

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of December 3, 2025
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 5, 2025 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Membership. Josephine O'Grady has resigned from the Commission. She will send a resignation letter to the borough.
4. Meeting Schedule. Mike sent Monica Jackson our meeting schedule for 2026. We will continue to meet the first Wednesday of every month at 8 PM except for April, when we will meet on the second Wednesday, and August, when there will be no meeting.
5. Site Plan
 - a) The owner of 6 Barnard St. wants to convert the site from residential to commercial and is submitting a preliminary site application. The building use was changed to commercial in 2024. The applicant will put in new windows and doors and remove the garage and patio. The site will become an art gallery with four parking spaces in back with lighting. The parking area will be concrete, so there will be more impervious coverage, and the applicant will put a buffer of trees in the back to separate the property from the next-door neighbor. Karen suggested we urge the owner to use a different evergreen than the one they are proposing, which attract deer; STAC will address this with the applicant. The Planning Board should determine what the applicant is planning to do for stormwater management. There are catch basins on both sides of the corner. The ideal is to have stormwater remain on the property. Comments: Use pervious coverage for parking spaces and rain barrels to catch water on site. Lighting should be downlit, not shine out. Matt will look at the lighting at Cleveland Avenue to see if it's a model for best practices.
6. Correspondence: None
7. Old Business
 - a) Meadows Update. The message board at the trail broke, and the Trail crew fixed it. Councilman George will make a new sign for the Meadows and for the Steve Barnes Meadows Trail. We noted that Steve was very pleased to hear that the trail has been named for him.
 - b) Greenway. Nothing new.
 - c) Website. Meeting minutes are up-to-date. Allan will work on website improvements in January.
 - d) Leaf Blower Ordinance. Matt reported the Council will discuss this at a work session next Tuesday, December 9, at 7 PM in Borough Hall. The meeting may include public comment, but there will not be a formal presentation. Current plans are to introduce the ordinance in January.
 - e) Community Solar. Matt noted the opt-in letter for Community Solar was sent out on November 5. The borough is looking at getting the program started in a few weeks.

Solar Landscaping is using solar panels from existing or new solar farms not in Highland Park. The company has infrastructure on rooftops on many locations. The borough still wants to move forward with solar installation on our larger buildings.

- f) Cleanups. Mark and volunteers did a cleanup at the high school, where they removed a lot of trash, especially under the bleachers. A high school student joined the cleanup. It would be helpful if we could get the high school's environmental club to take responsibility for maintaining school grounds. There may be additional cleanups done at the high school and middle school. Two cleanups are scheduled for December, both downtown, on the 6th and the 21st. Current plans are to keep the same cleanup schedule for 2026—the first Saturday and third Sunday of each month.
 - g) Invasive Species Act. The Borough Council passed the bamboo ordinance at their last meeting.
 - h) 2026 Budget. We spent all but \$28 of our budget this year on a new saw, blades, and a battery for a lawn mower. Allan submitted our request for \$7,400 for 2026 because everything increased in price, including ANJEC membership and the website and URL \$6,000 of this request is for the storage shed at the Meadows. Craige will try to find the most affordable shed option.
 - i) Mulch Volcanoes. Karen and several STAC members met with the school groundskeeper about this. STAC members will pull the mulch away from the tree trunks with hand rakes. They just need to inform the groundskeeper about when they plan to do this. The groundskeeper agreed to tell his crew to not redo the mulch volcanoes. We noted there are still some landscapers working for private homeowners who put mulch volcanoes on street trees even though no one is supposed to do anything to those trees.
 - j) Oral History of the Meadows. Allan and Matt met last Tuesday to discuss this. Work on the project has not yet started. Terry is writing a letter to the Rutgers History Department approving the project, which the mayor will sign.
8. New Business
- a) Borough Engineer Bruce Koch has retired after at least 20 years of service. The Council will determine whether the borough will stay with CME for engineering.
 - b) The Borough Council reorganization meeting will take place on the first Tuesday in January. It has not yet been publicly announced.
 - c) The borough is having a South 3rd Plaza presentation on December 15 at 6:30 PM at Borough Hall, where findings from the public session in October will be reported.
9. The meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at 8 PM on Google Meets.