

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of April 17, 2002  
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld,  
Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello, Wendy Rosen  
Guest: Eugene Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 20, 2002 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received a letter from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, asking us to identify our future open space needs as best as we can, identify and prioritize lands we would like the county to acquire as open space, and provide background data by April 26. The Freeholders will consider partially funding local open space purchases. The letter also asked us to identify recreation projects that we would like to have funded with county assistance and to provide this information to Bill Kruse. Mike will ask the Mayor if a list has been submitted to the Freeholders, and Arnold will draft one for us to have available to send. Arnold emphasized that putting properties on this list does not involve any commitment by the borough. It just means these are open spaces eligible for county preservation funds.
  - b) We received complimentary copies of two ANJEC publications: "Open Space is A Good Investment: The Financial Argument for Open Space Preservation" and a "Handbook for Public Financing of Open Space in New Jersey." The first is an update of a previous publication while the second is new. We will review them and put one of each in the library.
  - c) The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Office of Coastal Planning and Program Coordination sent a fact sheet on "What is the New Jersey Coast?" a publication sent as part of the public outreach effort of the New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Project. The goal of this publication is to stimulate public discussion on updating the state's coastal zone management plan. We will put a copy of the publication in the library.
  - d) We received a memo to Arnold from Borough Administrator Richard Kunze regarding the Trail Grant. Richard sent us the topography map for the proposed area, which he said CME found, and asked that we return it at the conclusion of the project. The map has no key, scale, date, or source, and Arnold questioned when it was done, adding that there is a lot of fill in the area. Gene recommended we have Richard ask CME for the source of this data.
  - e) The DEP Bureau of Underground Storage Tanks sent us notice of a discharge of hazardous substances on 8/9/01 from the underground storage tanks at the Mobil station on 702 Raritan Avenue. The notice said the Remedial Investigation Report sent by owner Tosco Corp. to DEP was incomplete. All products and leak detectors were tested, and one gas line failed. There were elevated levels of MTBE, benzene, and xylene. With the notice, DEP included a list of required remediations demanded from Tosco. Tosco was also ordered to install three monitoring wells at the site. Gene commented that underground leaks can get into the water and sewer systems. Mike added that newer tanks come equipped with alarms that sound when leaks occur.
  - f) We received a letter from the State of New Jersey Division of Law and Public Safety, Division of State Police with three enclosed copies of the state's Executive Order and Administrative Order detailing water use restrictions. These restrictions are outlined in the Governor's Water Emergency Executive Order Number 11. Local Offices of Emergency Management are asked to send copies of these to municipal clerks, chiefs of police, and appropriate municipal officials. A complete list of drought restrictions can be found at the web site [njdrought.org](http://njdrought.org).
  - g) We received a letter from the East Coast Greenway Alliance thanking us for being one-mile sponsors of the greenway. Our name will be put on a signed kiosk reading "Borough of Highland

Park, NJ.” The Alliance sent us its booklet “2001 State of the Trail Report,” which includes a section on the Middlesex County trail system that mentions Highland Park.

