

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



May 28, 2025 - Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting - 7:30pm – 9:00pm

In Person – Boro Hall (downstairs meeting room)

Google Meeting Information - <https://meet.google.com/ibq-yrmb-zhf>

Attendees

In-person: Rose Delorenzo, Lisa Noss, Matthew Hersh, Randy Solomon, Meli Pihura Shiu, Paul Sauers, Mark Lesko, Tami Sharma

Virtual: KT Ho-Nguyen, Irene Riegner, Chris Perez

New attendees – in-person: Ellen Walsh, Tamara Richman, John Caputo

New attendees – virtual: Mary Botteon

Topics for Discussion

- **Tribute to Tina**
 - We were heartbroken to hear that Tina, our past Chair, passed away in the morning. It was nice for us to be together in community for an in-person (hybrid) meeting for the first time in about 2 years
 - Randy shared a beautiful tribute from Sustainable Jersey which will be published soon
 - We would like to find a way to recognize Tina's incredible dedication to our community. We will first speak with Tina's family to see what is appropriate.
 - The Boro might do a proclamation in her honor. Maybe there can be a ceremony at the Native Plant Sanctuary.

Pertinent Committee Updates:

- **Earth Day Fair Debrief**
 - On Sunday, May 4 we had our annual Earth Day Fair as part of the Highland Park Spring Street Fair. It was a wonderful day despite the rain.
 - Irene R. thinks we need to do more to stand out from the Street Fair.
 - We all agree that a different day and location is a lot of work and not the direction we want to go in but there is more we can do to distinguish the "Green Zone" of the Street Fair.
 - Signage needs to be clearer at the entrance to North 3rd Ave
 - Matt says he can probably get a banner printed across North 3rd like they do for the regular Street Fair on Raritan Ave. We should be in touch with him about this.
 - We want to print a vertical banner next year. We didn't this year because we were considering changing our logo.

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



- We can be more creative with making North 3rd Ave look more like a “Green Zone”
 - We should speak with Monica about including the Earth Day Fair in the name of the Street Fair
 - The day before, we had a cleanup of the Earth Day area. Perhaps we can add something next year like a tree planting in honor of Tina.
 - We want to have more kids' activities next year and make sure we have a food vendor (vegan food from Meredith – she couldn't make it this year)
 - We also want to speak to Main Street Highland Park about having vegan / locally sourced food vendors and aligned businesses closer to our street
- **Website Update** – Lisa and Claudia
 - We launched our redesigned website this month! Check out <https://sustainablehighlandpark.org/>
 - Claudia and Lisa spent months working with our web designer. This project was made possible by a \$2,000 grant from the Boro.
 - Everyone seems very happy with the new website
- **Marketing** – KT / Lisa / Rose
 - Please take photos at each event and share them along with a blurb in Discord so KT can share on social media
 - We added a new feature to our monthly newsletter, Sustainability Spotlight, where we will highlight local organizations, businesses, and residents who are doing sustainability-minded work. We'll add each feature to social media and the website. [Nominations are open here.](#)
 - KT will share the form on social media and Lisa will add to the website
 - We discussed creating a recognition program for local businesses for sustainability practices since it's a Sustainable Jersey action but it's a lot of work to do properly.
 - As soon as anyone knows dates for an event/program that is relevant for us to promote, please share on Discord so we have plenty of time to advertise.
- **Gas Powered Leaf Blower Task Force Update** – Mark
 - [Fill out the quick survey here.](#)
 - They are also working on surveying landscapers in English & Spanish.
 - There has been one public meeting already and two more are scheduled on June 11 and June 26.
- **Park Partners Grant/Rain Gardens Update** – Mark, Chris
 - Mark Lesko, Josephine O'Grady, and Chris Perez won a Park Partners Grant from the Boro in the Environment category: Raritan Avenue Rain Gardens Revitalization

