

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of April 3, 2024
Minutes

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

Guests: Craige Ambroch, Brianna Casario, watershed ambassador for Watershed Management
Area (WMA) 9

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 6, 2024, meeting were approved with one minor correction.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a letter from Colliers, an engineering firm seeking a DEP permit for riverfront stabilization behind 2 River Road. A drawing was submitted with the letter. The Borough Clerk's office has the entire submission.
5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. Craige reported the volunteers now have the materials to carry out the next phase of the ANJEC grant, which is building a new observation deck. Construction will begin in April and take four to six Sundays depending on the number of volunteers. So far, they completed about 58 hours on Phase 1, replacement of the old boards on the oldest deck. At least two signs will be put up stating the project was built with money donated by ANJEC. These will be placed by the observation deck and by the redone boardwalk.
 - b) Neonicotinoids. Matt reported he got a response from ANJEC, who seem to endorse our idea. Matt is ready to move the resolution to the Council's Public Works Committee. The resolution says we support healthy pollinator enhancement, and we will host at least one educational event about this. Now, we need to determine whether we want to ban neonicotinoids and develop a plan to qualify for Bee City designation. The current resolution can be modified. Matt will find out if the school district uses neonicotinoids. The borough and county do not use them.
 - c) Open Space/Skyview Terrace. Nothing new.
 - d) Riverfront Greenway. Nothing new.
 - e) Website. The February minutes are up. Allan put up a short blog about birds that have returned to Johnson Park since the winter.
 - f) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
 - g) Leaf Blower Ordinance. Matt noted the borough asked ANJEC about leaf blower ordinances and about working to support Senator Bob Smith's bill. Westfield's Board of Health, led by the group Advocates for Transforming Landscaping, passed a resolution on this. We will come up with an Environmental Commission statement presenting facts and gathering data about communities that have taken action to limit noisy lawn equipment. We could use support statements from the HP Board of Health and Sustainable Highland Park. Laurel will share the Westfield resolution with our Board of Health. Senator Bob Smith introduced legislation to prohibit the sale of gas-

powered leaf blowers. The bill is designated S217. There is also an Assembly bill, A2319, which provides rebates for electric equipment. We would like to recommend the Council support these bills; ideally, the Environmental Commission, Board of Health, and Sustainable Highland Park could submit statements supporting both bills. We also noted Tina Weishaus of SHP has ideas on rolling out an ordinance banning gas-powered leaf blowers.

- h) ANJEC Grant. Allan will submit the report in June. We have to supply pictures.
- i) Rezoning of the Meadows for Solar Farm. Teri wanted clarity on exactly what we want. We need to set up a meeting with her. Matt will follow up on this.
- j) Community Solar. The borough authorized an RFP for a solar consultant. The next step is applying to the BPU, which will be done in June.
- k) Appreciation for Philip George. Craig will report on Philip's donation. We could do this at the next Council meeting on April 16. Allan will confirm Phil's availability for that date. It would be great to have some of the volunteers and Commission members present.
- l) May 5 Earth Day Event. We won't have a table, as we don't have enough people to staff it. Craig will give tours of the Meadows on April 20. We need to publicize this.
- m) HP Ecology and Environmental Group. They are still doing cleanups in town, and the next one will be this Saturday. No location has yet been chosen. The last one was done at the bottom of South Sixth Avenue, and DPW picked up the trash collected.
- n) Sump Pumps. Allan searched for sump pump ordinances and found that Franklin Township has one. He will send a copy of it to us. The Franklin ordinance has a checklist for new homes that install sump pumps. The issue isn't sump pumps themselves but the fact that water cannot be diverted off people's properties. Matt reported that the only restriction in our ordinance is the prohibition of connecting sump pumps to the sanitary sewer system. This is not sufficient, so our ordinance needs to be updated. Matt will consult with Teri about this.

6. New Business

- a) Brianna discussed upcoming events sponsored by the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. They are hosting a rain barrel building event, which will cost \$60 for the materials. More information is available on their website. Brianna will lead an LRWP cleanup in Franklin Township on April 13. On May 11, LRWP will lead a visual and habitat stream assessment training at Middlesex High School and out in the field. A multi-site LRWP cleanup will be held on May 19 in Dunellen, Green Brook, Middlesex, and Plainfield. Mike noted the county is looking for people to do trail patrols in county parks. He will call for more information.
- b) MIZELA Event on April 14. The electric equipment demonstration will be held on this day. Matt will have the event flyer put on the borough's Facebook page.
- c) Craig noted that Senator Bob Smith reintroduced the invasive species bill in the State Senate following Governor Murphy's veto of it in January. The bill number is S1029. The Commission should actively support this legislation.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 8 PM on Zoom.