

Highland Park Environmental Commission  
Meeting of January 3, 2024  
Minutes

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

Guest: Sam Friedman of NJPIRG

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:12 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 6, 2023, meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans: None
5. PIRG Speaker on Pesticides and Bees. Sam Friedman of NJPIRG introduced himself, discussed the adverse effects of neonicotinoid pesticides, and asked the Commission to recommend the Council pass an ordinance banning their use in Highland Park. Bees pollinate 90% of our food, and 51% of bee colonies have been destroyed. Neonicotinoids are banned statewide on a commercial level, but agricultural companies can still buy and use them. They are banned in Europe and Maine. NJPIRG wants NJ towns to ban their use, and Sam provided us with a sample template of an ordinance. Adopting it will qualify for the borough as a community project under Sustainable New Jersey. Several towns in the state have enacted ordinances banning neonicotinoids. Karen noted that landscapers can use these on private properties. Neonicotinoids do the most harm in the spring because that is when bees pollinate. Matt recommended we draft an ordinance and send it to Council. Sam will send us more information we can use for this.
6. Old Business
  - a) Gabrielle Estates. The applicant will consolidate the 49 lots on the site into one. The borough planner wants some additional details about the site updated.
  - b) Meadows Update. Half of the work for the ANJEC grant has been completed.
  - c) Open Space/Skyview Terrace. Nothing new.
  - d) Greenway Meeting. The borough held a public meeting on December 13, at which ETM discussed their greenway feasibility study. People were generally in favor of the project but brought up several concerns, including pedestrians having access to the rear yards of properties along the greenway, lighting, and flooding during storms. ETM did not discuss these issues and addressed only the route and the access points. Safety, security, and materials will be addressed when the report is done. There will be additional meetings on these subjects and on environmental concerns. This should be a county project, so the next steps will be to engage the county and state. Jon noted the proposed route is made up of two segments that have no connection with one another. A better route is needed to cross Route 27. ETM also did not mention that this is part of the East Coast greenway. Matt will inform us when their report is released.
  - e) Website. There is a new blog entry about the trip to the recycling center.
  - f) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
  - g) Leaf Blower Ordinance. There have been a series of meetings about this. Tina Weishaus of Sustainable Highland Park wants the Commission and the borough to co-sponsor the demonstration of electric lawn equipment that will be held in the spring. Co-

sponsoring means the borough would promote and endorse the event. The subject was discussed in the Council's Public Works Committee and will be put on the Council's next work session agenda, which will likely be on January 23. We voted unanimously to co-sponsor the event, which will be held at Yelencsics Park in Edison on April 14. Several manufacturers and distributors will attend and demonstrate zero-emission landscaping alternatives.

h) ANJEC Grant. Everything is on schedule. The volunteers are accumulating the photos and work orders that will be submitted in June.

i) Rezoning of the Meadows/Solar Farm. Nothing new. We will provide details on how we believe this area should be zoned, which Allan will put together and given to Council. We noted the solar farm area is still zoned residential.

j) Healthy Community Planning Report. This will be removed from our agenda.

k) Community Solar. Nothing new, but Matt should have an update next month.

l) Arts Commission Bench. This will be removed from our agenda.

m) Mary Denver's Memorial Tree/Grove. STAC will discuss this at their next meeting. They are waiting for the Native Plant Society of NJ to meet and decide what they want to do in Mary's memory. Matt noted that many people and groups want to honor Mary. He will reach out to her husband about this. The commemoration will be in the spring. Mike noted the Arts Commission calendar has a blurb about Mary.

n) Appreciation for Phil George's Assistance to the Meadows Trail Crew. Phil is okay with us honoring him at a Council meeting as long as we keep things low key. We need to work with Matt to pick a date to put this on the Council's agenda.

o) Meadows Trail Crew Sweatshirts. Allan picked them up.

7. New Business: None

8. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 8 PM on Zoom.