

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of May 15, 2002
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney,
Councilwoman Elsie Foster Dublin

Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Anthony Puniello, Wendy Rosen

Guests: ShayMaria Silvestri, Eugene Young, David Younge, Danae Younge

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the April 17, 2002 meeting were approved with one correction: Item 6c) should read Jean Baum rather than Jean Bauman.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a letter from PSE&G informing us that they have submitted an application to DEP for Freshwater Wetlands Statewide General Permits # 1, 2, and 21, which would allow them to disturb freshwater wetlands throughout the entire PSE&G service territory in New Jersey. They have informed all state municipal clerks of this application.
 - b) The NJDEP Site Remediation Program sent us a copy of a Hazardous Discharge Notification report for Bergen Car Care at 101 Raritan Avenue. The substance released was heating oil. A 550-gallon underground storage tank at the site is in the process of being removed.

4. Site Plans

- a) Sprint Spectrum
Ausonia Apartment Building
501-505 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: #145-1, 2-02
Block and Lot: B-145, L-1 & 2

Currently before the Zoning Board, this application is for the placement of cellular antennae as part of a telecommunications facility. The applicant states that this site is suitable for this because there is fiberglass screening around the roof, and addition of the antennas would require no significant alteration. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 prohibits municipalities from enacting ordinances against telecommunications facilities. Nextel and AT&T already have facilities on the roof of this building, and Cingular is in the process of constructing one. No Comments.

5. Old Business

- a) Open Space Inventory and Plan. Arnold revised Loren's letter and sent a copy of it to all borough committees and commissions dated May 10. We received a reply from Economic Development Coordinator Guil Vivas. We do not know if the borough has sent any information to the county in response to its request for a list of sites we would like to see as open space. We have submitted suggestions to Councilman Steve Buzbee for properties the borough might recommend for possible open space use through purchase or easement. Any areas not currently set aside for preservation could be listed with the county, so in the event they came onto the market, the county would be ready to take action. Gene said that

our strongest chance of protecting land as open space is through Middlesex County. Once completed, this list could be added as an appendix to our open space inventory and plan. Arnold suggested we request that Commission members be emailed copies of the list before it is sent to the county. He also informed us that there is a program that reimburses municipalities for not selling land that could be used for open space and said he would bring this program and its application deadline to Steve's attention.

- b) Trail Grant. This grant is for the meadows area below the landfill. The original project described by former Borough Administrator Jesse Landon in 1999 was for an all-purpose multi-use trail that would be wide and paved. Landon then sent a follow up letter stating that if we did not get the large grant for which we were applying, we would not pave the trail. DEP put this project in its multi-user category and cannot transfer us out of this. They informed us that we can choose to forego this grant and apply for a natural area grant next year or build a partial multi-use trail this year. The question now is do we want to do this. There may be money to clean up the area because it is part of a landfill; such cleaning might involve tearing up plantings we would put in. Arnold suggested we construct two trails—an upper loop for children and wheelchairs in an attractive clearing surrounded by woods and a separate, more rough lower loop. The borough now has access to workers from the county detention center once or twice a month; they could begin the work on these projects. Arnold reported that Joy Norsworthy suggested using a shale surface for the upper loop. This surface would let some water through. Gene reminded us that Jesse Landon wanted to connect the Southside bikeway with Donaldson Park and added that this area is not handicapped accessible. He suggested we use this grant to have DPW construct a trail along the area by the chain link fence adjacent to DPW, which is a well-used walkway. We should then seek a natural areas grant for the meadows site. If we do construct a trail next to DPW, we need to leave it wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass through. Gene said we could complete such a project within \$15,000. If we decide to do this area instead, there are two questions—what type of surface to use and where the trail should end. We would ask the county to connect the area beyond the distance we complete. The area has some blue stone, and we could put something over the blue stone to fill in the crevices. Mike said using asphalt is okay if the asphalt area is a narrow one of about three feet wide. The borough engineer would be the person to design this, Gene said. Arnold will contact DEP with these ideas and get back to us with their feedback. Elsie will look into the cost of resurfacing the area near DPW and get back to us with an answer.
- c) Greenway Environmental Education Center. The committee had another meeting on this. The borough is now in the negotiating stages with two landscape architectural firms, one of which will be chosen for the project.
- d) Route 18 Plant Rescue. Eight people participated in the rescue, which went very well. The plants are now at the Native Plant Reserve and will be planted at the next work session. There may be a second round of rescues and re-plantings as well. Also, there are currently large piles of wood chips at the Reserve that tree cutters put there thinking we need them. There is a sign asking people to take them, but it is not visible from River Road. We need to publicize the availability of the chips. Notice of them is already on our web site, and we will also put it on HPTV. Elsie said she asked Borough Administrator Richard Kunze about putting a “No Dumping” sign at the site and added that there is an area at the bottom of the DPW site where wood chips can be placed. We will send a letter

to the tree cutting companies about this and will also mention in the letter that mulch is being applied in ways that are harmful to the trees. Arnold said the workers from the corrections department cleared a lot of the Japanese knotweed at the Reserve. One way to suppress it from growing back is to spread cardboard and put wood chips on top.

- e) Environmental Commission Web Site. Mike will give Jon minutes of our 2002 meetings to place on the site.
- f) Cell Towers. A cell tower has been proposed for near the end of Cleveland Avenue. The application is currently in the federal system because determination must be made that it would not interfere with any federal programs. The programs with which it might interfere are the National Register of Historic Places because of its being near the Livingston Manor district and the federal Fish and Wildlife Guidelines, which advocates placing cell towers on existing buildings as a first choice.

6. New Business

- a) New Donaldson Park Plan. Gene brought a map of the new Donaldson Park plan for our review. There are several issues with which we are concerned. One is the location of the skating rink near the playground. Another is that the new path does not go all the way around the park and is further from the river than the current one. We would like to see Donaldson and Johnson Parks replace trees from the Route 18 expansion and feel such a request would be stronger if it came from the county. We would also like to add a shelter in a natural area behind the restrooms, move the skating rink, connect the walkway to the path by DPW, and place biofilters on sewer vents. Additionally, we advocate stabilization of the riverbank, which can be done ecologically. Laurel recommended we ask ANJEC to provide information on natural restoration of riverbanks to Schoor DiPalma and said she would contact ANJEC about this. Elsie said she will ask Baykeeper Steve Barnes for a list of environmentally acceptable ways of stabilizing riverbanks. We discussed the idea of having Ralph Albanir do another presentation to the Borough Council after which we could add our comments. Gene emphasized that formal comment by the borough needs to be done before this goes into working drawings.
- b) Deer. Loren informed us that deer are eating down everything we plant. They have eaten an entire layer of shrubs at the Rutgers plant rescue area. Arnold reported that someone saw 15 deer at the meadows. Mike said that most of the deer are in the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. Arnold reported that Blaine Rothauser of Thonet recommended that because of the high density of deer in this area, we put fencing around certain plantings.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 19, 2002 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.