

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of October 17, 2001

Minutes

Present: Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello,
Councilwoman Elsie Foster Dublin

Absent: Arnold Henderson, Wendy Rosen, Michael Rosenberg

Guests: Nathan Imm, ShayMaria Silvestri, Shay Silvestri

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 12, 2001 meeting were approved with the following corrections:
 - a) Item 5 a) will be changed to read, "We should request a narrative of field discoveries from Thonet."
 - b) Item 5 b) will be changed to read "plastic panel sign boards for River Road and Valley Place."
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) Marlie P. Wasserman
12 North 8th Avenue
Docket No.: #137-20, 21-01
Block and Lot: B-137, L-20, 21

The applicant is proposing to construct a two and a half story addition to a residence on a 50 X 100 foot lot that has four pre-existing variances for minimum front yard setback, minimum side yard setback on both sides, and minimum rear yard setback. She is currently seeking new variances for side yard setback, maximum lot coverage, and maximum impervious coverage. The addition will increase the lot coverage from 33%-42% and will increase the impervious coverage from 45%-55%.

Comments: The impervious coverage is already in excess and should not be increased. One option that still allows the addition to proceed is to replace the concrete in the driveway with something permeable.

5. Old Business
 - a) Orchard Heights Community Association Meeting on Pocket Parks. On October 11, the Orchard Heights Association held a meeting to discuss the new pocket park on South 8th Avenue. This park is approximately one acre and has an apartment building next to it. Elsie reported that discussion at the meeting centered on neighborhood children's desire to remove a large oak tree in the center of the lot. She felt the borough should take the children's preference into consideration and remove the tree while leaving the upper plateau natural with a chess or checkers table, a small garden, and possibly swings and a hopscotch board. ShayMaria commented that the site of the tree is a catchment basin and should not be filled in. Commission members questioned whether an alternative design that leaves the large tree intact could be pursued. Elsie also reported that there will not be basketball hoops in this park. She asked us to come to the

- Orchard Heights Association's next meeting on November 8 in the Senior/Youth Center to share information about our environmental concerns regarding the area.
- b) Stamp Out Graffiti and Albany Street Bridge Cleanup Day, Sunday, November 4. Two separate groups of volunteers will clean the Orchard Heights neighborhood along Woodbridge Avenue and the Albany Street Bridge area. The state Department of Transportation will provide cleaning supplies. We would like to see as many people as possible come out for these cleanups, which will be from 10 AM-2 PM. The goal is for the two groups to meet downtown at the end of the cleanup. Elsie said she is trying to get Superintendent of Schools MaryLu Simon to send information about the cleanup through the schools' mail system. There is an announcement about it on the borough's cable TV bulletin, and the event will be covered by Channel 12. The Environmental Commission will support this effort by recruiting volunteers and by members' participation. Laurel, Elsie, and Robyn Shumer of the Board of Health will work on a press release and a flyer to publicize this event.
 - c) Biosurvey. We need to contact Thonet to determine which meeting their representative(s) will attend. Because the third Wednesday in November is the day before Thanksgiving, we will probably postpone our next meeting to November 28. This would be a good meeting for Thonet to discuss the biosurvey with us. Laurel returned the Thonet preliminary report, and Jonathan took it to review.
 - d) Greenway Environmental Education Center. The Environmental Education Center Committee presented their concept of the center to the Borough Council yesterday. Arnold identified four areas that need work. Nathan said he has experience removing Japanese knotweed and that Roundup is the only effective means of doing this. He added that Roundup is nonpersistent and has a half-life of only 14 days. However, several Commission members expressed concern about using Roundup. Loren commented that it harms invertebrates such as amphibians and should not be applied. If the best course of action is applying Roundup with great care, then serious problems could result if it is not applied with great care. We could not reach a consensus regarding the use of Roundup. We did agree on Item 4 in Arnold's report. Elsie said the borough wants to place some type of memorial to the victims of September 11 at the center. ShayMaria suggested placing this in a flower garden.
 - e) Open Space Inventory and Plan. We sent a memo to the Planning Board informing them that we are putting together this inventory. We need to make sure the Planning Board will refer to this inventory and list all borough open space in the new Master Plan.
 - f) Amendment to Zoning Ordinance. Laurel reported that Borough Attorney Dan McCarthy said the open space in the new cluster zone cannot be legally required to allow public access. Nathan suggested having open space in the zone belong to a homeowners' association. Loren suggested that a homeowners association or the developer could transfer open parcels of land to the borough for open space. Tony asked whether we could have a joint meeting with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee on Nov. 14 (the day of their regular meeting) to discuss this issue.

g) Environmental Commission Website. Elsie reported that Kim and Fern are working on establishing a borough website. Loren said her husband could put our site on Rutgers' server since he works as Rutgers' System Administrator. Our site is currently part of someone's private site. Several people questioned whether we would require specific software to move the site to Rutgers. Jon commented that our current site is a good prototype and suggested we now add pictures, links, minutes of Commission meetings, and links to the county's website. Laurel suggested we link to the Board of Health, which is also working on setting up a site. Elsie suggested Jon contact Joy Norsworthy about this project since she worked on the Residents' Handbook. Laurel will send Jon Joy's email address and also send him copies of this year's Commission meeting minutes. ShayMaria said that DEP has a "Maps for Mayors" section on its web site that shows each town's percentage of land use and we might want to link to that site as well. As an aside, she added that the Highland Park map shows the borough to be only 36% permeable. Laurel suggested we also link to the Environmental Defense Fund's Scorecard site at which people can type in their zip codes and find out how polluted their air is. ShayMaria said that if we can get Archview GIS software, she could make maps for us. Currently, she can only produce maps at work, which she downloads from the Internet.

6. New Business

a) Albany Street Bridge Beautification. Elsie informed us that flower arrangements to be hung at the Albany Street Bridge were donated by a Highland Park resident. She said she would like to see the same arrangements donated for the Woodbridge Avenue entrance to the borough, which could be displayed along with decorative flags. The borough will do the "Stamp Out Graffiti" cleanup once a year, but would like to get groups of residents to do general upkeep of the Albany Street Bridge area every two weeks. The Environmental Commission could be one of the groups that takes on this responsibility. Elsie also said that children will not handle chemicals during the cleanups.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10 PM. The next meeting will be either on Wednesday, November 14 or Wednesday, November 28 at 8 PM in Borough Hall. When the date is finalized, Mike will inform everyone about the meeting.