

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of March 20, 2002
Minutes

Present: Arnold Henderson, Jonathan Abrahams, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Wendy Rosen,
Councilwoman Elsie Foster Dublin
Absent: Anthony Puniello, Michael Rosenberg
Guests: ShayMaria Silvestri, Eugene Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 20, 2002 meeting were approved with the following corrections:
 - a) Section 3b) should read "May 5."
 - b) Section 6a) should read "we need more copies."
 - c) Section 6f) should read "Leora (not Loren) added maps, photos, and text to the website."
 - d) In item 6f), the statements "Jon has information on recycling" and "He will also put a list...on the site" should be removed.
 - e) Section 7d) should read "we need log steps on the bank if the trail is to cross the creek. We might also need to hire someone to haul out the trash..."
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received an Urban Forestry Grant Application from the Middlesex County Urban Forestry Advisory Committee. This is a Shade Tree Advisory Committee matter, so it will be addressed by them.
 - b) We received announcements of Hazardous Waste Collection Days from the Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management. There will be two types of collections, each with its own schedule—one for household hazardous waste and the other only for paint and paint-related products. Paint and paint products will be collected at various locations during specified times the first four Saturdays of every month. The web site for information on paint collection is www.co.middlesex.nj.us/planningboard/solidwaste.asp. Household hazardous waste will be collected at various locations at specified times during the spring and fall. The web site for information on household waste collection is www.njhazwaste.com/midhome.htm. We will put these flyers in the library and add links to the county web sites onto our web site.
 - c) PSE&G sent notice that they are redoing gas mains along road rights of way in Highland Park, adding that they have applied to DEP for a permit.
 - d) We received a copy of a Suspected Hazardous Discharge Notification sent to Borough Administrator Richard Kunze from NJDEP regarding a small spill at Stop and Shop on February 26, 2002. The material spilled was a non-PCB chemical.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Jonathan and Colleen Wharton
119 Johnson Street
Docket No.: #15-22-02
Block and Lot: B-15, L-22

This is a proposal to add a 16 X 16 two-story addition to the rear of a home on a 35 X 100 foot lot. The setbacks are already nonconforming, and the applicant is seeking a C variance for side yard setback. The property already has five pre-existing variances. Impervious coverage will increase from 20-23% with the addition. No Comments.

b) John Brennan and Jean Baum
241 Grant Avenue
Docket No.: #168-56-02
Block and Lot: B-168, L-56

The applicant is proposing a two-story addition to a home on a 73 X 100 foot lot and seeking two variances for side yard setback, a variance for maximum lot coverage, and a variance for maximum impervious coverage. No number is given for the existing percent of lot coverage, but the proposal would bring the lot coverage to 33% (the maximum permitted by borough ordinance is 30%). Current impervious coverage is 47%, and the addition would bring it to 52% (the maximum permitted is 40%).

Comment: We request that the applicant conform to borough ordinance on impervious coverage by replacing portions of the concrete drive or walk with landscaping and pervious walk surfaces such as stepping stones, etc.

c) American Cellular Network aka Cingular Wireless
Ausonia Apartments
505 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: #142-1 & 2-02
Block and Lot: B-142, L-1 & 2

Cingular Wireless is proposing to add an equipment room, sump pump, cable tray, and concrete stairs to the roof of this building, which is already a Cingular cell tower site. This is a zoning issue, and there will be a public hearing on this application before the Zoning Board on March 25.

Note: We received only partial information—a map—for this application. There was no cover sheet or explanation for the proposal. Based on this limited information, we have no comments.

d) Zoran Miletic
121 North Fourth Avenue
Docket No.: #144-30-02
B-144, L-30

We received only a cover sheet with no site plan for this application.

e) New Buck Woods Application. JSM submitted a new site plan application, but we are not sure if the application is complete. The applicant does not meet the new zoning requirements, and instead claims that the judge has allowed him to apply under the previous zoning. Elsie said this is a new application (rather than a remand). The new zoning would allow a smaller number of homes, but these would be on smaller lots so that 40% of the property could be left as open space. Loren will obtain a copy of Planning Board rules to determine what makes an application complete. We need the information checklist of what the applicant must submit. Borough Planner Susan Blickstein said this is in our Land Development Code. Laurel will look up this Code in the library and copy the list of criteria, and Gene will contact Tony with questions on the procedure. Loren recommended we have someone go to tomorrow night's Planning Board meeting to inquire about this process. We need to find out the date that this application was received by the borough, how much time it takes to determine whether it is complete, who and what determines whether it is complete, and whether there currently are elements of this application missing.

5. Old Business

- a) Biosurvey. Arnold met with the Borough Engineer and Borough Administrator to discuss the biosurvey and possible restoration of the site. We need to contact DEP to find out what work we can do without permits. At this point, we are uncertain about whether we would need to hire someone to help with the work if we decide to go ahead with it. Arnold will contact Thonet to set up a tour of the Harding site for Environmental Commission members some time in April.
- b) Greenway Environmental Education Center. The working group for the Center interviewed four landscape architect groups. Elsie reported that the borough is trying to arrange second meetings with three of the applicants next Wednesday or Thursday. She will arrange the meeting schedules.
- c) Open Space Inventory and Plan. The Open Space Inventory is now on our web site. Loren and Arnold condensed the original report to cut out duplication. Loren reported that she contacted the Green Acres Planning Incentive Program and found out that although they do not necessarily require a plan conforming with their guidelines, they do require that towns have an open space tax to receive grants through this program. These grants are 50% matching grants. The only way we could obtain one of these grants is if the county allows us to use its eligibility. The program does require that towns have an Open Space and Recreation Plan, but the recreation part can be covered by activities such as photography and nature appreciation rather than traditional ball fields. Adopting such a plan requires two public meetings for discussion. Green Acres does have another program through which towns can obtain 25% matching grants solely for acquisition; these do not require any of the above criteria including the open space tax. In spite of our likely ineligibility for the first program, Arnold recommended we write our plan as a genuine Open Space and Recreation Plan, which could then be used to guide the Master Plan Review Committee and the Planning Board in their work on our new Master Plan. As additional steps supporting open space preservation, Loren wrote a draft letter to all boards, commissions, and committees in town asking for comments on open space issues, and Laurel distributed copies of a Critical Areas Protection Ordinance passed in Independence, New Jersey. She has also submitted copies of the ordinance to the Planning Board and Borough Council.

6. New Business

- a) Arnold brought photos of the construction site of Rutgers University's Cedar Lane bikeway showing where a large number of trees were cut down.
- b) Arnold obtained information from the DEP Bureau of Tidelands regarding the public's right of access to tidelands along rivers. He found out that for tidelands behind private properties, the rights have been transferred to the private owners, and there is no language giving the public the right to access. He also reported that there are currently cases in court addressing exactly where the tide lines have moved. The state is seeking to define tidelands as lands 10 feet from mean high tide. Arnold will contact the Rutgers Environmental Law Center for more information.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:03 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 17, 2002 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.