

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of November 28, 2001

Minutes

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

Absent: Loren Muldowney

Guests: Justine Bumby, Eugene Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:25 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 17, 2001 meeting were approved with two corrections:
 - a) Item 5a) should read “the large Norway Maple on the south side of the lot interfering with sledding” rather than “the large oak tree.”
 - b) Item 5d) should read we approved Item 4 on Arnold’s list of things to do for the Environmental Education Center area, which is to add a guardrail at the Valley Place Ravine area where Donaldson Street passes above a steep drop.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received notice of a meeting of a free Municipal Forum on December 5 from 10 AM-4 PM dealing with the Lower Raritan Watershed Management Area. The meeting will take place at the JFK Library in Piscataway, and Freeholder Camille Fernicola will speak. This meeting will be an opportunity for municipalities to share the actions they have taken to improve and protect their water resources.
 - b) We received notice of a Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Amendments to the Lower Raritan-Middlesex County Water Quality Management Revision and Amendment Procedures, which will take place at 4:30 PM on December 11 at the Middlesex County Planning Board Meeting Center in New Brunswick.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Estate of Josephine Schultz c/o Susan Jones
228 South 10th Avenue
Docket No.: #61-17, 18, 19, 20-01
Block and Lot: B-61, L-17, 18, 19, 20

The applicant proposes to merge four adjacent nonconforming lots into two 50 X 100 lots and to tear down several existing structures on the lot and build two new residential ones.

Comments: If the large street tree is replaced, it should be by three smaller trees that will not be so large in diameter at maturity. The sidewalk area heaved by the large oak tree should be replaced. Also, consider using permeable materials for the driveway.

5. Old Business
 - a) Biosurvey. Blaine Rothausen of Thonet will come to our December 19 meeting, where he will summarize their final report and answer questions. Arnold met

with a Thonet representative at the site and said the final report will add some more plants and animals seen there. He will invite Shade Tree Advisory Committee co-chair Ruth Bowers to the Dec. 19 meeting, and Mike will invite the Mayor and Council. Arnold added that Thonet agreed to do a geographic narrative in the final report. One of Thonet's comments about the site is "the location presents an excellent opportunity to preserve natural areas." Mike said Rothauser invited us to look at the Harding Township site that they renovated. We agreed to postpone a visit until the spring. Arnold added that the Harding site is larger and was not as degraded as ours is.

- b) Environmental Education Center. The subcommittee met tonight and informed us that they will do an informal presentation on the concept to the county Parks Department and prepare for a future presentation to the Freeholders. Elsie questioned whether we still need convict labor to clean up the area, and we decided to schedule this for January at the River Road site, where bottle collectors left large pits that need to be filled in and covered over for safety purposes. She will contact the warden about this. Arnold informed us that Harvey Stengel, a former Shade Tree Committee member and a pesticide expert, sprayed the area of Japanese knotweed. Both DPW and the Riverkeeper agreed this is the best way to get rid of it. DPW did the mowing, and Stengel did the spraying. We will have to spray or cut again next year and do a final spraying next fall.
- c) Open Space Inventory and Plan. Arnold said our open space list is complete. The Borough Planner currently has the list, but the Planning Board does not. In contrast to a list, an open space plan must have specific sections required by Green Acres. To turn the list into a plan, we need to break it down into actions we recommend the borough take for each site. One possibility is to list municipal properties and call them parks. Arnold emphasized that Green Acres has a list of borough open space that is legally binding, and that some of our parks may not be on it. For example, the area of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve along Buell Brook is zoned conservation but may not be on the Green Acres list. Tony will contact the Green Acres office to find out how to amend our list and get new properties onto it. Meanwhile, Tony suggested we have an inventory that describes each site and create a separate document in which we recommend actions for the sites. We decided to officially adopt the open space list and print out two versions: one that only lists properties and descriptions and another that contains annotations (with the recommendations for each area) to the inventory. The second version will be a subsidiary document. The Commission voted unanimously to adopt the open space list, removing the word "draft," and dating it Nov. 28, 2001. We decided to treat the list as a living document to be reviewed once a year every November for potential revisions. We will indicate in the document that it is subject to changes. Wendy commended Arnold for all his hard work on this project.
- d) Land Use Ordinance Amendment. Elsie questioned whether we received a copy of the ordinance before it was introduced, and Mike responded that we did not. She said our questions need to be directed to the Planning Board. Mike said that

some of our recommendations, but not all, were incorporated into the draft. The Commission is on the list for groups to be consulted by the Technical Advisory Committee. Our recommendation that a Commission member be included on the Committee was not done; instead, this seems to be left to a project by project basis. Tony suggested that the Environmental Commission chair be informed of any actions the Technical Advisory Committee is taking. Arnold added that it would be a good idea to notify the Commission in advance of site plan applications so we have the opportunity to comment on them. We also discussed the pros and cons of the cluster option in the ordinance.

- e) Environmental Commission Web Site. Jon spoke with Leora, who is hosting our current web site. We will advertise it as our official site, and if it moves, Leora will add a link to the new site. We currently do not have a lot of space for comment, but Rob Muldowney can facilitate our using space on the Rutgers site for content. Elsie said that once the borough web site is up, every board and commission will be on it. She also said the borough will put the Residents' Handbook on its site, so we should not put it on ours. Jon questioned who will control access and whether each commission will have its own section. He also asked whether the borough will provide server space even if our site has its own link. Arnold will contact ANJEC to find out what other environmental commissions have done regarding their web sites. Jon recommended we now make our site public since it will be a while until we have a permanent site. We decided to announce the site as a prototype site and ask people to provide comments on it. Jon will have Leora put an email on the site so people can contact us. Mike will email Jon all the minutes of our 2001 meetings to put on the site. The address is <http://www.leoraw.com/hpenv/>.

6. New Business.

- a) The East Coast Greenway runs through Highland Park and also includes the Johnson Park bikeway and the Cedar Lane bikeway. People or organizations can sponsor a mile of the greenway by donating \$100. The greenway organizers will create a brochure that will include a listing of restaurants and bike shops in Highland Park. The consensus was that if we have the money, we should sponsor a mile. The Commission voted for Mike to look into this option.

7. The meeting adjourned at 11 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 19, 2001 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.