Rutgers took over Johnson Park on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend to have fireworks for its football team. Several people complained that pedestrians were blocked during this time. Teri is reaching out to the county for more details on this issue. Matt said the borough will assure that pedestrian access is not cut off should Rutgers use the park again.

## 6. New Business

- a) Healthy Community Planning Report. Craige reported that Middlesex County released its 2022 Healthy Community Planning Report, a 54-page report with Highland Park data. We should consider whether there are issues brought up in this report with which we want to get involved. It is a [newjersey.gov](https://www.newjersey.gov) report with links to the county and state. Craige will email the report to Commission members.
- b) Moving Arts Commission Bench to the Environmental Education Center. Phil reported that an artistic bench created by the Arts Commission, currently located in front of the Lafayette condos, needs to be moved by September 11. He and Matt want to put it at the Environmental Education Center site but first want to run the idea by

the Commission. The EC agreed with the proposal. It needs a concrete pad, which DPW can put in. Phil will send us a list of suggested locations at the EEC.

7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, at 8 PM on Zoom.