

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of July 2, 2025
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 4, 2025 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Site Plans
 - a) 810 North Second Avenue. This is a minor site plan before the Planning Board proposing to convert a former laboratory building to four apartments. The lot is about 7,000 square feet, and the building is about 3,700 square feet. We need more information about drainage and where the water will go. Allan will write up a memo from the Commission to the Planning Board.
4. Correspondence
 - a) The Middlesex Greenway Coalition sent county Environmental Commissions a letter opposing the construction of a privately operated rail bike operation in the Middlesex Greenway Corridor in Metuchen on the grounds that it would monetize parkland for private profit and that it would interfere with people walking and biking. The letter does not ask us to take any action. The letter was also sent to the mayors and councils of both Highland Park and Metuchen.
5. Old Business
 - a) New Council Resolutions. The Borough Council passed two resolutions at its July meeting. These are a land use pledge and a Complete and Green Streets policy. The purpose of these is to get points in certification with Sustainable NJ, as many Sustainable NJ certifications require these resolutions as first steps. The Complete and Green Streets policy should help the borough better implement its bicycle and pedestrian plan.
 - b) Meadows. Craig sent us the following update about work at the Meadows: “A very large tree fell and blocked the trail. A big wind cracked it off about 10 feet off the ground. Unfortunately, the huge broken off section was still leaning against the upright trunk and very dangerous. The Trail Crew took it down to the ground very carefully and now all is fine. We again had the same HP resident setting up a tent and camping in the Meadows forest, down in the floodplain, about 50 feet from the trail. I called the HP Police, and Officer Winkowski came down to speak to the camper. They are very familiar with him. He doesn't have any food so it's a transient camp. Officer Winkowski said he really has no authority to force him to move, but he offered to check with HP Zoning. He spoke to Scott Brescher and confirmed there is no ordinance preventing him from camping. I then spoke to Matt and Phil George at the HP Pride Flag raising, and filled them in on the situation. I'll continue to track the camping and report any new occurrence to the EC. I'll also take pictures from a safe distance. Ideally, the Borough Council could draw up an ordinance to prohibit camping, motorized vehicles, etc. in the Meadows. These kinds of activities really do

present a public nuisance in my opinion.” Also, Craige led a tour of the Meadows this past Sunday, which eight people attended.

- c) Neonicotinoids. Nothing new
 - d) Greenway. Matt reported that the Council is discussing asking Middlesex County if they are interested in participating in the greenway project, as we want it to be managed by the county.
 - e) Website. Josephine is now listed as a Commission member.
 - f) Leaf Blower Ordinance. A meeting on the proposed ordinance was held at the library and on Zoom. Twelve people attended in person and three online, including a landscaper from BRD, which does a lot of work in town. There was a lot of good feedback at the meeting. The task force will hold another meeting after July 4 to address the next steps in the process. Over 400 people have completed the survey, including seven contractors. Matt wants to introduce the ordinance in the fall. We will have a formal update on the process in September.
 - g) Community Solar. The borough is waiting on the contract.
 - h) Cleanups. Two cleanups were held in June. Around 15 volunteers attended the cleanup at Karsey Park. They cleaned the park and adjacent streets and collected 23.5 pounds of trash. The other cleanup was on the Meadows trail along the river. The next two are scheduled for Saturday, July 5 in the woods at the bottom of South 7th Avenue and July 20 at Irving School. Both will take place from 9-11 AM.
 - i) Invasive Species Act. The borough will pass a resolution in support of the proposed state legislation. Matt asked the Borough Attorney to draft an ordinance prohibiting the planting of bamboo, which he will circulate with the Commission.
 - j) Budget. We spent \$657 of our 2025 budget on the website and ANJEC dues and have \$400 left. We need to submit our 2026 budget request by December 1.
 - k) Recycling of Plastics. DPW needs to do a better job publicizing this. We are still doing our own recycling and are not part of the county program. Matt will ask Teri to send us an update.
 - l) Mulch Volcanoes. We don't know if Karen or Melhi followed up on this. The concern was specifically about landscaping at the schools.
6. New Business
- a) Rain Gardens. Chris and Mark met with Teri. They brought up the sidewalk issue on South 5th and the need to have DPW not do maintenance at the rain gardens so we can see what is there and remove the weeds. We don't know if the rain gardens on South 3rd will be moved or altered. We want to do a rain gardens 101 presentation at the library and/or at one of the rain gardens. Weeding will be done in the fall; we will need to do several rounds of weeding before planting anything.
 - b) South 3rd Plaza. The borough is working with the site designer, but no plans have yet been presented to anyone. The borough is waiting to get a handle on several South 3rd properties that may provide access to the plaza.
 - c) Fawn Killed in Donaldson Park. An unleashed dog killed a fawn in Donaldson Park. We questioned whether the police can enforce leash laws in the park. Matt will consult Phil George on this. We could install signs in the park informing people that dogs have to be leashed.

- d) Boards and Commission Chairs Meeting. The meeting was held on June 18. Participants reviewed the Boards and Commissions handbook. Allan has a copy of the handbook and will send it to all Commission members. Matt said the borough is considering setting up an official email list of board and commission chairs. He also noted the borough has a diversity survey open for board and commission members and encouraged everyone to complete it.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM. We will not meet in August. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 at 8 PM on Google Meets.