4. Site Plans. There were no site plans to review.

5. Old Business

- a) Buck Woods. Loren reported that Borough Planner Susan Blickstein has deemed the JSM site plan incomplete. In a letter to the applicant, Blickstein listed everything missing in the application and said these do not even begin to address substantive issues. She also said the site plan must go to the Zoning Officer because it does not comply with the new zone. JSM asked for relief from the new zone but did not request any variances. Loren has a copy of this letter, dated March 25. Gene suggested that if we want the borough to purchase Buck Woods, we should make this request at a Council meeting, especially since the county has specified that any town interested in purchasing land for open space should request money from the county open space fund. He added that the borough should explore purchasing the land through a variety of means. Purchasing Buck Woods would either require JSM to consent or the borough to condemn the property. Loren emphasized that if JSM’s plan is built, there would likely be liability to the borough from the retaining walls and detention basin. Mike suggested that we submit this site to the county as a priority for open space funding since it is part of the greenway access to Donaldson Park. The situation with Buck Woods is similar to that of Red’s Marina, where things changed when county funds became available to purchase the land, Gene said. Arnold recommended we ask the Council to pass a resolution stating a desire to purchase Buck Woods. Tony said we should ask Elsie if she would sponsor such a resolution. Mike will also talk to her about this.
- b) Open Space Inventory and Plan. Arnold reported that he sent Loren a revision of the plan’s last section. He brought a copy of a revised action plan and questioned what we want to say in the action plan. He also included a maps page. The borough is currently doing two studies on redevelopment. Arnold researched our population density and found it to be 7,700 per square mile, which is comparable with Princeton Borough and close to New Brunswick’s density according to the 1990 census. To maintain our small town character, we should not increase our density or build on open space. Arnold and Loren will continue working on the action plan and try to have it ready for the next Master Plan Review Committee meeting in May. Arnold will also try to find a build out map showing what the town would look like if all the current zoning is implemented and an interpretation of this. He reported that he reworked the formula for parks to reflect the different categories of parks we have. We exceed the required number of county parks but are short regarding neighborhood parks. We need to counter the general formula used and work it into our action plan.
- c) Meadows Trail Grant. Arnold drafted a letter to the granting agency saying we are creating a dirt path through the area. The letter lists several things that might require permits, such as log steps on steep slopes. We need to know if taking the path down the steep slopes will be considered stream encroachment. There is a wet spot by the river where Thonet suggested putting wooded steps if this does not require a permit. The area of the log steps may have an intermittent stream in wet seasons. The upland area is a very large stretch that becomes wet during wet seasons. Tony asked Arnold to write a list of stream encroachment permits we might need and said he will inquire about them at DEP. Arnold said he would also like to remove invasives from the site. He has put in phone calls to the grant supervisor for clearance on the above projects. We will match the grant with in-kind services. We have received an extension on the grant; the project needs to be completed by late November.
- d) Greenway Environmental Education Center. Gene reported that Elsie is trying to arrange for proposals from the landscape architects; so far, only one of three requested to send more specific proposals did so. Arnold said the Committee could vote among the top three contenders; Mike emphasized that we need a deadline for the decision. Gene consulted with the director, curator, and landscape architect of Grounds for Sculpture in NJ. They advised us to find out what type of

sculpture is permitted by Green Acres regulations. We should not commit to specific sites until we see the sculptures. They also offered to serve as free consultants if we need help. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee received a letter from the Green Acres inspector stating that the pile of wood chips at the site is too big. This is the only problem the inspector found. We need to remove some of the chips off the site. Green Acres allows the use of wood chips to fill holes as long as we do not change the topography of the site.

