

## Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of February 21, 2001

### Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello, Councilwoman Elsie Foster Dublin

Absent: Wendy Rosen

Guests: Rob Muldowney, Eugene Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 17, 2001 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received a letter from the N. J. Department of Community Affairs State Planning Commission inviting us to the meeting of the final adoption of the new updated State Development and Redevelopment Plan. This meeting will be on March 1, 2001, in Trenton.
  - b) We received a letter from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders inviting us to a meeting of the Lower Raritan Watershed Management Group on March 7, 2001, at the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High School on in East Brunswick. At this meeting, the Watershed Management Group will provide for public and municipal input into the state's new Watershed Management Planning Process and allow participants to apply for state funding to implement actions to protect and preserve our water reserves.
  - c) We received flyers from the Middlesex County Department of Planning, Division of Solid Waste Management, announcing dates of Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events for 2001. Also sent were flyers with dates and locations for the Middlesex County paint-recycling drop off program.
  - d) We received a publication from the NJDEP Division of Water Quality titled "Proposed Priority System Intended Use Plan and Project Priority List for Federal Fiscal Year 2002." This pamphlet, which discusses clean water financing, involves municipalities buying land with 50% grant funding from Green Acres and 50% low interest loans. This program is funded under the Clean Water Act and requires municipalities to demonstrate a water quality benefit from the purchase of land for open space. The most that can be done with land purchased through this program is the creation of hiking and biking trails. As a related issue, Tony brought in samples of open space plans from Middletown and Allamuchy.
  - e) ANJEC sent us notice requesting membership renewal for 2001 at \$250 per year. We agreed to renew our membership. We may also add more people to the ANJEC Report subscription at \$15 per person. We decided to add Elsie to our mailing list so she can receive a subscription.
4. Site Plans
  - a) John Papoutsakis  
505 South Third Avenue  
Docket No.: #76-15-00  
Block and Lot: B-76, L-15  
The applicant wants to build an addition to the rear of a house that is non-conforming because it is a two-family home in a single-family zone. He is seeking a use variance and a variance for side yard setback. No Comments.
  - b) Highland Park Board of Education  
102 North Fifth Avenue  
Docket No.: #145-18-00  
Block and Lot: B-145, L-18  
The Board of Education is applying for a variance to place a 4' X 3' sign for its preschool on the North Fifth Avenue side. The variance is needed because only one free-standing sign is permitted on any property. No Comments.
5. Old Business
  - a) Biosurvey Grant. Out of the five requests for proposals we sent, we received three responses. These came from Amy Greene Environmental Consultants, Thonet Associates, and Biostar Associates. Arnold, Mike, and Loren reviewed the three proposals and said all were very good. We decided we would like to address questions such as what is the wildlife and vegetation in the

