

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of September 25, 2024

Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 10, 2024, meeting were approved (the September 4, 2024, meeting did not have a quorum due to problems with Google Meets).
3. Site Plan
 - a) 801 Raritan Avenue—Hogan’s Auto Mechanic. The applicant is proposing to build a second floor and reconstruct some storage areas, including a shed for tires. However, the site plan has no narrative.
4. Correspondence: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. Construction of the observation platform is finished. There is lumber at the site that might be available for another use.
 - b) Neonicotinoids. The Council’s Public Works Committee supports an ordinance on neonicotinoids as well as legislation proposed by State Senator Bob Smith. The borough does not use neonicotinoids. We reached out to ANJEC for draft resolutions.
 - c) Open Space/Skyview Terrace. Nothing new.
 - d) Greenway. Nothing new.
 - e) Website. Allan is writing a blog entry on the ANJEC grant, but it is not yet complete.
 - f) Trail Cameras. Nothing new.
 - g) Leaf Blowers. The task force composed of members of the Commission, Board of Health, and Sustainable Highland Park, which has not yet officially been formed, wants to start with an educational outreach program rather than an ordinance.
 - h) Rezoning of the Solar Farm. We made recommendations to the Council to rezone this property several times. Mike will look for our past submissions. He and Allan will put together a new recommendation to submit to the Council.
 - i) Community Solar. The borough hired the firm Solar Landscape. Residents can still sign up to be part of the program, which is opt out. Using census information and demographic data, the borough can provide a discount to households below a specific income.
 - j) Cleanups. Mark has been holding regularly scheduled cleanups around town. One is scheduled for this Sunday. Mark is also involved in rain garden repairs around town. There are rain gardens on South 3rd, South 4th, South 5th, and at the Teen Center.
 - k) Redevelopment. Matt reported the borough is doing amendments to the redevelopment plan for Tract C to expand the footprint for access. Condemnation will be allowed. He is trying to arrange a meeting with the Commission and Sustainable Highland Park to provide feedback on building practices, landscaping, and lighting. Matt will copy Mike and Tina on an email to get this going. Allan noted that Teri Jover was supposed to put the new Tract C plans on the borough website, but as of

last week, this was not done. Matt will send us the link once the plans are put on the site.

- l) Precipitation Diversion/Sump Pumps. The borough is supposed to have an ordinance requiring sump pump placement on new construction to be brought up to date. The question is how to remediate the situation in existing homes. We do know that some newly constructed sites are pumping water into the street. There may be opportunities to remediate these.
- m) Trail Patrols in County Parks. Nothing new.
- n) Mary Denver Recognition. A plaque with Mary's name has been installed at the Native Plant Sanctuary. Karen emailed the NJ Native Plant Society suggesting they plant a grove of trees or place a bench commemorating Mary at the site. Matt will look into whether the borough has done anything to honor Mary.
- o) Invasive Species Act. This is still being worked on at the state level. The governor vetoed it, but the bill is back in the legislature.
- p) Meadows Tours. Craige is running these.
- q) Parking at the Environmental Education Center. At one time, a red car was parked behind the building, but this hasn't happened recently. Matt spoke to Raices about this, and they were not familiar with anyone parking at that spot.
- r) Budget. We have \$437.95 to spend or give back by the end of the year. Allan plans to attend the ANJEC Congress.

6. New Business

- a) A tree in front of the Environmental Education Center was removed. It had a very large dead branch but wasn't dead itself, and STAC did not approve its removal. The borough wants to see the arborist's report, as we don't know why the whole tree was taken down. Karen noted that because the tree was large, five new trees should be planted in its place. Additional trees should also be planted deeper into the property. We asked Matt to find out how many trees will be planted and who is responsible for doing the planting. Jon noted the sidewalk is buckling, which the owner of the Frederick was supposed to address. None of the improvements they were supposed to do have been done. Matt will inform Scott Brescher about this. Scott, the borough planner, and the borough engineer are supposed to follow up with applicants on conditions of approval.

7. The meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 8 PM on Google Meets.