**Highland Park Environmental Commission**

Meeting of February 5, 2025

Minutes

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

Guests: Clark Chin, Qiuyu Lin, Irene Riegner, Matthew Schrager

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 8, 2025, meeting were approved with one minor correction. Item 4 should read “more benches around the trail,” not “more benches along the river.”
3. Prof. Clark Chin and student Qiuyu Lin at Rutgers’ School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, are working with Highland Park middle school science teachers to study the deer population in Highland Park. They are funded by a National Science Foundation grant. The project will determine if there is a deer overpopulation problem in town and if so, its possible causes and effects, and will focus on habitat fragmentation. Matt will share the borough’s Deer Management Plan from 2021 with them. Clark and Qiuyu will be happy to share their findings with us once the study is done.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Correspondence
6. We received a bill from ANJEC for our annual dues, which are now $500.
7. Old Business
8. Meadows Update. Mark did some minor maintenance work at the Meadows and noted we need more benches, especially for elderly people to sit down. Irene said many of the benches are too high and requested they be placed in a lower position.
9. Neonicotinoids. Mark will look into peer-reviewed literature to find if there is anything confirming these are harmful to humans.
10. Greenway. Nothing new.
11. Website. Some of the links for the minutes on the website do not work. Allan said this is due to changes in Word Press, and he is working on fixing it.
12. Leaf Blower Ordinance. The task force plans to hold a meeting on February 17. They are researching ordinances adopted by various towns. Allan noted that State Senator Bob Smith is sponsoring a bill in the State Senate to get rid of gas-powered leaf blowers. The bill includes rebates to cover contractor’s cost of switching to electric leaf blowers.
13. Community Solar. The borough is finalizing its agreement with Solar Landscape. Currently, 500 households are participating. They will receive a 30% discount on their energy costs. The program will officially launch in the spring.
14. Cleanups. No cleanups have been held since early December because the weather has been too cold. One is scheduled for February 16, but the forecast calls for snow that day. The schools are doing cleanups at their properties with tools purchased for them by Sustainable Highland Park (SHP). These will count towards the borough’s Sustainable Jersey points.
15. Invasive Species Act. Nothing new.
16. Sump Pump Ordinance. The Borough Council passed the ordinance. We now need to do outreach about it. Allan will raise the issue at tomorrow’s Planning Board meeting, and Matt will consult with Jennifer Santiago about this.
17. New Business
18. OPRA Request. Jennifer received an OPRA request for our 2024 meeting minutes and for those of Sustainable Highland Park.
19. Goals for 2025. Mark noted we need more benches in the Meadows. This will be discussed with the trail crew. We will further discuss goals for the year at our March meeting.
20. 2025 Budget. Mike submitted our budget request to Teri. We need $500 from our temporary budget to pay our ANJEC dues.
21. Parking at the Environmental Education Center. Two cars were parked at the center last week. We questioned how to get the word out that parking isn’t allowed there, and signage noting this was recommended. Matt will look into this.
22. Earth Day. The Street Fair will take place on Sunday, May 4, and there is an SHP subcommittee focused on Earth Day activities. Irene is an SHP member and can help coordinate our participation in this. Planning meetings will take place on Zoom.
23. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 8 PM on Google Meets.