- area, where can things be restored, and where and how to place a trail. We already have a grant for the trail. Also, we would like to put tags on trees in this area so we will already have a nature trail. Thonet invited us to see a restoration project they did, and they come highly recommended by ANJEC. The Commission agreed to select Thonet Associates to conduct the study, and we now have to send the proposal to Council so they can submit a contract. Mike will send a memo on this. Arnold will inform all three companies of our decision, and Mike will write letters to the two we did not select.
- b) Cultural Resources Survey. We haven't heard any new information from DEP. We are supposed to receive a response to our application by March 15.
  - c) Open Space Inventory. Arnold began creating a comprehensive list of open spaces in town, which begins by listing municipally owned properties that are currently open space and then provides a commentary on each site. This inventory also includes open space that is privately owned. A list Laurel obtained from Anne Barron also contains the Midland Ross site, which Arnold's list does not include. We still need to decide what criteria we will use to determine whether properties are included in an open space plan. Questions on this include, do we want a stream corridor protection ordinance? This is the best way to deal with stream corridors since it means we would not have to change the zoning for people's back yards. Mike suggested that we need to distinguish between properties designated for a stream corridor protection ordinance from those designated for an open space plan. An open space plan will suggest courses of action for various types of land including stream corridor overlays. Tony said that the state now requires towns have an open space plan in order to receive certain DEP grants. Arnold informed us that the state has a booklet on open space plans that we should use in this process. Our next step now is to take the inventory and determine which areas are appropriate for stream corridor protection and which are appropriate to list in an open space plan. We need to determine what information is available in electronic form versus paper. Loren will contact Borough Administrator Richard Kunze about this and will then call CME to find out what they can do to help us. Arnold suggested we check tax lists and maps, and Laurel will look into these to resolve discrepancies in the information we have.
  - d) Global Positioning System. Elsie asked about this and found that the borough never pursued purchasing this. However, because the county is purchasing Red's Marina, CME can do a GPS appraisal of this area as part of the county's purchase. Arnold recommended the county put permanent markers in the ground at the site to delineate the boundaries. Arnold said we should get a copy of the survey information once the county survey is done. Mike said he wrote a letter to the county to obtain copies of environmental studies being conducted on both Red's Marina and the Barwood property.
  - e) Environmental Ordinances. The Council has proposed two land use ordinance amendments, one creating an RA-1 zone on several blocks and lots including Buck Woods that downzones the area to 3.5 units per acre of single family homes. The other defines improvable versus non-improvable areas and requires a site have a minimum percentage of improvable area for it to be developed. These would still have Buck Woods as zoned for single family detached dwellings. Elsie said the Council consulted several land use attorneys who said we could not zone Buck Woods as recreation/conservation because of the current litigation. Both the Environmental Commission and the Planning Board would like to have had input into this ordinance before it was introduced, a position with which Elsie agreed. The Commission is concerned because among the areas being rezoned is the land at the base of the bikeway, the exact area for which we are doing the biosurvey. The borough's Master Plan says some of this land should be zoned for conservation. These ordinances will be discussed by the Planning Board at its February 22 meeting.
  - f) Master Plan. Tony said that a subcommittee of the Planning Board has been formed to deal with the Master Plan revision. This subcommittee includes four members of the Planning Board and three members of a Citizens' Advisory Committee appointed by the Mayor. He recommended that members of the Environmental Commission and Zoning Board also be on this subcommittee. Elsie said that members of the Environmental Commission and Zoning Board will be permanently invited guests rather than subcommittee members and that they will be permitted to comment at the meetings. The meetings will be open to the public. Tony said that Planning Board Chair Alan Kluger would like to get preliminary work done on the Master Plan by the end of June. The deadline for completing the revision is October. Arnold said that if we want to pass a stream corridor protection ordinance, this would have to be discussed in the Master Plan.

6. New Business.
  - a) DEP Permits. Tony obtained a directory of permits, licenses, and approvals issued by the DEP. We will make a copy of this and put it in the library.
  - b) High School Environmental Club. We are tentatively looking at Sunday, April 22, Earth Day, as a possible date for a cleanup in which the high school club could participate. Laurel will contact the club's advisor about this.
  - c) HERP Atlas. Arnold signed up to do the HERP Atlas survey for the north part of Highland Park and will do it in April. Anyone interested in assisting him will be given his number for contact.
  - d) Possible Dredging of the Raritan River. Laurel informed the Commission that Freeholder Director David Crabiell mentioned dredging parts of the Raritan River in his annual reorganization address. Laurel will contact Freeholder Jim Polos and Ralph Albanir to find out more about this. Arnold said that any dredging should be done at the request of nature groups. There is no point in dredging a river that boats do not currently use so they can subsequently use it.
  - e) Environmental Commission Website. Rob Muldowney said he will work on setting up a Commission website.
  - f) Mission Statement. We discussed drafting a mission statement for the Commission. Mike said he will bring a copy of the DEP's mission statement to our next meeting. We tabled discussion of this item until then.
  - g) Planning Board Buck Woods Memorialization. Tony made copies of the memorialization resolution as well as one copy of Morris' appeal and one of the Planning Board's response to the appeal, which he brought to the meeting. We made additional copies for those interested. Loren is mentioned as an expert witness in the memorialization resolution. Arnold suggested we put these in the library since they are public documents.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:55 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 21, 2001 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.