

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of July 10, 2024
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Mark Lesko, Karen Swaine

Guest: Craige Ambroch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:06 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 1, 2024, meeting were approved.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. Craige reported that the new observation deck and the boardwalk are complete. The volunteers will next replant the gully and remove invasive species during the summer and fall. The final report was submitted to ANJEC by the deadline. Additional work will include maintaining the trail and assuring it is wide enough. Construction will be held off until the fall. We need to put up signs in front of the observation deck and boardwalk stating these were made possible through a grant from ANJEC.
 - b) Neonicotinoids. We are waiting to hear from the Board of Health on what they want to do about this issue.
 - c) Open Space/Skyview Terrace. Nothing new.
 - d) Greenway. Nothing new.
 - e) Website. Several updates have been made. We have pictures of the new Meadows observation deck and can post them on the website.
 - f) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
 - g) Leaf Blower Ordinance. State Senator Bob Smith has a bill in committee that would regulate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.
 - h) ANJEC Grant. The final report was submitted on time.
 - i) Rezoning of Meadows and Solar Farm. Matt is following up on this.
 - j) Community Solar. Nothing new.
 - k) Cleanups. Mark reported that the last cleanup he led was at Valley Place Ravine. Volunteers pulled out three bags of trash and a tire. Three more cleanups are scheduled for the summer—at Irving School, Bartle School, and the middle/high school. These will be done on the first Saturdays and third Sundays of each month. Mark has a data sheet with information from two years of cleanups. He will send a copy of it to Commission members.
 - l) Sump Pumps. We are looking into an ordinance that would regulate sump pumps in places where they discharge stormwater. We reviewed and liked a Franklin Township ordinance. Matt will discuss this with the Borough Council.
 - m) Trail Patrols in County Parks. The county is looking for volunteers to patrol trails throughout county parks. We deferred this subject to our next meeting.
 - n) Parking at Environmental Education Center Courtyard. Karen reported that the planted area will be extended toward River Road, and the fence will be replaced. She will email us Susan Edmunds' plans for the Native Plant Sanctuary and will talk to

Susan to find out if she has ideas for the solar structure. Mike will talk to Udi Shorr about the status of the bee hives.

- o) Mary Denver recognition. Karen emailed the Native Plant Society about this but did not receive a response. She noted that the Native Plant Society is now responsible for planting groves of trees at the Native Plant Sanctuary site. Something was proposed in Mary's memory, which Phil and Matt Hersh favored, but we are not sure what it is. Karen will write up a summary of Mary's contributions and share it with both the Native Plant Society and STAC. We can also ask Harry Glazer to issue a proclamation in Mary's honor.

6. New Business

- a) Rain Gardens. Mark took a 10-week course on rain gardens at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension and now has certification. He held a meeting about maintaining rain gardens in town. The plan is to assess their structures and do plantings in the fall. Karen will advise the volunteers on what to plant. This is a multi-group project involving several Highland Park organizations. Mark's volunteers are cleaning rain gardens in town; we questioned whether DPW would also be willing to do this. Another idea is to recruit people who live near individual rain gardens to clean them. Borough Administrator Teri Jover announced that the borough is revamping the tot lot on Felton Avenue. That might be an ideal site for a rain garden.
- b) Invasive Species Act. Craige reported this is currently in the state legislature in front of the NJ Senate Environment and Energy Committee. We should pay attention to this.
- c) Meadows Tours. Craige led two tours of the Meadows, and Mark also led several. People are interested in these tours, so we might want to do them more regularly.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, September 4, 2024, at 8 PM on Zoom.