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



- Volunteers will be trained to properly maintain the rain gardens by Chris Perez and Karen Swaine
- The gardens need to be regraded and we need to add proper plants with deep roots
- Tamara asked about having signs that residents with pollinator gardens can include in their gardens. Meli said this is something we would like to do at some point. Perhaps it can be a Park Partners Grant submission for next year.
 - We can also nominate people we know with pollinator gardens for the Sustainability Spotlight feature.
 - There are also organizations that certify gardens that we can look into.
- **Sustainable Jersey Actions**
 - Tina Weishaus – Sustainable Jersey’s June 2025 Sustainability Hero – article brought to the meeting
 - Future meeting with Jake Callahan (meeting pending) – no update
- **Programming Updates – Tami**
 - **Next SHP Event - Clean and Green Weekend – June 7 & 8, 2025**
 - Saturday, June 7
 - Molimock-Graff Park (formerly Karsey Park)
 - 9 am – 11am – Community Cleanup
 - 10 am – 1 pm – Native Plant Giveaway
 - Sunday, June 8
 - Outside Highland Park Public Works (444 Valentine Street)
 - 10 am – 1 pm – Native Plant Giveaway
 - 12 pm – Guided Tour of the Meadows Trail
 - [Please RSVP here](#)
 - The plant giveaway is for Highland Park residents but non-residents are welcome to join us for the cleanup and trail tour!
 - **Selecting a programming priority for the remainder of the year**
[\[Updated Presentation Link\]](#)
 - Tami has a form set up for ranked choice voting to choose a program to prioritize from the ones listed in our [initiatives sign-up form](#)
 - Programming ideas fall into one or many of the following themes (which overlap with SHP’s Mission Statement) :
 - Economic * *previously not mentioned*

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



- Educational
 - Environmental
 - Plants
 - Waste Reduction
 - Social (Community Engagement)
- Adopt-a-drain and cleanups already have a lot of interest and buy-in and that's why not many people checked them off on the form
 - Composting has a lot of interest
 - Programs:
 - **Skill sharing series**
 - These programs encourage waste reduction.
 - In April Josephine presented on converting your lawn into a garden
 - In February we had a low waste craft night in partnership with the Library
 - We have about 18 responses on a skill sharing sign-up form
 - The next workshop idea is fridge cleaner recipes. We can turn this into an educational opportunity
 - This series requires communication with the people who reach out to us
 - We need about a month and a half to advertise the programs
 - **Swap markets**
 - Expansion of the children's clothing swap that Rose ran
 - We can potentially tie this into the town-wide garage sale but it's late this year (October 17-18)
 - We can have seasonally appropriate swap markets like for Halloween. (Irving and Bartle Schools do something similar like this.)
 - A lot of renters move out in May so this is another opportunity for a swap market.
 - There is a lot of potential for repurposing waste.
 - Irene Marx might want to work with the DPW for dropoffs like East Brunswick does
 - There is a lot of management involved with this

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



- **Repair Cafe / Fix-it Clinic**
 - This needs major support
 - This can be either a one-time event or a series
 - We had an idea to reach out to the senior center to see what skills they have that they would like to share. Perhaps we can create a (paper) survey? Paul Sauers is going to speak to people at the senior center. We can also reach out to Kim at the Boro.
 - One idea is a bike repair workshop
 - We can reach out to Interfaith Rise carpenters but we're not sure how available they are
- **Composting**
 - There are programs in other towns to pay a fee to get padlock access to a compost drop-off site. It would be great if the Boro could subsidize something like this.
 - Randy can help draft a resolution if we decide to pursue a legislation direction
- **Tool Lending Library**
 - We're in the very early stages of exploring this idea
 - There's a concern around insurance for borrowing tools
- Next programming meeting: Monday, June 9 at 7:30pm (virtual)
- Tamara has volunteered to help create flyers
- **School Green Team Update – Meli and Rose**
 - A high school sophomore in East Brunswick is doing a used notebook collection drive. Irene Marx put the HS Environmental Club in contact with this student and HPHS and HPMS are going to be hosting a used notebooks drive where the used notebooks can be dropped off at the schools in the front entrance ways.
 - The students are presently creating the flyer to advertise
- **Misc**
 - The Boro is getting an electric bus!
 - Appliance recycling
 - John Caputo spoke with the mayor about appliances that people throw out. His friend is setting up a nonprofit so people can get credits for donations. Matt Hersh to follow up with the mayor.

SUSTAINABLE HIGHLANDPARK



- Exploring recycling programs
 - Mary Botteon recommends the following:
 - <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/>
 - <https://gotsneakers.com/>
 - <https://www.trashie.io/>
 - We need to do more research and can consider compiling a list / resource on our website

Future meetings – hybrid