- e) Route 18 Widening Project. Arnold sent a memo to Commission members and STAC members about an opportunity to rescue plants from the area on Metlars Lane where Route 18 is being widened. Arnold said Nathan Imm recommends we dig up the sod and lay it into the Native Plant Reserve or give it to people for their backyards. Nathan and Arnold dug some sod for samples and found that we need a depth of 3-4 inches. The bulbs sometimes go down 8-10 inches. If we get a truck and people with shovels for the rescue, we could get a lot of sod and plants out quickly. Laurel suggested we do publicity for the rescue. The site of the rescue now moves to DOT ownership, and they are already authorized to begin construction. Our goal is to complete the rescue in May. Unfortunately, no plants were rescued from the Cedar Lane site. We put blue tags on areas to save, but Arnold said he saw one of the tags in the debris. Gene reported that bituminous cover 6 inches thick is being put in the new bikeway, which Arnold was informed would not be done.
  - f) Environmental Commission Web Site. We have been putting new items onto the site, including the Commission's 2000 Annual Report. Mike will give Leora the minutes of our 2002 meetings and the 2001 Annual Report to add to the site. Arnold put in a link to the Rutgers web site on the drought, and we will add the DEP drought site as well. Gene said there is a summary of drought restrictions in the STAC mailbox, which we might want to use on the web site. Jon informed us that Dan Sullivan, a Rutgers student, contacted us after viewing the web site.
6. New Business
- a) Resolution on Bank Account for Friends of the Environmental Education Center. The Commission unanimously approved a resolution urging the Mayor and Council to set up an appropriate account for funds donated to the Environmental Education Center. We would like the account set up so donations are eligible for charitable income tax deductions. We also agreed that all people who make contributions should be sent a letter of acknowledgment. Mike will send Laurel a copy of the resolution to append to the minutes.
  - b) Street Fair. The fair will be on April 28 from 12-5 PM. Arnold has literature for the table. Wendy will be at the table from 12-2, Loren from 2-3:30, and Mike from 3:30-5.
  - c) Impervious Coverage. Loren went to the recent Zoning Board meeting and found that applicant Jean Baum complied with our request and reduced impervious coverage from 47%-46% by ripping up the driveway. She said the Zoning Officer told her that he is not allowed to count grassy pave as pervious and must count it as concrete. This means people are not getting credit for doing what we ask. We need an ordinance passed specifying that pervious pavement not be counted as impervious. Arnold suggested we provide fractional credit for use of pervious pavement. We also need to change our ordinance so we don't grind tree roots when repairing sidewalks. Arnold suggested that the Zoning Board grant exemptions for 50% impervious coverage rather than for 100% impervious coverage.
  - d) Cleveland Avenue Site. Arnold reported that a Rutgers student is studying brownfields and is seeking information on a shed-like structure at 435 Cleveland Avenue. This structure is very close to the railroad tracks. Mike said this site appears on the DEP list of potentially contaminated sites. Arnold said he would encourage the student to give us a copy of the report he writes about this site.
  - e) Cell Towers. Arnold reported that someone wants to build a 150-foot high cell tower at the end of Cleveland Avenue on the yeshiva property. Jean Kolva of the Historical Society is writing a protest letter saying this tower would interfere with the Livingston Manor historic district and the property on the National Register of Historic Sites. She urges the proposal be rejected on a

federal level. We decided the Environmental Commission should write a letter stating that this tower would conflict with Fish and Wildlife Guidelines on Cell Towers. Instead of building a new tower, the company could put the cell equipment on top of an existing building. A possible adjacent site is Middlesex Water Company's water tank in Edison. Arnold said we should recommend the tower be built outside Highland Park. The current proposal puts it next to a school, and parents probably would not want it there. The proposal is now at the federal review stage. Tony said federal agencies have to determine the impact on cultural resources when a project like this is done. Arnold will get the appropriate agency address from Jean and draft a letter stating our concerns, which he will circulate to Commission members.

- f) Acme Auto. Acme Auto on Woodbridge Avenue is located in a commercial site but purchased adjacent residential property, demolished the house, paved the area with gravel, and now seeks to put parking there for 18 employees. This is in spite of the fact that they only have 4 or 5 employees. Adjacent residents are concerned that this will become a storage area for wrecked cars and that hazardous materials will leak onto their properties. Tony said this will go before the Zoning Board, which probably will not permit parking in a residential area. The Zoning Board requires a higher level of proof to give a variance.
  - g) Board of Health Pesticide Concerns. Wendy reported that the Board of Health has proposed banning pesticide use in areas where children walk and wants to know if we would support such a policy. Arnold suggested we recommend Integrated Pest Management practices be adopted on public lands. However, we might want to make an exception for Round Up, which is the only thing that kills Japanese knotweed. Wendy suggested pesticide application be done at time when children are least likely to be in public areas, such as Friday afternoons. We are interested in further discussing this issue with the Board of Health.
  - h) Boyd Park Cleanup. An environmental group is planning a cleanup of Boyd Park in New Brunswick. Arnold will send us information on this via email.
7. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 15, 2002 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.