

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 6, 2024
Minutes

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

Guest: Brianna Casario, ambassador, NJ Watershed Management Area 9

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:08 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 25, 2024, meeting were approved with minor corrections. Two additional rain gardens in town should be added to the list: Centennial Park and one on Felton Street. Condemnation will be allowed for two redevelopment sites.
3. Site Plans: None
4. Correspondence: None
5. Brianna is starting her term as ambassador to Watershed Management Area 9 and is looking for opportunities to become involved. She is one of 20 ambassadors in the state, all representing a watershed management area. The program partners with DEP, conducts goals presentations, educates communities about environmental areas, does at least two cleanups in each community, and engages in other partnership programs. The goal is to better each watershed. We discussed possible events and ideas on which she can work with us.
6. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. The volunteers aren't doing much work because the ground is so dry. They will investigate to make sure trees haven't come down.
 - b) Rain Gardens. Mark noted volunteers are waiting for Matt Hersh and DPW to meet with them to address work they plan to do on several rain gardens in town. DPW will do the construction, and Karen will do maintenance. There are rain gardens on 3rd, 4th, 5th, Felton, the Teen Center, and Centennial Park. The pipe at Centennial Park is completely clogged, and nothing is growing. Mark recommended we put rain gardens on our monthly agenda.
 - c) Neonicotinoids: Nothing new
 - d) Greenway. Nothing new
 - e) Website. Minutes on the site are up to date. Allan will put up his blog about the ANJEC grant and the new observation deck in the Meadows in a day or two.
 - f) Leaf Blower Ordinance. Tina Weishaus of Sustainable Highland Park (SHP) created a task force composed of members of SHP, the Environmental Commission, and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) to work on this. They plan to have information sessions at the library. Allan noted that ANJEC has resources about leaf blowers.
 - g) Cleanups. Mark holds these the first Saturdays and third Sundays of each month. Last weekend, volunteers cleaned the parking lot on South Third Avenue and picked up 67 pounds of garbage. The next cleanup will be at Valley Place trail on November 17. The high school and middle school are doing their own cleanups. The volunteers may get more supplies and work with the schools at additional cleanup sites.

- h) Precipitation Diversion/Sump Pumps. Matt sent us a draft borough ordinance on this. We will review it and give him feedback.
 - i) Mary Denver Recognition. The Native Plant Sanctuary has been renamed the Mary Denver Native Plant Sanctuary. Karen will write up a proposal for a memorial at the site and give it to Matt Hersh to run by the Council. She will then send a copy to the Highland Park branch of the Native Plant Society. The minimum amount of money we will need to plant a tree and put a plaque at its base is \$1100. Jon questioned whether we could use money from the borough's tree fund for this. We need to discuss this with Susan and Andy, the STAC members who are in charge of the Native Plant Sanctuary.
 - j) Invasive Species Act (state legislation). Nothing new
 - k) Parking at the Environmental Education Center (EEC). One particular car continues to be parked by the EEC. Karen said we should take the license plate number and give it to the police.
 - l) Budget. We have \$437.95 left in our budget. We could buy tools from Steve Barnes, who has many he is willing to sell, including a weed wacker, saw, and leaf blower. We need to ask how much he wants for these tools.
 - m) Removal of Large Tree at the EEC. Karen was told it was an ash and had to come down. We're not sure this is true.
 - n) Community Solar. Nothing new
7. New Business
- a) New Mural at the EEC. Molly Crabapple was paid to do the new mural along the EEC wall near where the tree was cut down. We are not sure who authorized this. We noted the borough signed an annual lease of the EEC with Raices.
 - b) Meetings Calendar for 2025. Allan drafted this. Mike reviewed it and approved it.
 - c) Allan sent Commission members an email from the Franklin Township Environmental Commission inviting us to their meeting on November 14.
 - d) Plastic Waste Webinar. This free national webinar is sponsored by ATL, a group involved with leaf blower issues statewide. Jon will send the email about this to Mark, who will forward it to SHP.
8. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, at 8 PM on Google Meets.