

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of June 4, 2025
Minutes

Present: Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Mark Lesko, Josephine O’Grady, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams

Guests: Craige Ambroch, Melhi Shiu

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:06 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 7, 2025 meeting were approved with one correction.
3. Membership. Josephine O’Grady has been appointed to the Environmental Commission.
4. We noted the recent passing of Sustainable Highland Park chair and longtime environmental activist Tina Weishaus.
5. Site Plans: None
6. Correspondence: None
7. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. The volunteers put an enclosure around Colin’s wildflower garden to protect it. Butterflies can still get in. Someone set up a tent by the river, unaware that there is no camping allowed there. The police helped him pack up his things.
 - b) Neonicotinoids. Nothing new.
 - c) Greenway. Matt was not here to report on this.
 - d) Website. Josephine was added to the list of Commission members. The April minutes are now up.
 - e) Leaf Blower Ordinance. The task force is having two additional meetings. The first will be on June 11 at 7 PM on Zoom, and the second will be on June 26 at 7 PM in the library. Jon hopes to share the survey results at the second meeting. A separate survey was sent to 25-30 landscapers. One task force member will contact the property managers of the larger apartment complexes in town to obtain contact information for their landscapers as well as invite the landscapers to the meetings. Task force members are trying to get a Spanish speaker for one or both of the meetings. Melhi will ask her colleagues if any are interested in volunteering as a Spanish speaker.
 - f) Community Solar. Matt was not here to report on this.
 - g) Cleanups. Mark reported that nine volunteers took part in the May 19 cleanup, and they collected 41.5 pounds of trash. The next cleanup is this Saturday, June 7 at Karsey Park from 9-11 AM and at the native plant giveaway from 10 AM-1 PM. On Sunday, June 8, during the native plant distribution, there will be a tour of the Meadows trail at noon. Mark noted the volunteers have done 58 cleanups in town since July 2022.
 - h) Invasive Species Act. Nothing new.
 - i) Budget. Our budget for the year is \$1,075. We will have \$400 left after we pay ANJEC membership and expenses for the website. We need to think about how we want to spend this money. One option is a wood shed by DPW to store tools.
 - j) Recycling. Middlesex County put out a brochure that covers recycling but gives no real guidance on the numbers of the plastics that are recycled. Highland Park

recycling is handled by a private entity that has just been purchased. We have been recycling only numbers one and two. Allan noted there is a recycling app that tells exactly what specific towns are recycling. Melhi noted Monroe accepts styrofoam items from anywhere for recycling, as long as they are clean and brought on the correct day.

- k) South Third Avenue Plaza. The borough has selected a designer for this project. We would like to see the basic design criteria. We also need to find out the plans for the rain garden there.
- l) Bamboo Ordinance. Karen recommended we draft a resolution supporting no outdoor bamboo use. She will write this up and share it with us before sending it to Matt.
- m) Rain Gardens. Mark's group won the Park Partners grant. Borough Administrator Teri Jover wants a planning meeting with Mark and Matt. Mark and the volunteers visited the rain gardens on South 3rd, South 4th, and South 5th Avenues and noted the weeds growing there. DPW needs to regrade the cement so water flows into the rain gardens. The volunteers plan to hold an education session at the library. Mark noted that on South 5th, there is no dirt or rock underneath the sidewalk, so the sidewalk will eventually sink.

8. New Business

- a) Mulch Volcanoes by Trees on School Properties. Karen reported the school district groundskeeper put mulch volcanoes with every tree and shrub on the high school property. Melhi complained about this and was told that the person who did the work did it the wrong way, and that the grounds manager was out for a week. She will send a letter to the high school principal and to the superintendent. We noted the groundskeepers do this year after year. We will write an email to the groundskeeper, principal, and superintendent and cc the school's Environmental Club advisors and the district green team leader. Melhi is one of the club's advisors. Karen noted the same thing was done at Bartle School and noted we need a sit-down meeting and walk-around with the groundskeeper. Melhi offered to act as a liaison to the district and its green team and recommended Mark serve as liaison to the borough.

- 9. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, July 2, 2025 at 8 PM on Google Meets.